



Cults in Zambia

Teaching Notes

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Lesson 1

Introduction

This lesson will explain some of the main characteristics of cults. Cults can be challenging because they often seem very spiritual, they have strong leadership, and they can even seem as if they are Christian. However, every cult teaches a false gospel. Therefore, every follower will have a wrong faith which leads to Hell after death. This is why it is important to know the characteristics of cults, so that we can share the gospel appropriately with members of cults and prepare our members to minister to people in cults.

Part 1 – What Is a Cult?

Definition – A cult has a faith that twists biblical Christianity.

- This can include a rejection of the historic teachings of the Christian church as well.
- A cult is also a group of people who are gathered around one person's interpretation of the Bible.
- Cults also stray away into different teachings about Jesus from what the Bible clearly teaches.

2 Corinthians 11:1-4; 13-15 – Cults can use the name, “Jesus” but their teachings reveal that their hope is in a Jesus that is not the Savior shown to us in the Bible.

- In this passage Paul is writing to the Corinthians about some false apostles and deceitful workmen who claim to teach the truth about Jesus, but their teachings are clearly against what was taught by Paul, the other true Apostles, and Jesus Himself.
- Vs 2 – Paul desires that the Corinthians remain true to Jesus as he taught them at first like a bride should remain faithful to her husband.
- Vs 3-4 – Paul highlights the key method of cults and false teachers. They are cunning and deceitful. Although they use the name of Jesus, speak of the Spirit, and proclaim a gospel, they twist each of these to be something different from what the Bible clearly teaches.
 - In **Genesis 3:1-4** the serpent twisted the words of God so that it confused Eve. She listened to the serpent, she was deceived, and she sinned.
 - Paul is saying that in the same way, the false teachers in Corinth were twisting the truth about Jesus, the Spirit, and the gospel. The false teachers were teaching that the Old Covenant laws, especially regarding circumcision, were still necessary in addition to faith in Jesus. Of course, any faith that is not in Christ alone is not a true faith.
- Vs 13-15 – Therefore, Paul boldly writes that teachers who twist the truth of the Bible are false. Instead of imitating Jesus they imitate Satan as they twist the truth of the Bible. Instead of serving Jesus, they serve Satan.
 - It should also be noted that false teachers and cults will appear righteous, but they are far from God and His truth. Even Satan can give the appearance of righteousness or light, but if you and your church members know the truth of the Bible you will not be deceived.

- Therefore, church leaders must commit to studying the Bible for truth and teaching the members of the church to do the same on their own. Every mature Christian must be able to discern truth from the Bible through study and prayer. By doing this, they will not be led astray to false teachings because they will be able to identify the false things when they hear them.

Part 2: Characteristics of Cults

1. Cults Claim to Have New Truth

- Many cults claim that God has revealed something new and special to them. Usually, they say it is something that has never been revealed before. They will also trust in the “new truth” more than the Bible even if the “new truth” says something very different from the Bible.
- Cults will also say that they are necessary because they have something more than what the Bible teaches. This means that they believe the Bible is inadequate or that the Bible is not enough for faith and truth.
- Their “new truth” cannot be tested by anything like the Bible because they value the new truth more than the Bible. However, in Christianity, we test all teachings according to the Bible because we believe it is sufficient and we believe the Bible is the final authority for all our teachings.
- People might run to these cults because they have a desire to know all that God has said and they do not want to miss out on something new. However, true churches believe that the Bible is God’s Word and that it has all that we need to know (2 Timothy 3:15-17).
- **Read Colossians 2:8** – Paul warns the Colossians not to be deceived and led astray by teachings that depend on human tradition. Christian teachings should always be rooted in clear and accurate biblical teachings.

