

CULTS & CHARISMATICS

Discipleship II - Chapter 10

CULTS AND CHARISMATICS

The influence and the growth of cultic and charismatic movements in America today is phenomenal.

Christians and Non-Christians alike remember the 1978 tragedy at Jonestown, Guyana, under the leadership of Jim Jones. Yes, few observers realize just how prevalent and pervasive the growth of the cults has become. In Larson's publication, The Book of Cults (Tyndale, 1982), hundreds of cults are listed. Ronalds Enroth, a noted cult expert, said, "Within the past two decades especially, there has been increasing evidence of a widespread and clash with our familiar Judeo-Christian tradition" (Fundamentalist Journal, Oct. 1985). The alarming growth rate of the cultic movement and the inroads that cults have made into genuine Christianity, demand that the movement be examined by true believers.

Likewise, because of its sheer size alone, the Charismatic movement should be understood by those who would follow Christ. In 1980 "19 percent of all adult American (over 29 million) considered themselves to be Pentecostal or Charismatic Christians."

THE CULTS

Virtually everyone has seen the bald, flower peddling cultist, but not all cult members are so easily distinguishable. Therefore, we should be aware of some characteristics that identify the cults. These characteristics generally include:

1. **A denial of the deity or other attributes of Christ.** The cult may teach that Christ was a good man or a great teacher, or even "a god," but it will not teach that Jesus Christ is the only true God and the only way of salvation (I John 2:22-23; John 14:6).
2. **The elevation of other teachings or writings to the level of Biblical authority.** Cults believe that God continues to reveal Himself through special revelation today. In violation of II Timothy 3:16, cults teach that men must have more than the Bible to become truly mature.
3. **A dictatorial leadership.** Cult members are often taught not to disagree with or question their leaders. All disagreements are considered

disobedience. Leaders frequently assume roles equaling that of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). In fact, one cult leader goes by the name of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Rajneesh was the Indian-born man's birth name. Bhagwan Shree is the name he has given himself. This name literally means "Sir God."

4. **A denunciation of all other beliefs and religious systems.** The implication of the cults is, "We are the only group that is right." Therefore, over 700 cults claim to be the only true way to God (John 14:16)
5. **Secrecy.** Instead of proclamation, cults are marked by protectionism. Sealed campgrounds, sealed messengers, and secret rites are marks of the cults. How unlike Christ's marching orders found in Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 10:42.

Cults do not differ from true Christians simply on minor points of doctrine. They are marked by their radical departure from Biblical revelation and their unabashed denial of Christ's Deity.

THE CHARISMATICS

As we view the modern Charismatics movement, we must be careful to differentiate between the old-time Pentecostal and the modern Charismatics. The Pentecostal movement began in earnest in the early 1900's. It remains a distinct branch of Christianity which includes the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World.

The modern Charismatic movement actually traces its roots back to 1960 when Dennis Bennett, the rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, claimed to receive the gift of tongues. Mr. Bennett determined to stay in the Episcopal Church and adapt his new-found beliefs to his episcopalian doctrine. Thus, the Charismatic movement has come to be a movement that crosses the denominational boundaries. Presbyterians, Catholics, Methodists, Baptist, Lutherans, and many others lay claim to the Charismatic experience.

The great error of many Charismatics is the tendency to elevate an experience to the level of Scriptural authority. The Charismatic experience has become a binding force. It binds together people who hold to varying doctri-

nal positions. Modern Charismatics emphasize a personal experience with Jesus Christ (salvation) and the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (tongues and healing). A common cry of the Charismatic when confronted with Scriptures that seem to contradict his practice seems to be, "I don't care what the Bible says, I've had an experience!"

As you do your Bible Study, you will be directed to verses which deal specifically with the matter of tongues and healing. As you study, remember that these verses are not man's opinion. These verses contain the directives of God's Word.

FROM YOUR READING

1. How many adult Americans claimed to speak in tongues by 1980?
_____.
2. What are five great marks of a cult?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
3. What is the great error of the cults? _____

4. How does the Charismatic movement differ from the Pentecostal movement? _____

5. What is the great error of the Charismatic? _____

GROUP TIME

As of 1980, over _____ million Americans claimed to be Pentecostal or charismatic.

CULTS

1. Matthew 22:42 asks, “What think ye of ____? whose Son is He?”
The answer to this question will help to differentiate between the true Christian and the cultist.
2. List three groups that have a low view of Christ.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. What was Paul’s desire for anyone who preached any other Gospel than Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:6-8)? _____

CHARISMATICS

1. What are the four “sources of authority” for man’s life?

2. I Corinthians 14 presents five rules for speaking in tongues. They are:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
3. What are the three possible sources of tongues if they are not biblically practiced?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

4. Notes on I Corinthians 13:8-11 _____

5. Notes on “healing.” _____

BIBLE STUDY

The following material is given for your personal Bible study and Christian growth. The basic assignments for the course are given and a special “achiever” assignment is suggested for those who desire to go the extra mile. Before you begin, pray that God will allow you to really grow through this endeavor.

SCRIPTURE ASSIGNMENT

1. The answer to the cults is found in the question, “What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?” (Matthew 22:42). You need to be able to answer this question Biblically. Find out Who Christ was and is by examining the testimonies given below. Who did these people claim Christ was?
 - a. Peter (Matthew 16:15-16) _____
 - b. Simeon (Luke 2:25-32) _____
 - c. Paul (Philippians 2:5-11) _____
 - d. Jesus Christ (John 4:25-26) _____
2. What did Paul desire for anyone that preached any other Gospel than Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:6-8)? _____
3. The answer to the Charismatic is found in the question, “What is your final authority?” If the Bible is the final authority, there are some specific rules that the modern Charismatics should familiarize themselves with. What rules do the following verses contain for those who would speak in tongues?
 - a. I Corinthians 14:27 _____

- b. I Corinthians 14:28 _____

- c. I Corinthians 14:34 _____

4. There are a few more interesting lessons about tongues in I Corinthians 14. For instance:
- a. For whom were tongues a sign (vv. 22-23)? _____
- b. What was more important to Paul, tongues or teaching (vv. 18-19)?

5. Does the Bible teach that God heals every sickness (II Corinthians 12:7-10)? _____ How do you know? _____

6. What can physical infirmity do for a Christian? _____

Achiever's Question

Read James 5:14-16 and describe the difference between these Biblical instructions and what you know of the work of the modern "Faith Healer."

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Old Testament Books: Learn the names of the five major prophetic books this week. (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel)

Verse: I Corinthians 13:1

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Achiever's Verse: John 17:22

And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one.

PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT

1. In the fly-leaf of your Bible write, "Rules for tongues - I Corinthians 14." Then turn to I Corinthians 14 and underline verses 27, 28, and 34.
2. Next to I Corinthians 14:27 write, "#1 - It must be by no more than two or three at a time."
3. Next to I Corinthians 14:28 write, "#2 - It must be interpreted."
4. Next to I Corinthians 14:34 write, "#3 - Women are not to speak in tongues in the church."
5. In the fly-leaf of your Bible write, "Healing - II Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:14-16." Then turn to these two passages, underline them, and write any comments you feel are appropriate in the margin