

# Religious cults



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Religious Cults ? Religious Cults: The Popular View  
What exactly are religious cults? With such a large number of religious organizations and movements in the world today, its important to understand what we mean when we start labeling certain groups. The dictionary defines cult as “ a system of religious worship or ritual”; “ devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc.” According to this definition, any believer in any god is a member of a cult.

In the popular media, a cult is typically defined as a religious sect whose members are “ controlled” by a manipulative organization or individual. This kind of cult is usually portrayed as deceptive, requiring absolute loyalty from its followers. Members are often removed from their prior lives altogether, including their jobs, homes and families. The Hare Krishnas, Sun Myung Moons Unification Church, and Moses David Bergs Family of Love are some popular examples of this type of cult. Religious Cults: The Christian Perspective  
Christians define religious cults from a different perspective. Simply, a cult is any religious group that deviates from the fundamental teachings of the historic, Bible-based, Christian faith as confirmed through the ancient ecumenical creeds.

Generally, if a religious organization follows Jesus Christ, but denies or distorts essential Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, the resurrection, or salvation by grace alone, that organization is considered a cult. Traditional examples are the Mormons, Jehovahs Witnesses, Christian Science, the Unity School of Christianity, and the Way International. All of these groups add to the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, some add to the Bible, such as Mormonisms The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of

Great Price. Similarly, Christian Science has added Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures. The Jehovahs Witnesses have actually changed the text of the Bible to make it fit their version of doctrine. Religious cults add their own rules, rituals and ceremonies — their own works of righteousness to the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

These organizations officially state that Jesus sacrifice is sufficient for salvation, but then they go on to say that their version of “ works” must be added to the simplicity of His grace in order to warrant true salvation. These groups will often use James 2: 26 (“ faith without works is dead”) to establish that works are part of salvation. Although it is true that faith without works is dead, it isnt the works that save us. Works are merely the result of a truly changed life through a saving faith in Jesus. A true Christian does good works because he has received the free gift of salvation, not to get salvation.

Religious Cults: Why Does It Matter? Groups like the Mormons and Jehovahs Witnesses reject their categorization with other “ religious cults”, because the emotional reaction to such a label often gets in the way of mainstream conversion. Actually, contrary to their historical foundations of deeming Christendom to be misguided, evil or apostate, most of the aforementioned cults are now claiming to be Christian themselves. They declare the Divine authority of the Bible, but they manipulate the scriptures to suit their own purposes. Although they claim to serve Jesus Christ, and may use Christian terminology, their doctrines are dangerously different. Why is this an issue? Why cant we all just get along? Because these organizations dont lead to the Jesus Christ of the Bible, but to another Jesus and another gospel message altogether. If these religious groups are based on bad history, or bad

doctrine, or bad motives, then we must respectfully expose these shortcomings.

If these religious cults are presenting false teachings, then multitudes of people are being led astray.