

How to Leave a Cult

I am an ordinary born-again brother of Christ, and I have trusted in Him for over ten years. Thanks to His mercy and grace. Having spent some of that time working for what the world calls “ministries” and having also worked for reform in various areas of the Church, I think I’m familiar by now with cults. I think I can tell what a cult is and how a cult distorts the Word of God. How it mars the face of Christ. I believe that’s a subject close to all of us.

Now let me also tell you that I rarely use the word “cult” ordinarily. You hardly ever hear me say it in conversation. That’s because I feel it is way overused, and has basically become a ministry cuss word. It’s the church version of the f-word, and is used against anyone you disagree with or against anyone who has standards and rules in their life. This overuse of the word by Christians just gets silly. However, I use it for THIS essay, and a few other prophetic messages, just to turn the pejorative word around and see if it fits those who always use it. Does it fit many of our neighborhood Christian ministries?

Well, when we see the average ministry misleading people about biblical doctrine, that definitely gets into cult territory, at least as the word is liberally used. When we see churches making every effort NOT to understand their own religion, just like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day didn’t understand their own faith, we also enter into cult territory. We see Christians doing their best to imitate the world and worldly aims, often dismissing actual Christian things, as being passé or unimportant. Missing the point of your own religion much like the ancient Jewish leaders, is definitely cult territory. Moreover, when we see ministries of ALL KINDS silencing servants of God who speak the biblical truth, because that truth has become unpopular, we are way into cult territory. Believe me, I speak both from personal experience and study, if you proclaim the truths which have become unpopular today and you do it inside of a ministry, you can bank on one thing: You WILL be threatened, silenced or kicked out. That is what the cult will do. They truly despise the Word of God.

Now the subject of this piece is how to leave a cult, and that’s what I’d like to get to. The first thing people think of when you talk of leaving a cult is the physical act of leaving a church. Should a faithful servant leave their church? If any reform is impossible, that is definitely what you need to do. However, it depends how sunken the situation is. If you think you can make a difference from the inside and bring the group back to the truth, perhaps it’s best to stay and try that. One qualification to think of though is that if you have a family, it is probably best to leave anyway, as you don’t want to expose them to the darker elements of the cult. If the whole church is bad enough, then you should leave even if you are single and find a better church. Drive a long way if you have to. If that’s impossible, then do what you can to start your

own church. It may not be ideally what you should be doing, but at times that course of action is necessary. Either way, get out of the cult.

While physically leaving is an important element, that's not really what I mean by leaving a cult. I speak more of leaving the attitudes, lifestyle and behavior of a cult. Sometimes those attitudes have become so deeply ingrained in the Christian, that even when they leave a worldly church, they continue with the unchristian attitudes, and take them wherever they go. I mean leave the cult by leaving its attitudes and behavior. Come to the truth of Christ, that marvelous life that scares so many of us because it is so radical, because it involves leaving so much behind. That is the only place we will find Christ. That is the Church.

One of the first and most productive ways to get the cult-think out of your head, is to start using all of your time to glorify Christ and grow in Him. To use that time right, you're going to have to make what some people think is a painful cut: cut the television, the movies, the secular music out of your life, as well as much of what passes as literature out of your life. It's got to go. To begin with, you will instantaneously find your life-span has nearly doubled, your evenings doubled, and the sacred space within your Christian heart and mind suddenly clear; it has been cleaned, emptied of garbage and become ready to fill. Pollute yourself with those cheap dalliances no more. Fill your inner being with God.

You can use much of that time in Scripture study of course, reading through books of the Bible, or reading topically. You can read traditional commentaries from various saints to help you gain insight. Today, you can get audio or video sermons of all kinds and lengths, so carefully select some good ones to learn from and enjoy. Your newfound free time -- free of the fantasies and perversions of lost men -- can also be spent filling your soul with Christ's music, the hymns and chants throughout history which saints have uplifted Christ with, you might even say experienced Christ through, praised Him with. There are 500 years of Protestantism and about 2,000 years of Catholic and Orthodox music to draw from, so I don't expect you to get bored, or lack ideas. Fill your time with art work also. If you can draw a picture, or simply turn the written word into artwork as many cultures have done, you can spend your weekends and evenings glorifying Christ through art. How amazing! We are friends with a family whose mother does Christian artwork, including black-ink Chinese calligraphy. That's one of my personal favorite styles. The ancient scribes of Europe made text into art as well, putting it into books or sayings, and you have their example to learn from. How much better you spend your time this way, than following along the cult, swallowing secular entertainment, and becoming overly familiar with evil. After all, we should be familiar with the things of God. We should not be familiar with evil.

"For your obedience has become known to all," wrote the apostle Paul. "Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil."

