

May 1, 2005  
Shepherd's Community Church  
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Selected Scriptures

“Growing in Your Relationship with the Lost World: *Cults*”

**INTRO: As long as I sincerely believe “something” won’t that be good enough to get me into heaven?**

- John 14:6; Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:12
- Warnings against false teachers: Dt. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; Mt. 7:15-23; 24:23-24; Mark 13:5-6; 13:21-22; 2 Cor. 11:14; Gal. 1:8-9; Col. 2:8-9; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 4:1-2; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-5.
- Cult members are not our \_\_\_\_\_! (2 Cor. 11:14) We should speak to them with gentleness and reverence (1 Peter 3:15).
- Acts 20:28-30; Mt. 7:15; 10:16; Lk. 10:3
- “Counterfeit”
- What about 2 John 7-11?

## **I. Cult Defined**

The original use of the word “**cult**” comes from the Latin word “**Cultus**” which means **worship**. It was used of any person or group that had an object of worship.

- Webster’s: “a system of religious worship with a strong admiration of, or devotion to, a person or thing.”
- “A group of religious people who follow teachings and practices that deviate significantly from historic Christianity and the central doctrines of the Bible.”
- “A group bound together in an intense devotion to a person, ideal or thing; and which has a system of beliefs that is contrary to Scripture and the Christian faith they claim to represent.”
- “A group of people gathered about a specific person’s interpretation of the Bible... from a theological viewpoint, the cults contain not only a few major deviations from historic Christianity, they paradoxically continue to insist that they are entitled to be classified as Christians.” (Walter Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, MN. 1985, p.11)
- “A cult is a group of people who follow the teachings of a leader, group of leaders, or organization, which (system) denies (either implicitly or explicitly) one of the constitutive (i.e., defining) doctrines of the historic Christian faith as recorded in the 66 books of the Bible.”

## **Common beliefs of Cults:**

1. **Deify man** - Teaching that man may become God, or is a part of God. Man needs to be a part of a certain group or church to learn a new revelation or knowledge to progress to godhood.

2. **Humanize God** - Some groups deny that God is eternal. Some believe in many gods, or that all is god (pantheism). Other groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses teach that God's nature or state of being must be understood and reasonable to the human mind to be true. In other words, if finite man cannot understand something about God then it is not true. This technique subtly elevates man's mental ability to that of God.

3. **Minimize or eliminate sin** - The biblical concept of *sin* is not taught, or is completely eliminated by some groups. They teach that man can overcome his sinful nature and that evil is a part of the physical and not the spiritual. This is seen in Christian Science, Mind Science, Religious Science, and New Age groups.

4. **Minimize the importance of the Bible** - Most cults use “anointed” information, books, magazines or scriptures. These are believed to be just as or more important than the Bible. These are often times indispensable in understanding the Bible. Some groups strongly discourage their members from reading the Bible alone; telling them the group is the only one that can rightly interpret the Bible. Others use the Bible with their own unique interpretation unknown ever in church history or align themselves with what was considered heresy in the past. Meanings that are biblical are changed to their own personal interpretations, which support their teaching, rather interpreting through a historical, grammatical, cultural, or contextual approach which reveals the original intent of the author.

5. **A different salvation** - Many cults teach a “grace plus works” salvation. Many teach that man possesses at least some ability to earn eternal life by their own works or by grace perfected through their works. Salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on Calvary is denied. The cross is not sufficient. A system of good works, dictated by the group, helps the members earn eternal life. Membership in their organization or church is usually a requirement for salvation in most of these cults.

6. **A different Jesus** - Virtually all cults deny the deity of Jesus Christ. They teach that Jesus is not the true God manifest in human form but something less, such as a created being, an angel, a prophet, an ascended master or just “a god” (secondary to The God).

7. **A different Spirit** - Most cults teach that the Holy Spirit is not God but an impersonal force or energy that emanates from God to perform certain functions, much like the energy flowing from a battery to start a car. Some teach that it permeates everything and we can breathe it in rather than the Spirit being a person who is characterized as having a will, and who is able to be grieved and resisted.

8. **The only true church** - The one mark of a cult that is most common is their claim to be the only group or church ordained by God. They alone speak for God on earth today teaching that all others have lost the way and that they are a remnant of the “true church.” God directs only their organization, or church.

- The bottom line of what constitutes a fatal or destructive cult is a group that presents “**another Jesus,**” or “**another gospel**” (2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; Acts 20:28-31; Matthew 24:24).

## II. Christianity Defended (see Discipleship I notebook)

### A. The Bible is \_\_\_\_\_!

- Every cult in some way reduces the absolute and final authority of the Bible.

- But what does the Bible claim for itself?

*The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly. (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, p. 127)*

- Psalm 19:7-11
- Proverbs 30:5-6 (cf. Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19)
- Hebrews 1:1-2
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- 2 Peter 1:1-4
- Jude 3

### B. Jesus is God – the Second Person of the Trinity [The Person of Christ]

- 1 John 4:3; Matthew 24:24
- The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah (Luke 2:11; 1 John 2:22); that He is one in nature with the Father (He is God – John 20:28; John 1:1); that He was truly incarnated as man (Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 2:5); that He rose bodily from the dead (John 2:19; Luke 24:39); that He will return at the end of the age to judge all men (Mt. 24:30-31; Rev. 1:7; 19:11-15; 20:11-15); and that He saved us from our sins on the cross (Acts 4:12; Romans 5:9-11). Denial of any of these essential teachings is a denial of Christ Himself!
- John 8:23-24

#### Trinity:

**Is the Father God?** The Father is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures and about this point there is little debate (John 6:27, 17:3; I Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 1:3).

