

## **World Religions and Cults Synopsis**

There are a number of characteristics that occur with cults and collections of thought such as these, including:

- They are started by an individual who develops a new set of ideas about spirituality, salvation, or life.
- The leaders are strong personalities, charismatic, and persuasive.
- The groups are controlling and make non-verifiable claims.
- They usually have admirable goals like peace and love, but on their own terms by man-made, invalidated means.
- There is financial gain for the leaders.

### ***Scientology***

This was founded by L. Ron Hubbard, a science fiction writer, in 1954 based on one of his books, *Dianetics*. The following summarizes the basic teachings of Scientology.

- Basic intent is to improve and achieve spiritual freedom for oneself and society.
- There are eight dynamics that form the harmony in people's lives. These are the basic urges of people. They are urges to survive as oneself, as a family, as a small group, as mankind, as other life forms like animals, as the physical universe, as the spiritual universe, and as God.
- Their goal is to help people become "Clear" so that crime, mental illness, warfare, and addictions will decrease.
- The basic approach to accomplish this is through a series of spiritual audits using E-meters, which are instruments that measure the electrical resistance of the body.
- By doing this, one can move from the Preclear (PC) stage to the Clear stage to the Operating Thetan (OT) stage. The Operating Thetan stage is the ultimate stage of thought and life – OT's can leave their body and mind and fly around outside of themselves.
- Salvation is accomplished through the freedom from the cycle of birth and death by achieving reincarnation.
- There is no heaven and no hell.
- To get from the PC stage to the Clear stage, one must audit out the effects of assaults in the womb, trauma at birth, and other assaults and injuries in one's life.
- To get from the Clear stage to the OT stage, one must conquer the spirits of those that were killed by the hydrogen bombs 95,000,000 millions years ago brought to Earth by Xenu to control the overcrowded planet.
- Jesus and Buddha were only a little beyond the Clear stage.

*Interesting things to think about with respect to Scientology:*

- Less crime, addiction, and warfare are all noble pursuits, but recognize that they are achieving it through very unconventional, non-scientific means without any embracing of God.
- The religion is founded by a science fiction writer. Yes, a science fiction writer. Hubbard was able to formulate a series of "sci-fi", non-verifiable stories whose history can not be disproved.

### ***Christian Science***

Founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1854 based on one of her book *Science and Health and Key to the Scriptures*. She charged \$300 for 12 healing sessions and died a millionaire in 1912. Her basic teachings include:

- The Trinity is Life, Truth, and Love.

- Jesus was not God and did not die.
- There is no death, no sickness, no sin, and no devil. Good and evil do not exist.
- Matter, sin, and sickness are illusions.
- True healing comes from true belief.
- Salvation comes from finding the true reality of understanding, as revealed in Christian Science teachings.

*Interesting things to think about with respect to Christian Science:*

- If peoples' senses are a mirage, then why should they believe our eyes when we read *Science and Health and Key to the Scriptures* and our ears when we hear the claims of Mary Baker Eddy?
- If sickness is an illusion, why do practitioners go out to Christian Scientists in attempts to heal them?
- If sin is not real, then why does the Bible say that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23)? Also, consider the following verse, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us," (1 John 1:8).
- If man is incapable of death, then why do people die?
- Mary Baker Eddy claims that Jesus did not die, when the Bible clearly states he did. (Rom. 8:34; Rom 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:13; 1 Cor. 8:11; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 1:7)

***Islam/Muslim***

Islam or the Muslim faith was created by Muhammad, who claimed to be Allah's greatest and last prophet. The basic doctrines of Islam include the following:

- There is only one God, Allah. There is no trinity.
- If your good deeds exceed your bad deeds, and you sincerely believe in Allah, you may go to heaven.
- Muhammad's message supersedes all other prophets including Jesus.
- It is accepted to beat wives on their third offense (admonish them on the first offense, do not share a bed with them on the second offence).
- In Paradise, voluptuous women await men for their sensual gratification.

As with any major world religion, a good litmus test is to investigate how women are portrayed and treated. In Islam, the following are called for in the Quran.

- Men have more divorce rights than do women.
- Men can marry up to four women, but women can not.
- Men get twice the inheritance of women.
- It is accepted to beat wives on their third offense (admonish them on the first offense, do not share a bed with them on the second offence).
- In Paradise, voluptuous women await men for their sensual gratification.

