

10 Characteristics Of Cults

Christian-Like Cults And Religious Organizations That Control Their Followers



I will begin by stating that God has not given all Christians the gift of discernment. It can be a gift that other Christians might not appreciate in their peers, especially if that discernment results in things being exposed that other Christians don't want exposed. However, the proper exercise of true discernment should result in other Christians being benefited by the fact that error in doctrine - or in practice - is revealed to people who have been deceived. The exercise of biblical discernment is for the good of the body of Christ. Our sin nature that wars against the spirit, can cause us to negatively react against other Christians who exercise discernment concerning things that we are saying or doing that are unbiblical. It is the duty of all Christians to exercise discernment graciously and to receive instruction and correction graciously.

I bring this next point up because I think it can often relate to people who are common victims of false teachers, false prophets and cult leaders... I was in a Pentecostal church for three years and learned several things about the kind of people in those churches, not that they were all alike or all had the same weaknesses or strengths. However, a lot of what I saw taking place in a pentecostal church (Assembly of God to be precise) are things that allow cult leaders to develop and to take advantage of their followers. Many of the points below were observed during my three year period at the pentecostal church mentioned above and I have since observed in people who have been seriously deceived by their church leaders. Anyone who has observed the many "name it and claim it" and prosperity preachers on television will see commonality between those false teachers and the characteristics listed below.

Characteristics Of Cult Leaders And Their

Followers:

1. They typically love praise music and worshipping God with great emotion – this can be a very good thing for which I admire them. But at the same time, this form of “worship” can tend to attract people who are more prone to be manipulated by emotional psychological tactics.
2. They tend to base their Christianity on experiences or on writings outside of the Bible more than upon scripture and this can get them in trouble at times. The Assembly Of God had its own printing facility in Springfield Missouri called the “Gospel Publishing House” which ensured that AG churches were getting the Pentecostal view of doctrine that they wanted taught in their churches.
3. They tend to accept “sign” gifts without enough discernment and without enough examination.
4. They use bible verses to silence people who seek to discover truth and expose error. Their standard way of trying to silence Bereans (biblical truth seekers) is to say: “You may be committing blasphemy of the holy spirit by questioning the prophet ... or the prophecy ... or the tongues speaking ... or whatever the pastor just said”.
5. They also try to stop any examination of error or false teachings of church leaders by saying “Touch not the Lord’s anointed”. This is just an excuse used to silence truth seekers and it is UNBIBLICAL, in view of the Bible’s admonition to test the spirits, prove all things, and earnestly contend for the faith – and in view of how Paul publicly rebuked Peter at one point in time (Galatians 2:11). In fact, if someone tells you not to listen to anyone who does not agree with their church or organization, you need to do the opposite, and check out what “detractors” have to say about that group, to be certain that you get both sides of the story.
6. Many of their followers like to be lied to, or so it seems (perhaps some of those followers don’t really know the Lord). They like to be promised healings and prosperity and other **self-centered** blessings from God. True believers should be preoccupied with OTHERS, with holy living, and with sharing the gospel, not with “what can I get from God”. We should take our “cue” from Paul who said that he would rather “glory in his infirmities”. I personally suffer from arthritis pain and nerve pain caused by back problems and I prefer to be content with my health situation as it is a good reminder to me that this corrupt body will be replaced someday by an incorruptible body by my glorious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, which is far more than I deserve anyway. I minister to handicapped people and disabled people when I can, and rather than thinking that they need healing from God, I remind myself, that what they really need is 1. Salvation and 2. someone like me to minister to them. The more we minister to people whose problems are greater than our own, the more we will be focused on what God wants us to focus on, namely HIM and OTHERS.

7. Many followers of false teachers are trained to be very defensive when anyone dares to point out anything wrong with their leaders. They may think they are defending God himself or a very special representative of God at the very least.

8. Their followers tend to be taken advantage of by their leaders who often have very have charismatic personalities and are very good at using emotions to control their followers, including getting donations from them.

9. Their followers get so caught up in these ministries that it becomes very difficult for them to back out for various reasons... primarily because they feel they have invested so much time, money and trust in these ministries and ministers, and they don't want to admit - even to themselves - that they were taken advantage of. And often, they have been conditioned into thinking it is a grave sin to question their leaders and equally sinful to leave their church or ministry.

10. When people do leave churches and ministries run by very controlling leaders, the remaining members are very often instructed to shun those "outcasts", especially if those leaving spoke openly about leadership errors and false teachings. This threat of "excommunication" often causes people to stay where they are at, especially if they have developed close relationships with church or ministry members.

Conclusion

If YOU want to be 100% certain that you have not been deceived or taken advantage of, you will want to listen to OUTSIDE sources of information from people who have nothing to gain by exposing a particular church, ministry or cult leader's errors and false teachings. These people care about the Lord's sheep and don't like them being taken advantage of. I am one of these people and I don't like seeing people taken advantage of either. If truth really matters to you - and I hope it does - you will want to check out the videos listed below, and others about identifying religious cults and in particular, Christian-like cults. — *RM Kane*

Videos about identifying cults and cult leaders

The Marks of a Cult

13 Phrases Used By Cult Leader

Top 10 Signs of a Cult (2018 Edition)

Top 7 Signs of a Cult Leader

Recognizing Cult Talk & Patterns