Another way to leave behind the cult, and its virtual obsession with the sensual secular world, is to organize your home life around life in Christ. If you are a husband and father, you do that for the entire household. If you are single you do that for yourself. Make sure your days move along worship of Christ and service of man, and have some regularity like a liturgy. Daily prayer is important, including longer times each week to pray deeply, for longer, or for more concerns. Find time regularly for home worship through group prayer and hymns. In our home we make sure to sing hymns at least once a week, although it would be good to worship this way daily. People who know how to sing a capella even rise and sing their meal's blessing as a hymn, breakfast, lunch or dinner. One area that I am weak is with confession, as I often forget. The Christian home should have regular times for confession, as the Christian, though righteous in Christ, has a repentant attitude and lifestyle. As apostle John writes, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Times of Bible study need to be worked into the home life too, and regular readings from the Psalms function both as learning the Word and as prayer, as the Psalms themselves are prayers. Try to memorize Scripture at least once a week and see how much you can commit to memory. These things are not just for little kids' groups. They are an important part of the Christian life; a life lived at the feet of the Christ, not before the face of the television. With Scripture committed to memory, you can meditate on it throughout the day, gaining insight and great constant joy. As the Psalmist writes of the righteous man: *his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.* As the Almighty spoke to Joshua: *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.* You can also speak the Scriptures from memory anytime, not just to inspire, but also to share God's Word when you don't have a Bible in front of you. Many are the people who will refuse to sit down and open a Bible with you. If you can speak Truth from memory, they are going to hear it anyway. The Christian should memorize Scripture.

On top of that, your deprogramming from the cult will never be complete until you start preaching the Word of God, and preaching the whole uncensored council of God. Forget about all those times the cult has conditioned you to censor the Word or cover it with saccharine or ambiguous language. The apostle Paul wrote to the young Timothy, exhorting clearly: *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.* Preach the unadulterated Word. You won't fit in, but you WILL be a Christian. Where the cult wants to do away with talk of God's judgment, of wrath, of repentance and of obedience, speak these things without shame. Speak them in blunt, unadulterated language.

Where the cult want you to pepper conversations with hip cultural references or at least constant humor, pepper it instead with the Word of God and sound reason. It may take time, but if you do it regularly you will get out of the cult think that demands the children of God talk like the world and pretend to be like it.

To give you one example, not long ago I was doing a pro-life witness in front of an abortion mill. A man of the street approached me to ask me some questions about abortion and why I was protesting. After explaining that we know the child is a living human being, and explaining that the moral law applies to everyone, not just Christians, and after explaining the principle of reciprocity, that we must protect others just as we'd expect to be protected ourselves, I asked the man if he knew Jesus Christ. I frequently do that while at pro-life vigils, or at the minimum hand out tracts. When the man told me no, I gave a simple Gospel presentation, of man's fallen and corrupt state, and our need for Christ's sacrifice and a new life in Him to be restored and have eternal life. I proceeded to ask this man if he would read the Gospel of John. I recited the opening verses of John for him, and he said he would immediately go read it on his I-phone. Then he left. I don't think this man was lying. I believe he went and looked at the Gospel. The rest is up to God.

Now in order to do that, I did not need to pretend to have cultural relevance. I did not need to wear hip fashions, or have a cool haircut. I did not need to reference his favorite movies, shows or songs. I didn't say – hey, let me tell you how that show I was watching last night reminds me of Romans chapter 3. No. All I had to do was speak the plain truth, and if that man's heart is readied by the Lord, he will indeed open up the Gospel, and come to know Christ. I didn't have to be fashionable to do my job as a child of God. I ask the same of you: Simply proclaim God in all you say, and don't censor yourself. I'm not saying there is NEVER a call to make a cultural reference in conversation or a sermon. However, I wish to point out how the entire ministry philosophy you'll see in the cult – that of claiming that being worldly will make the message more relevant to the culture – is nonsense and is damaging. The cult exposes countless millions to the depraved and perverse culture when it tries its hardest to be relevant and contemporary. It makes the Church into the world, and misleads people about God and Christ. The best way to leave this behind is a commitment to sincere, uncensored preaching of the Truth.

That goes for the simple Gospel. It goes for every other doctrine too. Speak the words that have been banned by the cult, or slimed by the cult. Words like "authority," "obey," "repent," "wicked," "hell," "religion," "commandments," "law" and much more. Speak the prohibited words. You see, contrary to what cults want you to think, the New Testament says much more than – tell people about Jesus, tell people about Jesus, tell people about Jesus. That's not the only deed we must do. The New Testament commands righteousness for the family of Christ. It commands repentance to those the Savior calls His brethren. Who is that family of Christ?

