

What is a Cult and the Occult?

(The information below is summarized from numerous expert sources and the occult.)

The two words, “cult and occult”, sound similar. But while different, they both pose a similar spiritual threat to people by appearing to be something they are not. Both can cause its victims to miss God’s loving and free provision for their lives through Christ, and cause them to face a tragic, Christless eternity. There are many nice, friendly and caring people in the cults and the occult. God loves them, so much that Christ died for them. They are not our enemy. Our enemy is Satan and his deceiving spirits.

CULTS. In popular usage, “cults” are religious groups predicted by the Bible (2 Peter 2:1) that deviate from the central, historic truths of biblical Christianity and God’s revelation in Christ. Some cults are offshoots of ancient pagan religions, have no similarity to Christianity, and are easy to identify. Others falsely try to imitate Christianity, often using the Bible and Christian terminology, and are more difficult to distinguish. These latter cults typically exhibit one or more of the following traits:

1. **They may consider Jesus Christ as not equal to God the Father, but something less.** But Jesus said, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), and Paul said that Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). The Bible is repeatedly clear that Jesus is deity, and when on the earth, He was God in human form. We can be redeemed from our sins only because God’s own perfect blood (in Christ) was shed for our perfect cleansing.
2. **They may typically reject the clear biblical revelation of a triune God, sometimes called the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – one God, not three, but manifest in three Persons.** The Bible refers to all three as Persons, yet One. A mystery, but truth.
3. **They may have their own “sacred” book in addition to the Bible.** And although they usually deny it, these books conflict with and are given precedence over the Bible.
4. **They typically reject the wonderful biblical truth that salvation is a “free gift” from God by grace through faith alone (this truth glorifies God and not man).** Instead, cults and all other “religions” falsely say that people must “earn” their salvation by certain works and deeds, often works that will perpetuate the cult (this glorifies man rather than God).
5. **Cults are often exclusive, centering around a strong leader (or late founder) who has the only “true” interpretations of Scripture.** Whereas Christ came to give us freedom, (Galatians 5:1), cult members are in bondage to that cult leader, with the threat that leaving the cult will cause a loss of salvation.

Thousands of cults exist, but here are some major ones listed in most cult reference books: Mormons, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Science, The Worldwide Church of God (Herbert W. Armstrong), The Unity School of Christianity, The Way International, The Children of God, Scientology, The Unification Church, Unitarianism and the new Age movement (which is also occult).

If involved in any cult- run, don't walk, to the nearest exit, and find a Christ-centered, Bible-believing church. Also, apply the four-step process which follows toward the end of this page.

References: There are many excellent books available on cult. Four are: *The Kingdom of the Cults*, by Dr. Walter R. Martin; *The Deceivers*, by Josh McDowell and Don Stewart; *Cult Watch*, by Dr. John Ankerberg and John Weldon; and *Larson's New Book of Cults*, by Bob Larson.

THE OCCULT. The word "occult" refers to what is hidden, concealed, or secret. The occult involves the spirit world- but the spirit world of **darkness**. The occult is particularly deceptive because the spirit world is very real. Practitioners are dealing with reality – but **dark, forbidden and evil reality**.

There are two kinds of spiritual reality. The first is God's spiritual kingdom of truth and light where Christ is King, the nature of which is "*righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 14:17), and where God's holy angels dwell, worship, and serve Him. The second is the world of Satan (a fallen angel); a world of deceit and hopelessness, void of God, where other fallen angels (**demons**) who hate God, work to advance this evil kingdom under their leader, Satan.

The Bible does not reveal a "dualism", or co-equal forces of good (God) and evil (Satan). Satan is totally subject to the sovereign omnipotent Creator. But God has given Satan certain authority to operate in the earth as a result of man's sinful fall. He operates through the minds and wills of fallen humanity, and he has constructed a complex web of many evil schemes, including occult practices, and even "religions" to deceive and snare people by appearing to offer them supernatural powers and knowledge. The Bible says that deception will increase in "the last days" before Christ's return (1 Timothy 4:1). But the Bible also says "*The Son of God appeared for this purpose: that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John 3:8). Those who trust and obey Jesus Christ have protection and victory through Him.

Any degree of occult involvement can produce problems of oppression, depression, despair, hopelessness and many physical problems, sometimes bringing self-destruction, even death. **Demonic influence** can produce obsession, phobias, bizarre behavior, violence, homicide and sexual perversion. Worse, it can **deceive a person into eternal darkness**. The occult is a form of idolatry and a sin expressly forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

Here are just a few of the many occult practices: **astrology, “fortune-telling”, witchcraft, Satanism, clairvoyance, séances, spiritism meetings, use of mediums or “channeling”, ouija boards, eastern religions, reincarnation, voodoo, involvement with “psychics”, and the New Age Movement.**

If you now or have ever been involved with any cult or occult practice, you can be set free of it and any symptoms it may have brought by doing the following: 1) **CONFESS** sincere faith and commitment to Christ; 2) **CONFESS** the cult and occult sins to God, naming and forsaking each one; 3) **RENOUNCE** Satan, in Jesus’ name, and command him and his demons to depart; and 4) **RECEIVE** and claim your liberation by faith, without doubting, trusting in the authority and total faithfulness of God and His Word.

References: *Understanding the Occult*, by Josh McDowell and John Stewart; *Inside the New Age Nightmare* by Randall N. Baer; *The Coming Darkness* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon.