

Cults

Week 27

January 29, 2006

Mark Edward Sohmer
mark@sohmer.net

Fellowship Bible Church

notes and other materials available at:
<http://cults.sohmer.net>

What Is a Cult?

- November 18, 1978, in northern Guyana, 913 followers of Jim Jones committed mass suicide at "Jonestown" after murdering a US Congressman.
- March 27, 1997, in California, 39 followers of Marshall Herff Applewhite (aka "Bo" and "Do") committed suicide in an attempt to join a spaceship that allegedly was hiding behind the comet Hale-Bopp.

Message?

- Cults are unusual and bizarre.
- Cults are rare.
- *Normal* people don't have too much to be concerned about.

Why We Are Concerned:

- Cults do not always appear unusual and bizarre.
- Cults are sadly not rare.
- *Normal* people ought to be concerned.
- Cults say something about God that isn't so.

Acts 17:16

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry"

As Christians, our hearts ought to be stirred up when we see abominable errors!

What Is a Cult?

(secular definition)

- a system of religious beliefs and ritual;
also : its body of adherents
- a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious; *also* : its body of adherents

What Is a Cult?

(Biblical definition)

There are a number of doctrinal characteristics of cults. One will typically find an emphasis on new revelation from God, a denial of the sole authority of the Bible, a denial of the Trinity, a distorted view of God and Jesus, or a denial of salvation by grace.

Geisler, N. L., & Rhodes, R. 1997. *When Cultists Ask : A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Mich.

Twofold Error of Cults:

■ Wrong Theology:

- adding to Word of God
- authority other than the Word of God
- subtracting from Jesus
- manipulation of salvation

■ Manipulative Practices:

- dividing the loyalty of the follower
- fear of searching outside the cult

Wrong Theology:

The difference between the cult and true Christianity lies in belief. Though the average cult member will confess a belief in Jesus Christ, a reliance on the Bible as his authority, and devotion to God as a lifestyle, in reality, all of the terms have been redefined. What appears on the surface to be Christian deviates greatly from what the Scriptures actually teach concerning the key doctrines of the Christian faith.

Why Do Cults Exist?

One noted cult researcher observed that the cults are "the unpaid bills of the church." The church has failed to doctrinally train its members; it has failed to make a real moral difference in the lives of its members; it has failed to meet people's deepest needs; and it has failed to provide people with a sense of belonging. The failure of the church is wide and deep, and this has made it easy for the cults to flourish.

Geisler, N. L., & Rhodes, R. 1997. *When Cultists Ask : A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Mich.

Why Do Cults Exist?

Indeed, if the Christian church were more zealous in true evangelism, the world would have less cultic proselytizing.

Geisler, N. L., & Rhodes, R. 1997. *When Cultists Ask : A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Mich.

Is This True?

Do cults exist because of the failure of the church?

or, said another way...

If the church did better, would cults go away?

God's Sovereignty!

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion... For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Romans 9:15,17-18

God's Sovereignty!

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.

Mark 4:11-12

God's Sovereignty!

But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as *appeareth* this day.

Deuteronomy 2:30

God's Sovereignty!

O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Jeremiah 10:23

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

Proverbs 16:9

God's Sovereignty!

The LORD hath made *all things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Proverbs 16:4

What if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory

Romans 9:22-23

We Learned Because Of Cults:

- The deity of Christ JW, LDS, CS, CoS
- The Trinity JW, LDS, CS, CoS
- The physical resurrection of Christ JW, LDS, CS, CoS
- How to test Bible versions JW
- Monotheism JW, LDS, CS, CoS
- God is eternal JW, LDS
- The Holy Spirit is a person JW, LDS
- Baptism LDS, ICOC, RCC

We Learned Because Of Cults:

- Levels of Heaven LDS
- Works salvation JW, LDS, ICOC, CS, RCC, CoS
- The priesthood LDS, RCC
- The temple LDS
- Authority JW, LDS, ICOC, CS, RCC, CoS
- The true Church JW, LDS, ICOC, CS, RCC
- Eternal security JW, LDS, ICOC, CS, RCC

We Learned Because Of Cults:

- Biblical test of a prophet JW, LDS
- nature of man LDS, CS, CoS
- nature of sin CS, RCC, CoS
- Purgatory RCC
- Communion RCC
- The Canon JW, LDS, CS, RCC, CoS

**Not a bad seminary-level
theology course!**

Information Overload:

We've spent 26 weeks looking at:

- the prophecies of the Watchtower
- the evidence against the Book of Mormon
- the history of the International Church of Christ
- the proclamations of the Council of Trent
- et cetera

How are we to remember all that???

Information Overload:

Obviously it is valuable to have information about anyone we witness to, but...

No information is more important than BIBLICALLY presenting the gospel!

Of course there is great value to be able to say to a Jehovah's Witness, "The Watchtower claimed to be a prophet in the April 1, 1972 edition, and made false a false prophecy in the August 15, 1968 edition," **but not more valuable than Biblically sharing the gospel!**

Information Overload:

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

(Galatians 3:24)

We must use the Law of God to show that God is righteous and we are not. Then the coming judgment of Christ becomes a fearful thing to the unbeliever. Only then will an unbeliever cling to Christ as his only hope.

The 2nd Commandment is a great part of the Law to use with cultists.

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

To make an important point, I am going to teach you how to witness Biblically to four groups of people: a Moslem, a Roman Catholic, a Homosexual, and an Intellectual. So listen very carefully; this is a wonderful principal.

Okay, I'm sitting in a plane. There's a gentleman sitting next to me. I say, "Hey, how 'ya doing?"

