

Cult - continued

limit daily activities. We believe that we should be totally committed to God (Matthew 22:37), but we do not condone or condemn in one's daily life more or less than what is already condoned or condemned in the New Testament.

Regarding one's future outlook in life, cults tend to preach secret plots of coming destruction and they prepare their own for the so-called "Battle of Armageddon". We preach nothing more or less about the future than what you find in the New Testament (Matthew 25:31-46).

The label of "cult" against some Churches of Christ is slanderous. The Lord's church is not a cult! It is not a secret group that seeks to control your mind contrary to your will or (more importantly) the will God. It has been demonstrated here that the Lord's church is not a cult. The Lord's church does not have the four common characteristics of a cult. Anyone who charges otherwise, is either ignoring the evidence presented here, or is committing slander.

Friend, know the difference between a true "cult" and the Lord's church! Don't be fooled! The Lord's church always welcomes your investigation. We keep an open Bible, an open schedule, and an open mind to study with anyone, anytime, about any religious matter. Come visit us and investigate the Warfield Blvd. church of Christ. - *Chris Reeves*

Sentence Sermons

- It's not just a question of who is right, but what is right.
- Your character is like a fence, it can either be strengthened or whitewashed.
- Our giving should be a grace, not a disgrace.
- People typically lose their religion by a slow leak, not a sudden blowout.
- Pray without ceasing.

Warfield Blvd. church of Christ
290 Warfield Blvd.
Clarksville, TN 37043

Website
WBCOC.org

Assembly Times
Sunday: 9:30 am, 10:30 am, 6 pm
Wednesday: 7 pm

Everyone Is Welcome!
For More Information Call
(931) 647-1324

Published and Edited By
Chris Reeves
(615) 389-3250
chrisreevesmail@gmail.com
TheGoodTeacher.com

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Is the Church of Christ A Cult?

Maybe you have heard of a religious cult. What is a “cult”? According to the *Collins World English Dictionary*, a cult is “a quasi-religious organization using devious psychological techniques to gain and control adherents.” The word “cult” began to be used c. 1617 to describe “a particular form of worship” (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). Later, a cult was a “religious group held together by a dominant, often charismatic individual” (*American Heritage Cultural Dictionary*).

Some common religious groups in the United States widely considered as cults are the following: The Unification Church (1940’s), Church of Scientology (1950’s), The Way International (1950’s), Charles Manson (1960’s), Anton Lavey and the Church of Satan (1960’s), Family of Love (1960’s), Church of Bible Understanding (1970’s), The Raelians (1970’s), Jim Jones and the People’s Temple (1970’s), Elizabeth Clare Prophet and the Church Universal and Triumphant (1970’s), Order of the Solar Temple (1980’s), the Cross Roads and Boston Movement or International Church of Christ (1980’s), David Koresh and the Branch Dividians (1990’s), and Heaven’s Gate (1990’s).

The question I want to explore here is this: Is the Church of Christ a cult? This question is sometimes asked of us and we need to be ready to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15). In fact, Churches of Christ are actually listed in the “Index of Cults and

Religions” of Watchman Fellowship (watchman.org/index). There are also websites devoted to claiming that Churches of Christ are actual cults or close to it (see jesus-is-savior.com/F and chocd.org). Additionally, there are religious groups using the name “Church of Christ” that bare the marks of a cult like Church of Christ Jesus (ICC), Church of Christ Consciousness (Center of the Light), and Church of Christ with Elijah Message.

We, as members of the local church of Christ meeting on Warfield Blvd, must not judge or be judged a “cult” by appearance only or hearsay; that would be unjust and unfair (John 7:24; 15:18-21; Acts 24:5). We must always appeal to facts and the truth of God’s word. We must also be on guard for anyone (myself included) who would lead others astray through false teaching (Matthew 7:15; 24:11,23-26; 2 Peter 2:1-2). Just like the presence of a counterfeit dollar bill implies the existence of a true dollar bill, so the presence of a counterfeit church (cult) implies the existence of a true church like the one, true church we find in the New Testament.

As we try to answer the question, “Is the Church of Christ a cult?”, let us consider four issues related to cults. There are four characteristics to look at to determine if a religious group is a cult. They are: (1) authority, (2) scripture use, (3) daily living, and (4) future outlook. Let us now examine each of these to see if we are a cult?

Regarding authority, cults tend to follow

self-styled, charismatic and unproven leaders. We follow Jesus Christ only (John 20:30-31). Cults tend follow leaders with unproven, latter-day, extra-biblical revelations. We follow the New Testament only (John 16:13; Galatians 1:6-9; Colossians 2:8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 John 9; Jude 3). Cults tend to follow their leaders and not question them. We always question and test everything that is taught by everyone (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

Regarding the use of scripture, cults tend to have doctrinal ambiguity. They are unclear at times in what they say and believe. We believe the truth can be known (John 8:32; 17:17). Cults tend to discourage personal study and investigation. We encourage personal study of the Bible (John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 1 Timothy 4:13). Cults says that “special revelations” and “special discoveries of truth” have been given to their leaders. We say that you can know and understand the truth already given you in the Bible (Ephesians 3:4; 5:17). Cults often twist and distort Bible texts or use specialized texts like the *New World Translation* of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. We use traditional Bible versions and believe all Bible texts should studied and kept in their original context (2 Peter 3:16).

Regarding daily living, cults often create total isolation for their followers, engage in secret and sometimes immoral practices, deny one’s privacy, use psychological manipulation, and heavily control or