

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Do not become Slaves of Men

Do not become Slaves of Men, on: 2008/8/6 0:01

"Do not become Slaves of Men." by Rick Friedrich

"You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men." So the Apostle Paul implored the church of Corinth (1 Cor . 7:23). The Christians of Corinth had hardly grown beyond spiritual infancy before their church was split by factions. Paul was not holding out with them. He diagnosed Corinth's spiritual disease immediately — they were following men, not Christ: "each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.' Has Christ been divided? (1 Cor. 1:12, 13) Available evidence indicates no church of New Testament times had more problems than Corinth. These corruptions within Christ's church were the inevitable fruit of a bitter root — a selfish prejudice towards the body of Christ. Here is Paul's counsel which all who claim to witness to the one God, one Lord, one Spirit and one faith of the New Testament are compelled to observe:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)

If we impatiently and unlovingly alienate or oppress God's people we run the dire risk of dividing the body of Christ, or even becoming entangled in a cult. There are many cults today. You may be familiar with the biggest ones, oldest ones or the most sensational ones; but did you realize that there are tens of thousands of smaller ones now? Did you know that most of them do not differ outwardly from most churches? Yes they often even teach most of the same things as the real church.

Most people do not see beyond these things and do not realize at first what they have got themselves into. But eventually everyone begins to see certain traits appear that make up a cult. These will either be brushed off in denial or as tolerable 'needs', --while increasingly enslaving the same undiscerning people. Or they will be examined by the word of God and cause the same sincere questioners to be persecuted and pressured to totally submit to that form of teaching in the group. If any adherent within the group should dare to so wonder, even humbly questioning certain practices, you can be sure that there will be very little of the above (Eph. 4) loving instructions. But rather a manipulated hasty response, which is not ashamed to use every fallacy in the book; and whose chief appeal is an unproven self-asserted claim to being God's prophet or having the monopoly on truth.

Everyone finding themselves in such a shocking exchange with their leaders they once so highly respected, could hardly imagine experiencing anything like this. They once said, 'It could not happen to me because cults are so obvious.' But they did not know how easy it was to be deceived by the attractive values of the group, especially the dynamic enthusiasm. It would have been good if they had considered more seriously the repeated warnings of the critics about this group being a cult.

But there is no way my church is a cult! Just remember, every cult has both good and bad people calling it just that; and it would do you well to consider this fact. So how do you know when you have unwittingly become captives of a cult?

CULT CHARACTERISTIC No. 1:

Pyramid Power Structure.

Most ancient pagan religions vested all authority in an all-powerful priesthood. This pyramid power structure, high priest apex, is imitated by many modern cults. Adherents totally depend upon the meditation of a hierarchical figurehead, whether one "prophet" or a collective "governing body": The Mormons (Joseph Smith), the Seventh Day Adventists (Ellen G. White) and Jehovah's Witnesses (C.T. Russell) were all kick-started by latter day "prophets", through whom, it is claimed

God revealed His will for this day. Whether as extreme in error as these groups, the authority of the leaders of all cults are practically considered absolute while they are alive; and this is often passed on to a collective leadership whose (derived) authority is still effectively absolute— you cannot challenge THEM without challenging GOD. The Holy Spirit warned us in advance about such sectarianism, likening those responsible for fragmenting the flock of God to "savage wolves" who "draw away the disciples AFTER THEMSELVES" (Acts 20:29, 30). You will find that even though they deny that you should submit your conscience to them, nevertheless, they will practically pressure you to do so in many areas; and you will find them never correcting those devout souls in their group who do so. But does any man on earth have such authority—absolute as Christ Himself ?

CULT CHARACTERISTIC No. 2:

Mind Control by Men, not the Spirit.

Cult leaders pretending to protect the "unity" of their flocks, impose a tight control over the information reaching their "sheep". The One flock, in union with One shepherd (John 10:16), find themselves kept firmly in the fold by another shepherd, wielding his staff like a whip. But the apostles, whom Christ legitimized as leaders of His flock by "signs of an apostle" (2 Cor. 12:12), did not feel the need to so lord it over Christ's lambs. Even John, threatened by the prophesied "wolves" trying to tear away Christ's flock, appealed not to his own authority, but to the "anointing"— that Spirit endowment all Christians share — as the best protection from false teaching:

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know—... these things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. (1 John 2:20, 26-27)

A careful "testing of the spirits" will reveal the arguments of these 'shepherds' to be void of fairness, even though on the surface they will feel persuasive. But if you try to investigate this they will never admit a possible error, nor will they point you to Jesus to teach you; but they will pressure you to accept what they say by using manipulated accusations against your character as tool to enslave you. They will show no tolerance for differing minds, nor any patience for careful thinkers. No truth can be received into the church without coming through these mediators. You are not welcome to have any manly independence of thought at all. (Rom. 14)

CULT CHARACTERISTIC No. 3:

Isolating the Sheep.

Cult leaders must control the information reaching their followers if they are to retain power over them. Therefore they must isolate followers from potential critics. Most likely such criticism will first come from family or friends of the new recruit; therefore early in the convert's training he/she will be instructed to minimize association with family. Such attempts, of course, will be accompanied by a shower of attention by the new "spiritual family," in order to soften the blow of estrangement, from (former) loved ones. Isolation from past influences accomplished, control of converts will yet be but partial if any free flow of information remains unchecked. Therefore recruits will be discouraged from — even made to feel guilty about — reading "spiritual pornography", literature critical of the group. Any such criticism will be viewed as "persecution". In most cults, much pressure is exerted to keep the members in as much ignorance as possible. The leaders perpetually provide numerous impressive 'facts' to support their few causes and equally numerous insights on how to live an "unworldly" or holy life (but in fact keep such people ignorant of the true Way of salvation, and in bondage to personal sin). Fascinated by the seeming wisdom and holiness of the leaders, and loaded down with too many activities and information to process, each believer is easily captivated. Soon every thought of the believer is held captive to the self-appointed prophet of the group. But even the cult's "high priest" is isolated from the full range of the wisdom of God, due to his failure to acknowledge that the Spirit wills to whom He will give His gifts (1 Cor. 12: 11, 18).

CULT CHARACTERISTIC No. 4:

Christ is the Way;

but We're The Way to the Way (and you cannot go directly)

"WE have the mind of Christ", said Paul, curtly defying those among the Corinthians who thought to monopolize God's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:16). Generations before, Job had flattened his self-flattering friends with "Truly you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!" (Job 12:2). Solomon's name has become synonymous with wisdom, yet even he was not so arrogant as to think God could only speak through Him. "In abundance of counselors there is deliverance," Solomon claimed, adding "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel... without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed" (Prov. 11:14; 12:15; 15:22). The mind of Christ, Paul claimed, is the possession of ALL who have the Spirit of Christ (1 Cor. 2:12). But while we may greatly profit by the gifts and ministry of other Christians, we must NEVER become dependent upon them. If we do, we will forever remain children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." These groups would each have us grow up into their group in all conformity. But instead we are to "grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 15).

CULT CHARACTERISTIC No. 5:

Slandering Opposition Unmercifully.

It is the inevitable claim of the cults that they are restoring "New Testament Christianity." Since the doctrines of such groups almost always become opposed to the historic doctrines of the church, the restoration notion becomes a crowbar for leaders desirous of prying potential converts from "Babylon's" grip. They have an impressive appearance of reformation, and thrive where the professing church is dead as Pluto. But their reform is altogether selective. While it claims its source from the law of God in its few areas of reform, it utterly neglects His law in many others. Some outward practices are impressively brought back to the church, but the deeper matters of the heart are left to wait for a latter day (even though there is much talk about heart submission). It becomes inevitable that the leaders reveal themselves as much harsher than they are merciful. They could never weep for their opposition. There is no time for such goats! There can be little room for tolerance of any age or people who differed from the cult's exalted ideas. "They slander those things which they do not understand" because they fear the change that might result to a candid investigation, and the authority that could be lost from the exposure. The leaders are a harsh band who are accustomed to evil assumptions against any challenging internal seeker. It matters not who the person is inside or outside the group, if the leader is placed in a position to defend his unjustified claims, if there is any truth in it or not, he will cunningly slander someone to prove his point at some time in the explanation. They might sound sweet and delightful in moments of agreement with you; but if you search for some foundations for their pet ideas, half-truths, gross generalizations, and their wild logic you will be sorely crossed. And if you persist, in good time an evil report will forever remove you from the confidence of all loyal disciples. Your name once stigmatized will forever be ruined unless there is an impressive recantation and absolute surrender of the conscience to the entire collection of ideas and leadership. God will never lead you to do this.

