

# The Cult Church by Marlene Jones-Skurtu

by Marlene Jones-Skurtu

Cults seem to be the scourge of the nineties. Though they were existent in the seventies and eighties, an estimated 5000 cults in the United States hunger for our youth, worship, and money. One in twenty people are somehow involved in cult activity.

Visions of David Koresh's Compound burning down or of suicidal hundreds in Jonestown may come to mind when the word "cult" is mentioned. Or, one may connect cults with witchcraft, covens, and blood sacrifices.

There is, however, one type of cult that is often overlooked. This one is hidden down the block, under a steeple, and behind a pulpit--The Cult Church.

What most people don't understand is that false prophets may have been true prophets, full-blown cults may have been cult churches, and cult churches may have been normal churches at one time. David Koresh and his Branch Dividians started out as Seventh Day Adventists. David (Moses) Berg of the Children of God started out with the Missionary Alliance Church. And Jim Jones with his "People's Temple" used to be a Bible-thumper.

Scary, isn't it? This puts new meaning to what Jesus said, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many." (Matt. 24:5) A person can proclaim Jesus as Christ and still deceive his followers. Many Christians are being and will be deceived. And the victims of this "spiritual abuse" have more life-long bad effects than that of physical or sexual abuse.

How does this happen? Let us first look at the Christian leader, gone astray.

{mospagebreak title=Special Son Mentality}

## Special Son Mentality

All the leaders of the cults, from Joseph Smith of the Mormons to Sun Myung Moon of the Moonies, feel that they were chosen by God to do some special task or to know some hidden meaning of Scripture, or to become some cherished savior of mankind.

In the beginning they are innocent. They open the Bible one day and it "speaks out" to them in a way that hasn't been heard before (but cannot be confirmed by other Scriptures). Or, on the subjective side, "God" speaks to them, telling them something remarkable.

Now, every preacher has Scripture revealed to them in order to prepare sermons and many people hear from God in one way or another. But that is where the false prophets start straying. They do not stay accountable to Scripture nor to other preachers in their discoveries.

Eventually, these leaders believe not only that they have a corner on truth, but believe they have special privileges that are above everyone else. They can have more than one wife, various sexual encounters, complete control over finances, or can live in luxury while their followers struggle and sacrifice.

{mospagebreak title=A Spirit of Control}

## A Spirit of Control.

In every situation, though in varying degrees, these leaders will have a spirit of control over individuals or the total group. Barbara Ancheta, a young woman with three children who was involved in a Cult Church for about six months, tells of the intimidation that was felt in their small group.

"We studied two and a half hours per session, four times a week, with our Bibles and Concordances open," she reports. "Brother Alby would close his eyes and receive a Scripture reference that we would look up and it would always relate to the new doctrine we were studying." (It was never in context of Scripture, though.)

"If you had a doubt, he would read your mind and tell you what you were thinking, and then begin to rebuke and reproach you in front of the others." This would keep people from questioning what was being taught.

"If you needed to travel, you needed to ask him if it was God's will. One time when I needed to go to a family get-together, he reminded me that I hadn't asked him first and that I could possibly get into a car wreck or something. He did

give me permission to go," she says, "But only after I backed down in my spirit to submit to his counsel."

This spirit of control also prohibits anyone from discussing doubts on doctrine or the set of rules their particular church inflicts upon them. David Johnson, in his book, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse*, says, "The most powerful of all unspoken rules in the abusive system is what we have already termed the "can't talk" rule...If you speak about the problem out loud, you are the problem. In some way you must be silenced or eliminated. Those who do speak out are most often told, "We didn't have all these problems until you started shooting your mouth off. Everything was fine before you started stirring things up."

{mospagebreak title=Sins and Hurts in Life}

### Sins and Hurts in Life

The majority of these power-hungry leaders are trying to make up for sins in their own lives or for the past traumas and hurts they have experienced. When his wife was pregnant with their third child, David Berg was thrown out of the Missionary Alliance church that he had physically built, over a racial issue.

Richard Dortch, the former president of the scandalized PTL network, has written a book call *Fatal Conceit* to explain the causes behind Jim Bakker's and his own downfall. He says, "Often these people have unresolved issues in their own lives, but they refuse to deal with them. It's often these unresolved sins or problems, however, that drive them to be in positions of power over others...When a person living in sin or with deep hurts and insecurities arrives at a place of power, his objectivity is clouded. Instead of dealing rationally with issues that confront him, he is always on the attack. With every encounter, he is actually dealing vicariously with his own problem."

Now, let us look at the victims. Most people believe it cannot happen to them. Yet Barbara, whom we quoted earlier, was raised in a strong Christian home with a deep relationship with the Lord and a working knowledge of the Word. In fact, deeply spiritual people and those who want to make a difference are the ones most vulnerable to join a cult or a cult-like church.

{mospagebreak title=The Walking Wounded}

### The Walking Wounded.

Many times the same weaknesses present in the leaders are present in the followers: sins and hurts. Many have grown up without a father or with a perverted view of authority with their father being too busy, too hard, or too passive. Many have been hurt by the Church or by church organizations. Then they look for a "new father" or "new family" in the false church.

{mospagebreak title=Scripturally Lacking}

### Scripturally Lacking.

Though usually coupled with other reasons, a person can get deceived when he doesn't know the Bible in its context. Sunday morning service alone usually will not provide this. Only by study of the Word, books about the Word, and listening to various preachers can one get the balance he needs to be aware of false doctrines.

{mospagebreak title=Involved in a Cause}

### Involved in a Cause.

Built within every individual is a need to be needed and a need to be loved. Cults and cult churches always bring in their disciples through strategic "love bombing". Combined with having "a cause", which is of great appeal especially to baby boomers, they not only win them, but keep them for many years, if not forever.

Whenever a person has a doubt about doctrine, they compromise their doubts by believing the souls their church has won, or the prophecies it has understood, or the some other such "cause" proves the validity of everything that happens.

Or, if the church has a real family atmosphere, the person cannot bring himself to leave since he has not maybe seen such "love" anywhere else.

Neither can we ignore the "mob mentality". It is difficult to stand up against someone (or what they say) when all your friends believe every word he says. After all, you would be "gossiping" or "disobedient to leadership" if you disobey the "can't-talk" rule. And if it works for the Jones's, who are so spiritual, it must be you that has the problem. You're just not spiritual enough to understand it all.

How can a person prevent themselves from being deceived?

From the beginning there has been a Cult Church. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus commends a church for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (2:6) Judaisers, Gnostics, and "those of the circumcision" desired to bring early Christians into bondage to their beliefs.

Paul warned, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal 5:1)

Also, a person needs to be aware of their weaknesses. If they grew up without a father or had a lot of abuse, they will be inwardly seeking that father relationship that can only be fulfilled in Father God.

And, as described above, if they meet a group or church with a charismatic leader, an exclusive attitude, and "new revelations" that the rest of the Body of Christ doesn't know, they should put their brakes on and perhaps check out another church in the area!

You can reach us by e-mail at: [sword@post1.com](mailto:sword@post1.com)