**Is Jesus God?** Jesus Christ is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures (Matt. 28:9, John 1:1-4, 1:14, 5:17-18, 8:58, 10:30-33, 12:37-41 cf. Isaiah 6:9-11; 20:28-29, Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; Col. 1:16-17, 2:8-9, Php. 2:10-11, Heb. 1:8; 1 Co. 8:4-6, 1 Tim. 6:15, Titus 2:13; I John 5:20; Rev. 1:8, 1:17-18, 17:14, 19:16, 22:13-16). This fact of Jesus deity was spoken clearly by Himself and recognized as a claim to be God by the Jewish leaders without Jesus apology or correction (Matt. 26:63-65; John 5:17-23, 8:58-59, 10:30-39, 19:7). The Scriptures are also clear that Jesus was fully a man (Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:16, Rom. 8:3, I John 4:2).

**Is the Holy Spirit God?** The Holy Spirit is clearly called God throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament He is all-powerful (Micah 3:8; see also Acts 1:8, Rom. 15:13,19), eternal (Heb. 9:14) all-

knowing (Isaiah 40:13-14; see also 1 Cor. 2:10), creator (Gen 1:2; Ps. 104:30) and all present (Psalm 139:7). In the New Testament He is also clearly declared God (Acts 5:3-4, see also John 14:16, 2 Co. 3:16-18). The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but a person who can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), resisted (Acts 7:51), insulted (Heb. 10:29).

**Are the Father, Son, and Spirit different Persons?** Though one God, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct persons, The Father and Son are two persons in frequent salutations (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philemon 3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3) as well as in other Scriptures (John 3:17, 5:31-32, 8:16-18, 11:41-42, 12:28, 14:31, 17:23-26, Gal. 4:4; I Jn 4:10). The Scripture is also clear that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not the same person (Luke 3:22; John 14:16, 15:26, 16:7; I John 2:1). Likewise, the Father is not the Holy Spirit (John 14:15, 15:26; Rom. 8:11, 8:26-27; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; Gal. 1:1).

**What is the Trinity?** While the word “**Trinity**” does not appear in Scripture, the concept very clearly does. Church father Tertullian (155-220 A.D.) was the first to use the word “Trinity.” To say that God exists as a Trinity does not mean that there are three Gods, or that one God merely manifests Himself as either Father, or Son, or Holy Spirit on various occasions. To say that God exists as a Trinity is to say that **there is one God with a unified essence who exists in three equal persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** By person it is meant that God thinks, feels, acts and speaks. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) summarizes the doctrine by saying, “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.”

- See Isaiah 48:16b; Mt. 3:16-17; 28:18-20; Rom. 14:17-18; 15:16; 1 Cor. 2:2-5; 6:11; 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Eph. 2:18; 3:16-17; 4:4-6; Col. 1:6-8; 1 Thess. 1:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:13

### **C. Salvation is by Grace through Faith alone! [The Work of Christ]**

- Cults will always add some kind of **work** to faith in Christ in order to be saved.
  - Note: because of this most cults will teach that you can never know for sure that you will be saved. This is a direct contradiction of **1 John 5:13** – “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may \_\_\_\_\_ that you have eternal life.”
- John 6:29 -
- Romans 3:19-28
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Hebrews 7:25-28
- Acts 15
- Galatians
  - 1:6-9
  - 2:16
  - 3:1-6
  - 3:24
  - 5:2-4

### **Suggestions for witnessing to people in cults:**

1. Know what you believe! Study the Scriptures. Take a basic doctrines class. Review Discipleship I notebook.
2. Study some of the major things they believe that contradict Scripture. Purchase the pamphlets: “The Spirit of Truth and The Spirit of Error” parts I and II, Moody Press. Read other good books on cults: Walter Martin, “The Kingdom of the Cults” and “The New Cults”; Robert & Gretchen Passantino, “Answers to the Cultist at Your Door”; Anthony Hoekema, “The Four Major Cults”; M. Thomas Starkes, “Confronting Popular Cults”; etc.
3. Be gracious and loving. Speak to them with gentleness and reverence. They are not your enemy! Speak to them of where the “cult” has gone wrong in its teaching (not accusing them but the cult itself).
4. Keep the conversation on the essential issues: the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.
5. Share your personal testimony and your absolute assurance that you have eternal life.
6. If you don’t know an answer to one of their questions simply let them know that you will study further and find an answer for them.
7. Pray that the Lord would open their eyes to understand the truth of the Gospel and be saved!

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What would you say to a person that tells you, “It doesn’t matter what you believe about God as long as you are sincere”? What Scripture would you use?
2. Why do you think people join cults? Why do you think the majority of cult members have some background in Christian churches? What could be done in our church to help prevent people from being led astray by cults?
3. In order to recognize counterfeits you need to thoroughly study the real thing. Right now on a scale of 1 to 10 how well do you know the Bible and the major doctrines of the faith? What could you begin doing this week to get a better grasp on the historic Christian faith?
4. How can the evangelism training from “The Way of the Master” (using the 10 Commandments to confront the conscience and show people their need for salvation) help us in witnessing to people in cults?