

The Marks of Cults

The gospel defines clearly that salvation is found in the one and only unique God-man, Jesus Christ, and that only through Christ's efficient and sufficient death and resurrection is salvation found (Jn. 3:16, 36; 14:6; Rom. 5:12-21; Gal. 2:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Jn. 4:1-6). The Bible also warns against false gospels that will lead one away from Christ and salvation (2 Cor. 11:3-15; Col. 2:8-23; 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The question is what is a cult? One must be careful not to ignorantly follow a false belief or to falsely accuse a group of being a cult. First, a cult is not just any religion with beliefs different from Christianity. A religion different than Christianity is where their of God's nature is completely different and unique from the Christian concept of God. A cult is a person or group that proclaims the same God but changes certain aspects of who he is and how one knows him.

In David Breese's book *Know the Marks of Cults*, he lists twelve marks of cults to help one identify whether a group that claims to be Christian is a cult. One does not have to meet all twelve marks to be a cult, but certainly the more marks it meets, the more certainty one has that it is a cult.

Defective Christology: Denies some aspect of Christ; His deity, humanity, origin, or the union of his two natures.

A False Basis of Salvation: Teaches that eternal life depends upon works other than faith in the atonement of Christ on the cross.

Uncertain Hope: The issue of a cult member's salvation is unknown and is based on one's obedience to the leader and their doctrine.

Extrabiblical Revelation: They deny God's Word as the only source of authority. They add or elevate their own teachings as authoritative.

Special Revelation: They claim new and continual, exclusive revelation given to them through visions.

False Messianic Leadership: The leader is seen as the only interpreter of Scripture appointed by God and therefore should not be disobeyed.

Denunciation of Others: The members are taught that their community is the only true group and that all other groups are false.

Doctrinal Ambiguity: Their "doctrine" tends to be unclear or continually changing.

Segmented Biblical Attention: They tend to focus on one verse or passage of the Bible to the exclusion of others, violating the context.

Syncretism: They combine different teachings from differing systems of belief, which results in a new teaching or belief system.

Enslaving Organizational Structure: They demand total commitment from their followers that usually destroys their individual will.

Financial Exploitation: The leader strongly implies that money given to the cause will grant blessings, powers, and salvation.