



What is a Cult?

- **Merriam-Webster** - "a system of religious beliefs and ritual, a religion regarded as orthodox or spurious, great devotion to a person, idea, or thing"
- **Charles S. Braden** "any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief and practice from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture."

What is a Cult?

- **Psychologist** "a group that alters one's behavior and psychological outlook on life"
- **Sociologist** – "a group that does not fit the norms of a given society"

What is a Cult?

- The word "cult" is from the Latin Word **cultus** which means "to worship or show reverence to some things"

What is a Cult?

It stems from the word "**Heresy**"

1. An adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church **dogma**
2. Dissent or deviation from a dominant theory, opinion, or practice

Merriam Webster Dictionary

What is a Cult?

Dogma (**that which seems to one**)

- A teaching or doctrine that has received official church status as truth

(Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms)

What is a Cult?

Pseudo-Christian Cult

Walter R. Martin

"One that claims to be Christian but is not. Boasting of acceptance of Bible Authority, these cults have their own writings that are interpretive of the Bible and actually supersede it in ultimate authority."

What is a Cult?

Theological View

*a group of people basing their beliefs upon the world view of an **isolated leadership**, which always **denies the central doctrines** of Christianity as taught **from the Bible**.*

Why People Join Cults?

Intellectual

- Cults provide "answers"
- Cults provide false "securities"
- Prey on ignorance

Why People Join Cults?

Emotional

- Distorted view of life
- Experiencing identity crisis
- Grief
- Read-made answers
- Emphasize false beliefs
- Dependence
- Love and be loved

Why People Join Cults?

Social

- Society Drop-outs
- Exploit the social need
- Popular figures

Why People Join Cults?

Spiritual

- "Satisfy" spiritual needs
- Takes advantage of failed teaching in church
- Many were former Christians

Brainwashing

Ross Silke-*Recognizing a Cult or Semi-Cult*

1. They control your mind
2. Steal your dreams, desires, goals and refocus on the leader
3. Make you unable and render incompetent to make decisions

Brainwashing

Ross Silke-*Recognizing a Cult or Semi-Cult*

4. Take your worldly belongings and wealth
5. Is persistent in recruitment
6. Take your freedom
7. Misdirect your understanding

Semantics of a Cult

- “the language used to achieve a desired effect on an audience especially through the use of words with novel or dual meanings”
- “You interpret it your way, I’ll interpret it mine.”

Semantics of a Cult

•Proof-Texting

- A single biblical verse cites as a justification for a theological argument or position (WDTT)

Semantics of a Cult

Proof-Texting

the method by which a person appeals to a **biblical text** [or passage] to prove or justify a theological position without regard for the context of the passage they are citing. (*theopedia.com*)

Cult	Term	Cult Definition	Christian Definition
Mormonism	God	Many gods and goddesses	one Triune God
Jehovah's Witness	Jesus Christ	Not god, created by Jehovah Jesus is Michal the archangel	God the Son, second of Trinity Creator of all

Cult	Term	Cult Definition	Christian Definition
Christian Science	Sin	Illusion, error, not real	Disobedience to God
New age	Salvation	Becoming one with the universe God	Reconciliation with God by means of Christ's atonement and resurrection

Characteristics of a Cult

Cults emerge always with a "new prophet" who leads the people. They are also called "messiahs, apostles, sole channels of truth"

- Central Leader
- Believe and Promote "new" revelation

Characteristics of a Cult

They justify their existence outside of the traditional/contemporary church by saying the catholic (universal) church as departed from the true faith and they alone can lead the people back.

- Alter the Bible

Characteristics of a Cult

They promote prophecy, signs, and wonders

- Prove themselves anointed
- Deuteronomy 13:1-3

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences

Titus 1:9 {A church leader-v.7} ⁹ He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences - **Trinity**

God

All cults have a distorted view of God and deny the Holy Trinity

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences-**Trinity**

Jesus Christ

- False teaching about Christ
- Jesus was "God-like"
- Deny Atonement through the cross
- Many deny bodily resurrection

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences-**Trinity**

Holy Spirit

- Deny existence of H.S. altogether
- Some say the H.S. is one of several gods

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences—Salvation

- No one is taught that salvation is possible through faith.
- Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences—Salvation

Believe we are not saved based on:

1. **Baptism – 1 Corinthians 1:17** For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences—Salvation

Believe we are not saved based on:

2. **Works – Titus 3:5** he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences—Salvation

Believe we are not saved based on:

- 3. **Keeping the Law – Romans 8:3³** The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

Characteristics of a Cult

Doctrinal Differences – Eschatology

Heaven and Hell

- *Heaven is a state of mind*
- *Hell is non-literal*
- *No Teaching of Glory of Heaven*
- *No Hell for unbeliever*