According to Jesus Himself: *whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.*" (Mark 3:35) He describes them also in Luke as: *these who hear the word of God and do it.*" (Luke 8:21) If we don't bear those fruit, we will be cut down and cast into the fire. That is Jesus' promise. (Matthew 7:19) A profession of faith followed by years of unrepentant sin is only called one thing: a false profession. The sheep need to hear that truth. Don't forget to speak of other banned subjects, brethren. You should teach the man's headship and the woman's submission, which are taught in the Bible and confirmed in nature. That's part of God's order for us. That's why I am comfortable telling people my wife is godly and submissive, because that is the truth of the matter. Around here that's not an insult, it's an honor. I also tell people that in keeping the home and caring for our children, she is being faithful to God, because that is the godly path for a wife. It would be wrong to say otherwise. For Christians to treat careerism as the norm for the wife and daycare the norm for the children, is as satanic as it gets. It is rebellion against God and nature. If someone hears that and gets offended, the fault's on them. Never be ashamed of the truth God has given us. Let sinners and evildoers be ashamed. (Psalm 83:17) Let them hide underneath a rock. You, keep your light shining in your words and your actions.

Another way to come to Christ, and depart from the cult, is to make service a regular part of your lifestyle; service in the church or in the local community. This will be a serious investment of time, so right from the start just imagine all your favorite sporting events burning and burning in an all-consuming fire. They are over. You never needed them anyway. That same time can now be spent as a servant to others. Obviously, this can mean abundant things; it could be helping an older member of your neighborhood, taking care of the sick, volunteering to help the poor, teaching a class to others, taking part in pro-life witness, giving counseling to the troubled and oppressed. Each of those activities and more further act as an opportunity to share the Gospel, and share it in a natural environment of caring for mankind. Writing is its own form of service too, depending on the purpose, and I'm not just saying that because I am a writer. My wife has been able to serve by doing translations for ministry, as she is fluent in English and Chinese. How many languages do you know? Do you know computer languages? Do you know any ministries that need help with a website or audio/video tools? If not, I know you can track one down. The opportunities to serve are constant, and they will release you from many of the chains that previously bound you to the cult.

It will be freedom to you. It will unite you with Christ. For, *"whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— 'just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'*" (Matthew 20:27-28)

Don't look like the world or sound like the world. I'm not saying to go out of your way to be an oddball, but remember to look and sound like a Christian. In a cult environment where churches either tolerate or encourage the sheep to bleat just like the pagans, be different by following God. Divine truth teaches that the Christian is modest and plain in his apparel, and can be known by modesty, both in heart and in appearance. Our beauty is not from attractive apparel, but from the *"hidden person of the heart."* (1 Peter 3:4) Therefore dress modestly. Don't try and attract attention by being flashy or being hip. Keep it plain and simple, rather than sensualizing or sexualizing the body. There is nothing modest either in using your clothes as a walking advertisement for products, by putting pop stars on your shirt and your favorite team on your hat. It is attention driven behavior. Let your words be pure also. The Bible teaches that our speech be holy and produce good things for the building up of other souls. It also teaches the measured principle of self-control, a principle which applies to our speech. Good words reflect a good heart. Following these doctrines will lead us to a lifestyle visibly different from the world, one recognizably holy and pure. Commit yourself to being peculiar and not normal, whether you're liked for it or not.

Please do these deeds brother, and they will help you depart from bondage. They will help get that programming out of your head. You will live freely. Perhaps I should say – realize your freedom in Christ. Do them as individuals, as families, as a group. Most churches will not accept you. In fact, they may kick you out before you decide to leave yourself. You see, the average Christian parent today would rather have their children absorbing the flashy lifestyle of vulgar, sensual pop stars than listening to a brother like me, or anyone like me, pointing to the radical call Jesus has to our lives. That's a fact. The average church-going parent would let their children emulate the singers and sports stars who smoke dope, get drunk, fornicate like there's no tomorrow, revel in perversions, celebrate sodomy, commit adultery, violence and rape; they would let their children consume that day and night BEFORE they would let their children be around brothers who want to live like Christians. They WILL take the pop culture over the Church any day. They will take the prideful heroes of the pagan world over the saints. They hide their children from the word of God. Therefore, reform will start with the individual souls and families. Then perhaps God will use that repentance in a broader way to touch the whole Church. It will take His supernatural grace to change this. Pray for the Bride of Christ.

There is definitely much more to say than I have said here. There is more that it takes to depart from the cult and the cult mentality. I believe what I have offered amounts to a good start, but I know once you leave you will find the Savior's call much richer and deeper than I have been able to present. It means denying yourself daily. (Luke 9:23) It means putting to death the deeds of the body so that we can truly live. (Romans 8:13) It means considering all else like trash, including our comforts and dreams, so that we may be found in Him. (Philippians 3:8-9) Just start, brother. Start here and now, as you read this. Start now. Then you will leave the sad

mockery behind and you will come to the Church. Separate from the worldliness, from the flesh, from the trends, from the popularity and the fashion and false light you have known. Welcome brothers, to the Church.

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