

**To the Point
Biblical Truth!**
Rev. Tom Parrish

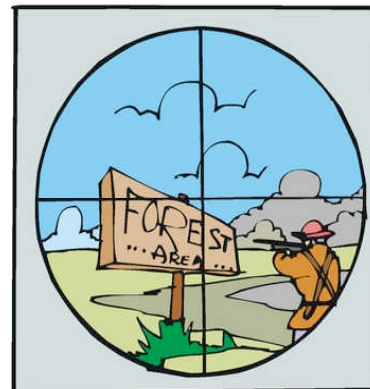
What Makes Something a Cult?

Key Question:

What factors make a belief system stray outside historic Christianity?

Cult: a belief system, often resembling genuine Christianity, but deviating on foundational issues. Built around one or two charismatic figures who have strong control over the members.

Cults appear to be on target but are just enough off center to miss the target in the end.



The contrast between Christianity and Cults

Foundational Christianity

1. One God revealed in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit
2. God the Father: Creator of the Universe, sent His only Son into the world as the Messiah.
3. Jesus is God the Son who died for our sins and rose bodily from the dead.
4. God the Holy Spirit enlightens us to the truth about Jesus and sustains us in our faith.
5. Call to personal belief and response to Jesus as Lord and Savior.
6. The Church is the Body of Jesus Christ in the world.
7. The Bible is God's revealed Word.
8. Every believer is a minister of the Gospel.
9. Every believer can go directly to the Lord for insight, answers, help.
10. Christianity is built around the person of Jesus Christ, not the human church leader.

Characteristics of Cultic Groups

1. The group displays excessively zealous and unquestioning commitment to its leader and regards his belief system, ideology, and practices as the truth, as law.
2. Questioning, doubt, and dissent are discouraged or even punished.
3. The group is elitist, claiming a special, exalted status for itself, its leader(s) and members.
4. The group has a polarized us-versus-them mentality, which may cause conflict with the wider society.
5. The leader is not accountable to any authorities beyond him or herself.
6. Members are expected to devote inordinate amounts of time to the group and group-related activities.
7. Members are encouraged or required to live and/or socialize only with other group members.
8. Jesus is often viewed as less than God even though cult leaders use Christian language.
9. Strong emphasis on end times and the cult being the only refuge against the coming apocalypse and gaining salvation.

Whenever Jesus is turned into anything but the one and only savior and salvation is anything but grace through faith in Jesus, it has become a cult!