*Interesting things to think about with respect to Islam:*

- It is not good to enter a house from the back.
- King Solomon learned the speech of birds.
- Jesus spoke in the cradle and said, "I am indeed a servant of Allah: He gave me revelation and made me a prophet."
- Ants can speak.
- Muhammad advocated lying.
- In the Bible, Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus performed the ultimate demonstration of love for humanity. What is the greatest act of love that Allah performed? The Quran states that Allah does not love non-Muslims, so how can Allah be a God of love? Jesus loves everyone, not just his followers.

- How do Muslims know that they are doing enough to get to Heaven? And, how do they know that they are doing it with sincerity? How do they feel that if they are fully sincere they only *may* get to Heaven?
- A number of contradictions exist in the Quran including the following:
  - Different parts of the Quran state that man was created from blood, clay, dust, and nothing.
  - The first Muslim was claimed to be Muhammad, Abraham, Jacob, and Moses in different places.
  - Pharaoh was killed by drowning in one place and did not drown in another place.
  - Wine consumption is called “an abomination” in one place and then encouraged in other places.

### ***New Age Movement***

The New Age Movement has many subdivisions, but is it generally a collection of Eastern-influenced metaphysical thought systems. To them, Christians are narrow-minded because we believe that Jesus is the only way to God. There are assorted theologies with common threads of tolerance for everyone. Teachings include:

- Everyone can have their own perception of reality and truth and that is ok.
- Evolutionary Godhood – the next step in evolution is spiritual, not physical, where people can achieve a god-like existence, including astral projection where your soul can leave your body and travel around, contacting spirits to speak through you, and using crystals to purify your energy systems.
- Reincarnation is central to most New Age thinking.
- Global Unity – there are three levels of ultimate harmony we need to establish – Man with Man, Man with Nature, and Man with God.

*Interesting things to think about with respect to the New Age Movement:*

- Man’s unity with nature is in opposition to the Scriptural teaching of man's superiority over animals (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:19). This does not mean that man gets to abuse what he is over, but man is given the responsibility of caring for and being stewards of God's creation (Gen. 2:15). We will be held accountable for our stewardship of nature. New Agers have a name for the Earth, Gaia, who is worshiped by some. This is in opposition to Exodus 20:3 which says we are not to have any other Gods before God.
- The Bible clearly states that man is not divine and does not have deity and direct unity with God. Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8 state clearly that we are fallen and in a state of sin – separation from God. It is only Jesus that can reunite us with God (John 14:6), not any form of meditation or reincarnation.
- If people are allowed to believe their own realities, then why do they contradict each other? If my reality was to go on red lights and stop on green lights, there is not going to be much harmony and unity between my reality and everyone else’s. If my reality was that murder is ok, there again would not be much harmony and unity between my reality and others’. You can not say that 1+1=2 and 1+1=3 at the same time. There is absolute truth.

### ***Mormon/Church of Latter Day Saints***

In 1820, at the age of 14, Joseph Smith (the son of a treasure hunter father and superstitious mother) claimed to have seen Jesus and God. When he was 17, he claimed to have seen Moroni, who was supposed to be the son of Mormon and told him that he had been chosen to translate the book of Mormon. The book was written on golden plates hidden near where Joseph was then living in Palmyra, New York. In 1830, at the age of 24, Joseph published the Book of Mormon. Joseph was killed in jail where he was serving time for a number of crimes. After his death, Brigham Young led the remaining Mormons to Salt Lake City, Utah. Here is a sample of the teachings of Mormonism:

- The Book of Mormon is considered “more correct than the Bible”.

- Jesus' sacrifice alone does not provide salvation. Belief in Joseph Smith and adherence to the Mormon teachings give you salvation.
- There are many gods. Men have a chance to become Gods and rule on their own planet, if they are good Mormons. As a means to procreate the cult, if men have at least five kids, they are given advanced status to have their own planet as a god.
- Polygamy is practiced. Joseph Smith had 27 wives, Brigham Young had 28 wives. For men who become Gods, they can choose which wife to take with them.
- God used to be a man on another planet.

*Interesting things to think about with respect to Mormonism:*

- Mormonism teaches that current gods help create future gods. The gods of today were created by past gods and so on. This process, by simple logic, can not continue without end. Yet, in Mormon teachings it does. This is faulty logic. The God of the Bible is an uncaused cause, a God who has always been, not created by anything or anyone. He is "I am".
- The golden tablets, according to the descriptions in the book of Mormon were around 230 pounds each, yet Joseph Smith was able to carry them by himself.
- No one has ever seen the golden tablets, but they are claimed to be at the Mormon headquarters in Salt Lake City, UT.
- If God and Mary has physical intercourse, how was Jesus born of a virgin Mary?
- The Book of Mormon, "the most correct book of any on earth" does not contain essential Mormon teachings.
- Almost 4000 changes have been made to the Book of Mormon, in an attempt to better align it with the Mormon teachings. These include significant doctrinal changes, not simple new translations.