2. Cults Have a Non-biblical Source of Authority

- Some cults have extra books that they follow. They will follow the extra books even if those books teach different things from the Bibles. They believe these extra books to have the same authority as the Bible or more authority than the Bible.
- A true church allows the Bible to be the final authority for all beliefs and practices for life and church. Other Christian books can be consulted for assistance in understanding the Bible and how to apply it but these extra books should never be considered the authority. They should be tested according to the truth of the Bible. If a book is found to say something different from the Bible, then that book should be considered false – even if it is a “Christian” book.
- **Read Jude 1:3** – Jude writes “once for all” to show that the writings and teachings they had from the Apostles was already complete and enough for believers without need for any additions. This means that God had already communicated everything He wanted us to know through the Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles. Any group that claims to have “new truth” or another book should be suspected to be a cult.

3. Cults Have a New Interpretation of Scripture

- Some cults do not claim to have a “new truth” but they will claim to have the key to interpreting the mysteries in the Bible. The Bible is reinterpreted without concern for the context of verses. This allows them to create support for their strange teachings and beliefs while using the Bible.
- Cults do not study the Bible to discover truth. They do not allow the Bible to tell them what to believe. They study the Bible to find support for the faith which they already have. This is not the proper way to study the Bible. A Christian always allows the Bible to change them and their beliefs so that they may grow into the faith and truth of the Bible.
- We see an example of new interpretation when the serpent twists the words and truth by saying “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). He twisted the words of God which actually said “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).
- Again, the serpent twisted the words of God when he said, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5). However, they did immediately die spiritually after eating the forbidden fruit.
- **Read 2 Peter 3:15-18** – In these verses we see another example of how cults use the Bible wrongly. They take things which are hard to understand and they twist them to mean something which they want to teach. Peter warns the churches that some people will twist the truth to mean something different. This twisting brings destruction on the false teachers as well as their followers. However, there is also an exhortation and encouragement to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus our Lord and Savior. By focusing on Christ alone, we will grow in grace and knowledge of the truth and we will be stable in our faith. When we cling to the true teachings of the Bible we will not be led astray by false teachers. Like Peter, we must also teach our church members to do the same so they can remain faithful in a world full of false teachings.

4. Cults Have a Different Jesus

- All cults have a teaching about Jesus that is different from the Bible. In the Bible, Jesus is presented as God in the flesh, who lived here on earth, lived without sin, died for our sins, resurrected from the grave on the third day, ascended to heaven 50 days later, He sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding on behalf of believers, and He will return to the earth to judge everyone and set up His eternal kingdom. Cults teach about a Jesus that is much less than what the Bible teaches.
- **Read 2 Corinthians 11:2-4** – Paul warned us about following a different teaching about Jesus from what we find in the Bible. Paul had taught the Corinthians the truth about Jesus but they had since turned to listening to different teachings about Jesus. Therefore, we must be like Paul and simply teach our people the truth about Jesus from the Bible so that they will not be led astray by false teachings.

5. Cults Use Double-Talk to Appear Like They are Christians

- Some cults use double-talk to appear Christian. They can say that they believe in Jesus Christ but once you begin to understand their teachings about Jesus you will see that they teach something very different about Jesus from what the Bible says.
- Cults can say they believe there is only one God. However, later you might find they believe that means that Jesus is not God in the flesh and that there is not Holy Spirit.
- This double-talk is a form of deception. It helps them seem like a Christian group so that people will join. Only after some time can one begin to hear the strange teachings they have about Jesus, God, salvation, and other key doctrines of the Christian faith.

6. Cults Reject Orthodox Christianity and Refuse or Change Christian Teaching on the Trinity

- Cults often believe and present themselves as if they are just another Christian church. Some of these cults claim to be a truer or newer church of Jesus. However, they reject or change so many biblical teachings that they cannot be considered true Christian churches. One of the most common places this is seen is in their rejection of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. No group which rejects the doctrine of the Trinity can be considered Christian.
- Some cults will teach that Jesus is not God in the flesh. Others will teach that the Holy Spirit is not God. Others may refuse the whole idea of the trinity and teach something very different on the nature of God.
- Cults will even accuse Christian Churches of adding pagan or satanic beliefs to their church. They believe the trinity, one God in three persons, is not in the Bible. They say the idea has come from pagan or satanic sources of faith.
- Some cults refuse to see the clear meaning when the Bible claims Jesus is equal with God the Father in John 1:1, John 14:9, John 5:18, Titus 2:13, and John 13:19. The fact that Jesus had control over nature, possessed all wisdom, and had the power to forgive sins is ignored or distorted by cults.
- Cults can also refuse the clear teaching that the Holy Spirit is also God. They ignore or distort the fact that the Bible says the Holy Spirit is all-powerful (Luke 1:35-37), eternal (Hebrews 9:14), all-knowing (1 Corinthians 2:10-11), and that lying to the Holy Spirit is like lying to God (Acts 5:3-4).

