

The Christian Arsenal

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How to Spot a Cult

Discernment Checklist

For the past 30 years I have looked at cults and different religions with a view of trying to understand them to be better able to witness and to communicate the Christian Faith. I found, over the years, it is quite impossible to know everything about all religions or even a minority of them. While it is good to be aware of different religions and cults, it is much more valuable to be in touch with the truth of the Bible. This is advice from not only my own experience but from many who work with and have written books on the subject of cults.

Many are surprised by what they can discern once they become familiar with the Word of God and what some call the key tenets of the Christian faith. Knowing what the Bible says about God, man and salvation will enable a person to spot any cult within just moments of talking to a person or reading their material. Being familiar with the truth is the best protection against deception a Christian can have.

The following 18 point checklist can be used as a guide to help in the examining of a teaching, doctrine, movement, ministry, or alleged spiritual gift. It can also serve as a guide to the learning of some of the key points a believer should be watching for when discerning whether an organization or particular teaching is not adhering to Biblical standards.

1. Does it attempt to attack or change the person, work or Deity of Christ?
2. Is salvation by a new unique non-scriptural method, works, or something other than faith in Jesus and His work on the cross?
3. Is membership with this group required for salvation?
4. Is the Doctrine of the Trinity compromised?
5. Does it attempt to change the teaching about the person, Deity, and/or work of the Holy Spirit?
6. Is the Holy Spirit credited with revealing things that are contrary to what He has already revealed in the Bible?
7. Is God being made to seem more like man?
8. Is man is being made to seem more like God?
9. Is someone or something being presented as an authority equal to or superior to the Bible?
10. Is the teaching or interpretation of one person or select group of people seen as the only acceptable material or guide by which you are to study the Bible?
11. Does it edify the Church and build up the body of Christ or does it seek to give glory to a person or organization?
12. Are claims and/or prophecies made that cannot be substantiated or that have failed to come about?
13. Are terms commonly used in "Christianity" redefined and given new "non-biblical" meanings?
14. Is the teaching or activity consistent with the New Testament?
15. Is this a matter of tradition, culture and emotions or is it Bible?
16. Does this group or teaching force interpretations of scripture passages that make the Bible contradict itself?
17. Does movement or group produce healthy well-balanced growing Disciples?
18. Is the teaching, movement or group focused on the entire message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ or are they focused only on a few specific issues? (For example end time prophecy, deliverance ministry, healing campaigns, prosperity teachings etc.)