He says, "I'm fine."

I say, "Where you from?"

He says, "India."

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

I say, "Oh. Did you get one of these? It's a gospel tract."

He says, "I'm a Muslim."

I say, "Oh yeah, would you consider yourself to be a good person?"

He says, "Oh yes, a very good person."

I said, "Well, can I ask you a few questions to see if that's true?"

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

He says, "Yeah. Go ahead."

I said, "Have you ever told a lie?"

He says, "Yes sir."

I said, "What does that make you?"

He says, "a liar."

I said, "Have you ever stolen something?"

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

He says, "Yes sir."

I said, "What does that make you?"

He says, "a thief."

And I say, "Jesus said whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already with her in his heart. Have you ever done that?"

He says, "Yes sir, plenty of times."

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

I said, "Well, what's your name?"

He says "Orem."

I said, "Well, by your own admission, Orem, you're a lying, thieving, adulterer at heart and you've got to face God on Judgment Day."

And I shut him up under the law. I make him tremble before the God of creation. I let his conscience accuse him. I make room for the Holy Spirit to convict him of sin, which is transgression of the Law, righteousness, which is of the Law, and judgment, which is by the Law.

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

I tell him he's an enemy of God in his mind through wicked works, that the wrath of God abides upon him, that he is by nature a child of wrath. I leave him with no hope; no means of escape, hanging by a spider's web over the pit of hell, and then I say, "Oh, there is one name under heaven whereby you may be saved, and that is Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He came to this earth, God in human form, perfect, sinless man who gave His life as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. And all your sin was laid upon the Savior. And neither is their salvation in any other. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

Now if you don't like that principle, if you don't like that method, for want of a better word, you can find a website with 10,000 pages of questions and answers when speaking to Moslems. That's serious.

But personally I don't believe that you have to bury your head in the Koran to witness to a Moslem. You just have to bury your head in this. This tells us how to do it: God's Word.

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

So I'm going to share with you how to share your faith with a Roman Catholic. And of course you and I know that there are millions of Roman Catholics and Protestants who have never been born again. They are merely Roman Catholics, or Protestants, that have never found a place of Biblical repentance.

So I'm sitting on a plane; I say, "Hey, how are you doing?"

He says, "Oh, good, good."

"So, where you from?"

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

He says, "Minnesota."

"Oh yeah? What do you do for a living?"

He says "Oh, such and such."

"Oh yeah? You get one of these? This is a gospel tract."

He says, "Ah, I'm a Roman Catholic."

"Oh yeah? Do you consider yourself to be a good person?"

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

See, I used to panic when someone says "I'm a Roman Catholic." "Oh, no! Now I'm gonna have to deal with papal infallibility, the confessional, praying to the saints, purgatory, transubstantiation, and Mariology! Oh!"

But now, folks, I go deaf! I don't hear him say "I'm a Roman Catholic," I just say, "Oh, do you consider yourself to be a good person?"

He says, "Yeah, I'm a really good person."

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

"Yeah? Ever told a lie? Ever stolen something?" And I shut him up under the law. Bring him the knowledge of sin. Bring him to the foot of the blood-stained cross.

Now I'm going to teach you how to witness to a homosexual.

I'm sitting in a plane. I say, "Hey, how you doing?"

He says, "Good."

I say, "Where you from?"

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

"San Francisco."

"Oh yeah? What do you do for a living?"

"I own such and such."

"Did you get one of these? It's a gospel tract."

He says, "I'm gay."

I say, "Oh yeah? Do you consider yourself to be a good person?"

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

He says, "Yeah, pretty much."

"Ever told a lie? Ever stolen something? Ever look with lust? Ever use God's name in vain? And I shut him under the Law, and bring him to the foot of the blood-stained cross.

I'm going to teach you how to witness to an intellectual. This is how to reach an intellectual.

I'm sitting in a plane. The man next to me has got so many letters after his name I think he's a mailman.

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

I say, "How you doing?"

He says, "good."

"Where you from?"

"Such and such."

"Oh yeah? That's good. Did you get one of these? It's a gospel tract."

How To Witness To 4 Types of People:

He says, "Ah, I'm Evolutionist, and I lean strongly towards a controversial spontaneous regeneration of the quantum embryonic theory of cosmological physics."

I say, "Oh yeah? You ever told a lie?"

You say, "That's too simple!"

It is simple, folks! It's really simple. The Bible says don't go away from the simplicity that's in Christ. What we do is complicate the issue. We bring up subjects that are irrelevant.

Information Overload:

Obviously it is valuable to have information about anyone we witness to, but...

**No information is more important than
BIBLICALLY presenting the gospel!**

Information Overload:

The information we learned over the past 6 months has great value:

- gave us secondary information to use with those in cults (primary info is the Biblical gospel!)
- strengthened our doctrine
- gave us information to use with those considering joining a cult
- helped give us a burden for those in cults
- helped define our mission field

Information Overload:

So, should we try to remember the things we've learned?

Absolutely!

Should we allow our inability to remember everything stop us from speaking with cultists?

Absolutely not!

Conclusion:

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16)

As Christians, our hearts ought to be stirred up when we see abominable errors!

God is In Control!:

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:
and be ready always to give an answer to
every man that asketh you a reason of the
hope that is in you with meekness and fear"

(1 Peter 3:15)

God is In Control!:

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

(John 6:37-40)

God is In Control!:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

(John 10:27-30)

God is In Control!:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself...being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"

(Ephesians 1:3-9,11)

God is In Control!:

God is sovereign.

God is in control.

It is our privilege and God's glory
for Him to use us as
His ambassadors!