7. Cults Have a Faith and Practice that Changes

- As Christians, our faith is based upon the Word of God as written in the Bible. The Bible does not change. We also try to use a proper interpretation whereby we allow the Bible to say what it wants to say instead of twisting the Bible to say what we want. You can say that we base our faith and practices on the authority of the Bible.
- However, cults do not use the Bible as their authority. They can twist the words of the Bible, ignore them, or follow a new teaching from another book or another person who claims to have a new word from God. Therefore, they have no solid foundation for their faith and practice.
- As a result, cults have a faith and practice that changes over time. Some cults claim to know the date for the end of the world and they have to change that date each time they are wrong. Some cults say certain types of medical assistance such as vaccines or

blood transfusions are sin but later, they change their beliefs to say it is not a sin. One cult use to allow, and even encourage, men to marry many wives but later they changed to say that it is not good anymore.

- **Read Malachi 3:6.** God never changes. We also know that God is perfect and never makes mistakes. Therefore, when God says something and had someone write it in a book that was added to the Bible, there is not need to think God will ever change what is written. If God does not change, that means His Word never changes either.

8. Cults Often Have Strong Leadership

- Cults usually have a strong leader. This leader considers himself to be a messenger of God and think he has unique access to the Almighty.
- Since the leader claims a special access to God and the followers believe this, the followers must take whatever the leader says as if it is God, Himself, saying it. This can lead to very false beliefs and sometimes very dangerous results. Some members of cults have even drunk poison or done other dangerous things by the word of their leader and died because of it.
- Colossians 1:17-18 and Ephesians 5:22-25 both teach that Jesus is the head of the church. He is the only one that we listen to without questioning. Pastors are merely under-shepherds. We test everything they say according to the authority of the Bible and we follow Jesus.
- **Read Hebrews 1:1-2 and Hebrews 8:1-6.** These verses teach us that there used to be many mediators between man and God in the Old Covenant. However, in the New Covenant Jesus is our one and only mediator between us and God for all eternity. The result is that no man or woman on earth has more access to God than any other person. We can all enter into a relationship with God through faith in Jesus that leads to repentance. We can all pray to God because of our faith in Jesus. We can all hear from God by reading the Bible and being led by the Holy Spirit.

9. Cults Teach Salvation by Works

- Cults might use the name of Jesus and encourage you to believe in Jesus but they will always add something to that faith. They will add a list of things you must do or something else to follow if you want to be saved.
- **Read Isaiah 64:6.** This tells us that our good works are like filthy rags before God. Our works are unable to save us or erase the stain of sin in our lives. Therefore, we need grace. **Ephesians 2:8-10** clearly explains that we are saved by grace through faith without any of our own works. Our church members need to fully understand this in order to not be led astray into false teachings that will not lead to salvation from sin through Jesus alone.

10. Cults Often Have False Prophecies

- Cults often try to demonstrate the authority, knowledge, and power through prophecy. Some cults have wrongly prophesied about the end of the world, famines, droughts, and presidential elections. When they are found to be wrong, they quickly dismiss their mistake and pretend as if they never said those things or blame the people for not understanding.