***Jehovah's Witness***

In the late 1800's, Charles Taze Russell developed his own ideas on doctrine and began publishing a magazine which became *The Watchtower*. Russell claimed that *The Watchtower* was the only correct way to interpret the Bible, so he was able to control what people read from the Bible and what they thought about it. The Watchtower organization now claims to be the prophet of God. Here is a sample of their teachings.

- Salvation comes through good works and sincere effort.
- Only 144,000 people will make the upper Heaven where they will have spiritual bodies.
- All other JW's will make the lower heaven where they will have resurrected bodies that will need to be cared for (fed, bathed, etc.).
- Salvation can be lost, setting up a competitive culture within the followers to see who gets one of the 144,000 spots.
- The Watchtower is the only channel of God's truth.
- They deny the Trinity, hell, and Jesus as God.
- The cross is a pagan symbol and should not be used.
- The wicked cease to exist.

*Interesting things to think about with respect to the Jehovah's Witnesses:*

- The 144,000 are mentioned in two chapters in the Bible: Revelation 7 and 14. However, these 144,000 are identified during the tribulation period and are literal Jews of the ancient tribes with no Gentiles among them (7:4-8). They are all males and virgins (14:4). The JW states that the usage of Jewish male virgins is figurative, but yet states that the number of 144,000 is literal. They use only what they want from the Bible and what works in their system.
- Why does the New World Translation insert the word Jehovah in the New Testament when there are absolutely no Greek manuscripts that have it in there?

- They have made a number of false prophecies, including incorrectly predicting the return of Jesus many times over (1874, 1914, 1915, 1925).
- They prophesized that a house that the organization bought in San Diego in 1929 would be “forever at the disposal of the [JW] princes on earth.” The house was sold 13 years later in 1942.

### ***Seventh Day Adventist Church***

William Miller in the early 1800’s started making predictions that Jesus was coming back in 1844. When this didn’t occur, some of his followers claimed to have had a vision of Jesus moving into a heavenly sanctuary and convinced the following that Jesus did indeed come back in 1844, but not all the way to Earth, only into a sanctuary outside Heaven. Their teachings include:

- The dead do not exist any more – they are in soul sleep. At the “Investigative Judgment” in the future, everyone will be judged. The wicked will be annihilated.
- There is no eternal hell.
- Worship must be done on Saturday (the Old Testament Sabbath).
- Jesus is Michael the Archangel

### ***Interesting things to think about with respect to the Seventh Day Adventist Church:***

- The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment in the Ten Commandments concerning the Sabbath Day is the only commandment not repeated in the New Testament.
- Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Sunday). Matthew 28:1-7
- The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, the first day of the week. Acts 2:1
- The first sermon was preached by Peter on the first day of the week. Acts 2:14
- Paul instructed the churches to put side contributions on the first day of the week. I Cor. 16:2
- Paul clearly teaches that each person can decide their own day or worship and that we should not judge anyone else with respect to when they worship.

Rom. 14:5-6a: "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord."

Col. 2:16-17: "Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."

### ***Witnessing to someone in a cult***

When witnessing to anyone in any of these cults, or any other, always remember to separate the individual from the set of teachings. Realize that it may be the only set of teachings this person has ever known. Love them like Christ would and does. Don’t make it an argument of “whose God can beat up whose.” Speak their language. Know where they are coming from, including having some knowledge of what they are involved in. Jesus meets people where they need to be met. We need to do the same.

Be in the Word do you can know the Word. Let the Word speak for itself. Remember II Timothy 3:16 says that the Word is useful for teaching and correction. But you must know the Word in order to use the Word.

Make sure you introduce the person to the real Jesus: the one of the Bible who is prayed to (Acts 7:59; 1 Cor. 1:1-2), worshiped (Matt. 2:2, 11; 14:33; 28:9; John 9:35-38; Heb. 1:6), and called God (John 20:28 - Heb. 1:8). If the person does not accept Jesus immediately, at least the seeds of truth will have been planted and he will have been exposed to the true Jesus. A good place to start your research into these and other cults is [www.carm.org](http://www.carm.org), the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry.