

What constitutes a cult?**(II Timothy 4:1 – 5, Key verse 3)****“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;”**

Intro: There are number of verses in the New Testament that address warnings about false teachers. We should not assume that this is solely about what many consider or will state are main-line denominations. False teachers exist misusing and abusing the Word of God by taking things out of context, or perverting the truth with lies and deceptions to purposely mislead people, **II Corinthians 4:1 – 5**. Paul marveled that the Galatians had been so easily misled or as He states it, “bewitched” in **Galatians 3:1**, and that they had been so easily duped in **Galatians 1:1 – 6**.

I had a friend who was an active member of a Nazarene church who joined the Jehovah’s Witnesses’. He was not anchored in the Word of God and therefore he and his wife were easily lead astray and wanted Peg and I to hear them out.

My college professor made a statement I haven’t forgotten since the first time I heard it, “If we don’t stand for something, we’ll fall for anything!” Jesus stated one of the best means for any Believer in Christ to keep from being duped by these false religions, cults if you will, and it is found in the Gospel of **John 8:31 & 32** – “**Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**”

While may not think they are susceptible to heresy, if we are not in the Word of God for ourselves, then we have no real foundation upon which to stand when it comes to what truth is or is not! So, what constitutes a cult.

I. Four characteristics practiced by cults – II Corinthians 11:13 – 15.

A. These verses are in response to the earlier **verses 1 – 4**.

1. The point Paul makes here is that false teachers offer an _____ to God’s truth.
2. It may sound lofty, seem exactly what one has been looking for, and so they successfully prey on the ignorant, the hurting, the lonely or the disenfranchised.

B. And so here are four characteristics the define a cult and its operation.

1. _____ **control** – such things as,
 - a. A group member who _____ the where, and how about every aspect of one’s life and isolates them from family and friends. (In most cases!)

- b. They regulate your diet through forced fasting.
 - c. They _____ a person and deprive them of sleep.
 - d. They practice financial exploitation, manipulation or dependence.
 - e. They impose rigid rules and regulations.
2. _____ **control** -
- a. They practice deception (by deliberately withholding or distorting information, and/or lying)
 - b. They minimize or discourage access to non-cult sources of information (TV, internet, former members, and so on).
 - c. They make extensive use of cult-generated information and propaganda (YouTube, newsletters, movies and other media).
3. _____ **control** -
- a. They require members to internalize the group's doctrine as truth (black-and-white, good vs evil thinking).
 - b. They change a person's name and identity.
 - c. They use loaded language and clichés which constrict knowledge, stop critical thoughts, and reduce complexities into platitudinous buzz words.
 - d. They employ hypnotic techniques and drugs to alter mental states, undermine critical thinking and age-regress the member.
4. _____ **control** -
- a. They manipulate and narrow the range of feelings—some emotions and/or needs are deemed as evil, wrong or selfish.
 - b. They teach emotion-stopping techniques to block feelings of homesickness, anger, doubt.
 - c. They make the person feel that problems are always their own fault, never the leader's or the group's fault.
 - d. They instill fear, such as fear of the outside world, enemies, leaving or being shunned by the group.
5. This information is gleaned from Dr. Steven Hassan's book - 'Bite Model of Authoritarian control'

II. who are the main cults today –

- A. Why is any of this important? It is important because today's youth have no genuine anchor in which to give their lives purpose and meaning. They have no established ideology and a mind void of understanding is mind easily manipulated.
- 1. As parents and grandparents we need to be rooted and grounded in absolute truth.
 - 2. Our young people need to be rooted and ground in absolute truth.
 - 3. **John 17:17** – Jesus said “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
- B. Three mainline cults.
- 1. **Mormonism** is a cult as it _____ essential biblical theology concerning God, the Trinity, and the person and work of Christ.
 - 2. **Catholicism** contains cult practices such as the co-redemptrix of _____ and Mariology, and others elevated to worship such as St. Jude, St. Bartholmew, the infallibility of the pope, infant baptism to a few of many.

- C. **J. W.'s**, deny the Trinity – (**Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 3:16 & 17; I John 5:7**), and they deny Christ's eternality – (**John 8:58; 17:5 & 24**); They were founded by a man named Charles t. Russell who was Charlatan, a liar and deceiver.
- D. Scientology, Seventh Day Adventism, as well.
- E. Then there are the middle-Eastern cults which abound from Satan worship to ancestral worship, animal and nature worship.
- F. The best way to know if something is of God or not is to try the spirits by comparing them with the truth of God's Word. There are reasons God commands us to "study" His Word and meditate therein. Cults prey on the ignorant, the hurting, the lonely and so when one finds themselves going through difficulties, don't abandon, don't give up on God. Stay close knowing He will - **Hebrews 13:5** - "***Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.***"
- G. Cults are dangerous, in our life time we have seen -
1. Jim Jones cult (People's Temple) and the Jonestown Massacre in Guyana in which in the final days the cult members were forced or volunteered to drink poison, and 909 people, men, women and children.
 2. David Koresh of the Branch Davidians cult in which 80 people including 20 children died in the fire.
 3. They are dangerous in this life and are eternally lost to hell.