- One example is when “Prophet” T.B. Joshua prophesied in 2016 that Hilary Clinton would win the USA Presidential election. However, Donald Trump won instead. T.B. Joshua ministries quickly erased his prophecy from the internet and it took a long time before T.B. Joshua, himself, responded. He said that his critics simply did not understand his prophecy because they lacked spiritual understanding.
- **Read Deuteronomy 18:20-22.** This teaches us that if a prophet prophesies something and it does not come true, that man is a false prophet and we need to fear him. Indeed, we need not even listen to him or his cult. Again, we already have Jesus, who is God in the flesh, His Word in the Bible, and the Holy Spirit to guide us. What more can we ask for?

Part 3 – Discussion: What Cults Are in Zambia?

In the next lessons we will discuss 3 cults that are found in Zambia and why they are cults. Before we move on to lesson two, it is good to discuss the reality of cults in Zambia based on what you have heard.

- 1. What cults do you see in Zambia now that you know the characteristics of cults?**
- 2. What are the effects these cults are having on their own members?**
- 3. What are the effects these cults are having on members of your church?**
- 4. What should be our response to members of these cults when we meet them?**
- 5. What should we do with members of our church who have come from these cults?**
- 6. How can we protect our members from being led astray into these cults?**

Lesson 2 – Is the New Apostolic Church a Cult?

Introduction

The New Apostolic Church (NAC) is a religious group that is known for teaching the existence of modern-day apostles and prophets. The NAC was founded in the 19th century with the claim that all other Christian denominations were in error. Since then, the NAC has expanded into many countries and is now very well known in Zambia. Zambia has more than 1 million members in the New Apostolic church. Zimbabwe and Malawi have about 230,000. There are about 9,200 congregations between Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. Within these three countries there are only 24 apostles. You can know this church by the way their male members dress in black suits with white ties when attending services. It is likely that we all have family and friends who attend this church. Let us study their teachings today and determine if our loved ones are attending a church or a cult.

Part 1 – Characteristics of the New Apostolic Church

1. NAC Claims to Have a New Truth

- The NAC believes that they have their own modern-day apostles, and their new apostles can bring new truth. Their official teaching in their catechism says “the Holy Spirit imparts to the apostolate new insights about God’s activity and plan of salvation, which, although intimated in Holy Scripture, have not yet been fully revealed.” This means that the NAC believes that we do not yet already know everything God wants us to know about the way of salvation. This means that they do not believe Jesus and His Apostles did not teach everything we need to know to be saved.
- There are three main new truths the NAC teaches about salvation
 - First, the NAC teaches that forgiveness of sins can only be received through the apostles in the NAC. This is a new truth not found in the Bible.
 - One problem with this idea of new apostles is that from the time of the Apostle John until the 1830’s there were no apostles. Since the NAC believes that salvation from sin can only be received through the apostles, this means that God willingly allowed people to die and go to hell from the time of Apostle John until the birth of the NAC in 1830. Obviously, this is not the case and shows how the NAC is misled.
 - Also, as we discussed earlier, there is no need for apostles today.
 - Second, the NAC teaches that forgiveness of sins is only found through the sacraments performed by the apostles. We will discuss this further under “Salvation by Works”
 - Third, in their catechism for new believers they offer as an example of a new truth that was not revealed in the Bible the idea that the dead can be saved after death even if they did not put their faith in Jesus while alive on the earth. Their catechism reads, “An important example that bears mentioning is the teaching that salvation can also be attained by the departed.”
 - They go on to explain that when you take their sacraments in their church as administered by their apostles, you can do so on behalf of

your dead relatives who do not know Jesus. By doing this, you are your relatives can be saved and forgiven of sins.

- As Baptists and believers in the Bible, we know that the Bible is sufficient in all its truth. We trust that God has given us all things we need to know through the Bible as He led the Prophets and Apostles to write what the Lord wanted recorded. What is required is proper study of the Bible.

