

Cults and Isms of Today:

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Outline Handout 1: Introduction

I. Understanding the Cults

- A. The Need
- B. The problem
 - 1. The problem of terminology
 - 2. The problem of discernment
 - 3. Analogy of disease

II. What is a Cult?

- A. Sociological definition:
- B. Theological definition:
 - 1. Broad:
 - 2. Narrow:
 - 3. Cult vs. "Cultic"
- C. What is the difference between a cult and a world religion?
 - 1. A World Religion usually has an origin completely independent of Christianity.
 - 2. A World Religion usually has little in common doctrinally with Christianity.
 - 3. A World Religion usually has a significant number of adherents around the world.

III. How Do We Know Spiritual, Theological, or Doctrinal Truth?

- A. Knowledge in General
 - 1. Does one have to be a Christian in order to know the truth of anything?
 - 2. Does one have to be a Christian in order to know any truths about God?
- B. Knowledge of Spiritual, Theological, or Doctrinal Truth
 - 1. We don't know the truth by the "lifestyle" of the group 2 Corinthians 11:13-15
 - 2. We don't know the truth by pragmatism.
 - a. Just because something enhances my life, does not mean that it is of God. Jeremiah 44:17
 - b. Just because a movement flourishes, does not mean that it is of God. Acts 5:34-40
 - 3. We know the truth by the Word of God. Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 4:16; 1 John 4:1-3

IV. It's Not Unloving to Disagree.

- A. A doctor and his patient
- B. Jesus sometimes disagreed with people. Matthew 22:29
- C. To Judge or not to Judge? Matthew 7:1 vs. 1 Cor. 14:29
- D. Unity must be unity of the faith. Ephesians 4:13, 15

V. Why Are There Cults and False Religions?

- A. Man suppresses the truth that is known. Romans 1:18-23
- B. The presence of cults and false religions is evidence of man's flight from God, not man's search for God. Romans 3:10-12