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# Cults and Caterpillars

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**N**OTED FRENCH NATURALIST Jean Henry Faber spent years studying the processionary caterpillar, so named for its tendency to blindly follow the caterpillar in front of it. In an unusual experiment, Fabre placed a number of these little caterpillars around the top rim of a small flowerpot. He put a large clump of pine needles—their favorite food—in the pot where they could easily crawl to it.

You can probably guess what happened. The caterpillars followed each other around the rim for a full week before starving to death, with an abundant supply of their favorite food only inches away.

When it comes to some things, it can be dangerous to play the childhood game of “Follow the Leader,” no matter how convincing the leader may be. What if your religious leader is leading you in the wrong direction? The results will be eternal no matter whom you choose to follow.

## Thoughts to Remember:

- ♦ What if your religious leader is leading you away from Bible truth? How can you identify truth and error? The best way to recognize a counterfeit is to be thoroughly acquainted with the genuine. The best way to recognize a false christ, a false messiah, is to know the true Messiah.
- ♦ “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9). Satan, the great deceiver, is trying to condition minds to follow the beast power, a false religious power at the end of time. We can see his plan working in how cults and spiritual philosophies are growing explosively today.
- ♦ With all the false religions and charismatic, persuasive teachers, we must know how to distinguish false leaders and teachings from true ones. We’ll look at the life of Christ to see how it compares with that of cult leaders and see how the Bible outlines ways to avoid deception.
- ♦ What is a cult? For a Christian, a cult is any group that does not accept Christ as Lord and Savior and the Bible as the foundation of faith. There are five sure ways to identify a cult.
  - A cult will substitute a human teacher for Jesus. Whether it is a “Christian” cult or a New Age cult, human authority will take the place of the Bible and God’s authority. Not only that, but many cults teach specifically and openly that you and I are God ourselves. “Look to me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and

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there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22). This teaching includes three erroneous ideas:

- **There is no death.** The Bible says the wages of sin is death; and if there is no death, there's no need for a Savior.
- **Man is God.** Here again, there's no need for a Savior. Without God and His law, there is no moral responsibility, no accountability, no judgment, and no sin.
- **Salvation is knowledge of yourself.** Here we have no need for a cross, for repentance or for a Savior. It is said that knowing yourself is the highest peak of spiritual experience and that salvation comes from within. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world. Religious leaders who have substituted themselves for Jesus include David Koresh, Jim Jones, the Order of the Solar Temple in Switzerland, and Japan's Aum cult.
- **A cult will substitute human teachings for the Bible.** Jim Jones claimed his teachings were above the Bible, and 911 people who had given up their minds to him committed suicide on his say-so. David Koresh taught that all women were his wives. Anytime we substitute human words or wisdom for God's Word, we are on dangerous ground. "Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). If we reject God's Word, we have no trustworthy way to know truth. People learn Bible truth and say, "But my pastor says..." *It is dangerous* to take the word of a person over the Word of God.
- **Cults work miracles to establish their claims.** Can Satan work miracles? Of course. Not all miracles are from God. "For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24). Jesus performed miracles to relieve suffering, supply people's needs, and teach spiritual lessons. Cult leaders and false teachers perform miracles merely to create a sensation, build fame, and satisfy curiosity. Always compare a miracle-worker's teachings (not his miracles) to the Bible.
- **Cults urge group conformity.** In this, they violate individual consciences. Jesus encouraged individuality. In the early church, no single leader dominated the rest. Everything was done through group prayer with others of faith. "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15)—God vs. Satan, not God vs. a person.
- **Cults attempt to establish heaven on earth.** New Age cults teach of the Age of Aquarius, and doomsday cults talk about Armageddon. Many cults attempt to bring about Armageddon or utopia through their own actions (usually destructive). But it's not the job of human beings to usher in the great endtime events. Our task is not to bring about the end of the world; our privileged task is to tell people the good news that Jesus is coming again, bringing with Him eternal peace, joy, and love. All times and events are in the hands of God.

## The "take-home" message for you . . .

♦ We will be saved by following Jesus, not a cult leader; by following Christ's teachings, not the teachings of a human being. "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Christ and His Word will always lead you to truth.

## Just between you . . . and God:

♦ Do you know Jesus? Are you determined to listen to His voice alone? He is the only one who should ever have control of your mind, through the Holy Spirit. His voice is the only one that will lead you on the road to heaven. New Age theories don't lead to repentance, but God and His Word do. Choose today to follow Him alone!

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