2. NAC Has Non-Biblical Source of Authority

- The New Apostolic Church began in the 1830's as a group that broke away from the Catholic Apostolic Church. The reason for forming their new group was because their founders received a prophecy that God had "restored" apostolic succession. This meant that their founders were now the new apostles who Christians should follow. Thus, a group from the Catholic Apostolic Church left their church to follow these new apostles according to a new prophecy.
- The source of authority for the NAC is clear in the name of the church. They put their trust in their modern-day apostles. The NAC uses the Bible to back up their beliefs but they actually follow the teachings of their apostles more so than the Bible.
 - In fact, their official teachings in their catechism explains that in John 16:12-14 Jesus promised that he would continue to reveal new truth to them through the Holy Spirit. What Jesus meant was that the Holy Spirit would help the first Apostles understand all that Jesus had taught them. However, the NAC believes this means that the Holy Spirit would teach the Apostles of Jesus as well as their new apostles new truths through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when an apostle speaks they believe he speaks with the authority of the Holy Spirit. There is no need to consult the Bible because the apostle has spoken a new truth.
- The Apostles in the Bible were chosen by Jesus Christ Himself (Mark 3:16-19). Seeing and learning from Jesus was a requirement for being an Apostle. Even when they chose a replacement for Judas, they selected Matthias because Jesus had allowed him to be with them from the beginning (Acts 1:20-26). Also, Paul was selected face to face by Jesus as well (1 Corinthians 15:8-9; Galatians 1:1; 2:6-9).
 - The Apostles in the Bible met Jesus face-to-face and were personally chosen by him. These Apostles filled the "office" of Apostles as we read in Acts 1:20. The work of their office was to lay the foundation for the church (Ephesians 2:20). They did this work through their evangelistic ministry, discipleship, planting churches, and writing their letters to explain all that we need to know. Since the foundation has been laid by the Apostles, there is no need for the "office" of apostles anymore.
 - It should be noted that the gift of apostleship is different from the office of apostleship. The 12 Apostles of Jesus, including Matthias, and then Paul were given the Office of Apostleship to lay the foundation of the church. The gift of apostle is a calling on the life of a mature believer to travel to new places and to expand the kingdom of God through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. The work of those with the gift of apostle are in the same vein as the office of apostle except they do not have the same authority. Remember, the foundation of the church is already laid by the first Apostles. The things

written by Apostles John, Peter, James, Paul, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were included in the Bible because they had authority according to their office and they were laying the foundation for the church. Those with the gift of apostle today do not have that same authority because the foundation was already laid by the first Apostles who sat under Jesus' teachings.

- Therefore, the NAC makes a mistake in thinking that the office of Apostles is still open to them today. They make an even more serious mistake in thinking that forgiveness of sins is administered through the prophets but we will discuss that more in a later section.
- Finally, as Baptists, we believe the Bible is the final authority – the source of truth for faith and practice. Every spiritual teaching we hear must be checked for accuracy according to the Bible. In this way, we remain faithful to the foundation laid by Jesus and the Apostles. We do not need to fear missing out on new truth presented by the New Apostolic Church.

3. NAC Has New Interpretations of Scripture

- The NAC would argue with the things we just discussed under New Truth. They would argue that they are not teaching new truths which are not found in scripture. They believe that their teachings from their apostles are not “new truth not found in the Bible” but that the teachings of their apostles are “new enlightenments on what is written”. However, in saying this, they are admitting to having new interpretations of Scripture.
 - They write in their catechism, “the Holy Spirit imparts to the apostolate new insights about God’s activity and plan of salvation...”. This means that they believe their apostles can receive new information. They would not say it is a new truth but we do say it is new truth because it is not in the Bible. They would argue that it is simply a new insight to what is already written in the Bible.
 - Again, they write in their catechism, “it is incumbent on the Chief Apostle to proclaim such revelations of the Holy Spirit, and to declare them as binding doctrine of the New Apostolic Church.” Once again, when someone says a new revelation, that means new truth. However, the NAC would argue that the new revelation is simply a new way of interpreting what is written in the Bible.
- Another problem with the idea that the NAC apostles can bring new interpretations of the Bible is that their new interpretations do not start with the Bible. They did not reach the conclusion for new apostles, forgiveness by the apostles, salvation by the sacraments, and salvation for the dead by carefully studying the Bible.
 - No, they reached these conclusions by the miraculous revelation received by one man who claims to be an apostle. They believe that word as truth and then they search the Bible to find support for their new doctrine. They twist the Bible to meet their needs and fit into their faith.
- As Baptists, we carefully study the Bible with a good method and we allow the Bible to say whatever it wants to say to us. We believe and live by only what the Bible says. We do not force the Bible to say what we want. We will change our lives and faith to match what the Bible clearly teaches.

4. NAC Have a Different Jesus

- Based on what we have already discussed, one thing that makes the Jesus of the NAC different from the Jesus of the Bible is that their Jesus cannot forgive sins himself. The NAC believes that Jesus needs the help of the apostles.

5. NAC Uses Double Talk to Appear Like They Are Christians

- As we just discussed, the NAC teaching on salvation is an example of double-talk. They say things that make it seem as if they are Christians who are fully devoted to following God and the Bible. However, when you take time to study deeper into their teachings you find that they actually do not.
 - They follow their new apostles even though they bring new and false teachings as well as twisting the Bible like the serpent did in the Garden of Eden.
 - They say they trust in Jesus alone for salvation but really, they trust in the works they can do for salvation for themselves and their dead relatives.

6. NAC Rejects Orthodox Christianity and Refuses or Changes Christian Teaching on the Trinity

- The NAC is not a church which follows orthodox Christian beliefs.
 - The NAC does not see itself as a church that has departed from traditional Christian teachings. Again, they view themselves as having given more clarity to what the Bible teaches because they possess the apostles who can teach with the same wisdom and authority that the first Apostles of Jesus taught with.
 - However, it should be clear by now from all that we have discussed that they have truly strayed away into false teachings. Although they think themselves to be the only church through which salvation can be found, they are clearly not church that is able to save anyone.
- The NAC can change their belief about the Trinity at any time.
 - This is one topic where the NAC actually seems to teach the truth. They believe the Triune God is one in the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They believe the Triune God is eternal and present in both Old and New Testaments.
 - However, we must also remember that the NAC is open to new teachings and prophecies from their apostles. Therefore, it is possible that at any time a new teaching can come that would change their theology about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.
 - This practice of mixing truth with error seems to be the strategy of Satan in the Garden of Eden and in the temptations of Jesus. We must work hard to keep ourselves alert to these mixed messages and help our members to do the same. Finally, we must herald the truth to the followers of the NAC so that they can come out of that deception and find true salvation in Jesus alone as they learn to trust in the authority of the Bible and all it truly teaches.

7. NAC Has a Faith and Practice that Changes

- As we discussed earlier, the NAC is very open to changing their theology because they believe their apostles have the ability to bring new truths and new interpretations of the Bible. The fact that they put an emphasis and even an expectation on receiving new information about salvation is very dangerous. As we have already seen, Satan has already used their openness to new teachings on salvation to introduce many false teachings about salvation that lead them astray. Even still, they do not believe the revelations are finished. They still expect more to come.

8. NAC Has a Strong Leadership

- The leadership of the NAC is very strong by nature. Other cults may have a strong leader by virtue of that man's name, personality, and fame. However, the leaders of the NAC have strong leadership based on the office they hold as apostles who are not to be questioned. Their apostles have the ability to reinterpret Scripture and bring new teachings. That is a strong and dangerous leadership quality given to these men.
- As a result, the followers of NAC do not feel comfortable searching the Bible for explanations or to question their leaders. They blindly follow the leaders of NAC into the depths of false teachings mixed with truth.

9. NAC Teaches Salvation by Works

- The NAC says that they believe salvation is only through Jesus. When you hear this, you may feel good and think that the NAC is a good church because they have the same faith we have. However, they are very confused and you are being deceived.
- Although they say salvation is only through Jesus, they still believe that forgiveness of sins is only through their apostles, baptism by an apostle, holy communion from an apostle, and being sealed by the Holy Spirit by an apostle. Therefore, what they mean is that salvation starts with Jesus but can only be completed by the work of the apostles and through the sacraments in their NAC.
- Remember, the NAC also teaches that dead people who never trusted in Jesus can also be saved by the works their members do on behalf of the dead. So even a dead person who never even tried to follow Jesus or go to church can be saved because of something a relative does for them. This is simply not biblical and therefore not true.
- As Baptists, we believe that salvation is by grace, through faith in Jesus alone (Ephesians 2:8-10).