But there is hope for you, even if you have found yourself in this very place with this powerful group. God is calling a people out of these groups into the Truth, even though it may seem impossible to them to ever find God again. In fact this conflict between you and these kind of men is evidence of God's desire to give you the truth and them an even further delusion. (2 Thess. 2: 10-13) Your conflict is needful (1 Cor. 11: 19) and if you look meekly to Jesus, you will find the Way, and the Truth, and the Life that this cult has no knowledge of.

To those who have become prey to religious leaders who match the above description, we plead **DO NOT BECOME SLAVES OF MEN!** Do not allow your mind to become captive to other humans, no matter their claims, evident sincerity, or powerful persuasion. Christians should be "taking every thought **CAPTIVE TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST**" (2 Cor. 10:5).

Re: Do not become Slaves of Men - posted by enid, on: 2008/8/6 6:37

This article deals with someone being converted into a cult.

Fact is, we could find something wrong with every church on the planet and brand it a cult.

However, leaders should be able to answer valid questions, and show scripture to clarify what they are saying, without twisting the scriptures.

A point I would like to make is, supposing someone is in a church for years, and slowly, over time, the teachings begin to change, and that church becomes a cult.

Is that an impossible scenario?

In this day and age, we need discernment and godly wisdom in all that we do.

God bless.

Re: Do not become Slaves of Men - posted by rowdy2 (), on: 2008/8/6 10:07

Reply to wisevirgin

Great post and a good reminder

Our Lord rebuked James and John for their thoughts in this area and I am pretty sure that the servants of Christ and His flock today have not achieved greater stature in the eyes of God than James and John..

Maybe some of you have read how Saul was elected king and reigned over the children of God without reading the firm reprimand and warnings to His children God gave them. Yes, we live in the New Covenant generation but, the Words of God are unchangeable.

1 Samuel 8

7. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.
8. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.
9. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.
10. And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.
11. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.
12. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.
13. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.
14. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.
15. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.
16. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.
17. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.
18. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.
19. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;
20. That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.
21. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord.
22. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

Thank God I am free. I serve The Master of Grace only.

Eddie

Re: Do Not Become Slaves Of Men, on: 2008/8/6 13:23

Eddie(rowdy2),

You said,"Thank God I am free. I serve The Master of Grace only."

Would to God that such a testimony could be proclaimed by all those who claim to be His.

Sadly though,such is far from the truth.

Re: - posted by rowdy2 (), on: 2008/8/6 18:48

Reply too wisevirgin

Don't you love edification? I do

When I was a vile filthy sinner I was a pillar in my community, loved by my family and many friends. After I was converted my new heart was filled with love and charity. Since then friends are few but peace flows through out my life and IÂ'm like a watered garden..

I could reconstruct the deceptive facade and regain a few friends, I could become a conformist and a respecter of man again and be excepted while living in spiritual shame and guilt in a loathsome existence.

Having eaten of The Bread of Life and drank from the Fountain of Life that flows from the words of Jesus I lost my appetite for the uninspired words of manÂ's wisdom.

The words of God are spiritual food and drink to the thirsty masses of earth bound men searching and longing for the Kingdom Of God.

Man can only speak the words of God by manifesting what the Holy Spirit put in his heart on the day of his conversion that He himself searched out in The word of God and manifests to a spiritual dark and waterless desolate land, with little or no spiritual food, with only sand to build upon..

Eddie