

So What's the Difference
Religions and Cults and Bears, oh my...

What is a “religion”?

Basically a religion is *a set of practices or beliefs that acknowledges that man is not alone and is dependent on some other force for his present and future existence.*

- Religion is universal
- Religion meets needs
- All religions are NOT the same

What is a cult?

A cult is *a set of practices or beliefs that have [usually] evolved out of a distortion of biblical Christianity or outright rejection of the basic Christian beliefs or teachings.*

Why are cults [and other religions] popular?

- They *seem* to provide answers
- They *seem* to meet human needs
- They make a tremendous first impression

Characteristics of a cult

From Heaven's Gate to the Moonies to Jehovah's Witnesses, cults differ in many ways. But there are certain traits they all have in common:

- They claim to have a NEW truth, many times from God Himself (I John 4:1)
- They claim to have new interpretations of Scripture (Revelation 22:18-19)
- They hold to a non-Biblical source of [written] authority (2 Timothy 3:16)
- They have a different [non-Scriptural] view of Jesus Christ or promote a “new” Jesus
(2 Corinthians 11:4)
- They have a different [non-Scriptural] view of the nature of God
- A strong central, charismatic leader
- Teachings based on ‘salvation’ by some sort of works (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- False/incorrect/inaccurate predictions (not prophecies) about the end of the world
(2 Peter 1:20-21)

In addition, many cults and other religions will:

- Reject [and sometimes openly oppose] the teachings of Christianity while at the same time...
- ...claiming to be some form of or embracing ‘Christianity’.

The whole purpose of this study is to equip us to “be ready to give an answer to everyone that asks you the reason for the hope that is in you” (I Peter 3:15) and to become mature in the Scriptures in order “to discern between good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:14)