10. NAC Has False Prophecy

- The NAC started based on a false prophecy. They believe that their new apostles who were called to take the office of apostle in 1833 were called by prophecy. However, we discussed earlier that the office of apostles was only filled by men who met Jesus and were chosen by Jesus Himself.
- In addition, we learned in the Bible that the work and office of the Apostles was to lay the foundation for the church. The Bible clearly proves their founding prophecy to be false.
- Their apostles also regularly bring new truths and new interpretations which can be found false according to the truth of the Bible.

Part 2 – Discussion on the New Apostolic Church

- 1. Now that you know what the New Apostolic Church believes, how would you share the gospel with a member of their cult? What Bible verses would you use?**
- 2. Why is it better to have the Bible as our final authority instead of a modern prophet?**

Lesson 3 – Is the Jehovah’s Witnesses or Watchtower a Cult?

Introduction

It is estimated that there are more than eight million members of the Jehovah’s Witness Watchtower church. The JW organization claims to have 300,000 members in Zambia. Their number seems to be increasing quickly because they are zealously preaching their beliefs and gaining more members. As with the New Apostolic Church, many of us probably know someone who is in the Watchtower. However, you will learn today that the Watchtower of Jehovah’s Witness is not a church at all. They are a cult that teaches false things about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, salvation, and they have their own version of the Bible to support their teachings.

Part 1 – Characteristics of JW and Watchtower

1. JW Claim to Have New Truth

- The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach many new ideas which are not found in the Bible. One example is that they teach that there is no Hell as a place of everlasting punishment for the wicked. They say that the idea of Hell is not scriptural, it is unreasonable, it is contrary to God’s love, and that it is not justice
 - However, the Bible speaks clearly of Hell in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 and Matthew 25:46. Hell is a real place of everlasting punishment for those who refuse the free gift of salvation through Jesus. The everlasting punishment for the wicked and unbelieving people lasts just as long as the everlasting life for those who put their faith in Jesus for salvation.
 - Hell does not go against God’s love, mercy, or justice. According to God’s love and mercy He has provided a way of salvation for all people through Jesus if people will just put their faith in Jesus and His work on the cross. If people refuse to believe in Jesus, they must bear the punishment of their sins themselves which is Hell. That is justice.
- It is clear that the JW teach new truths not found in the true Bible. Their teachings are so different and new that they require a different bible and many books from the Watchtower to teach their doctrines. They have rejected historical and faithful teachings from the Prophets and Apostles in the Bible and changed many things to fit the new things taught by their founder, Mr. Russell, in 1870.

2. JW Has a Non-Biblical Source of Authority

- Since they have their own translation of the Bible, it is clear that they do not have a biblical source of authority. However, they would argue that they simply have their own translation much like we have different translations today. However, their method of translation has two major problems.
 - One problem with their translation is that their translators clearly ignored the rules of proper Greek grammar and context of the passages when translating certain Bible verses. For example, when they translate John 8:58 they say Jesus said “I have been” instead of saying “I Am” as God did in Exodus 3:14.

Since the Pharisees immediately become angry and attempt to stone Jesus for blasphemy it is clear from the context that Jesus was quoting God from Exodus 3:14 and Jesus was claiming to be God in the flesh.

- In addition, the same Greek words for “to be” appear 22 times between John 8:42 – John 9:12 and the NWT always translates the words as “I am” except in John 8:58. Why? They do this because this is the only one that can prove that Jesus is God in the flesh.
- Why would the JW not want to say that Jesus is God? Because their founding teacher, Mr. Russell, taught that Jesus was not God. Therefore, when they translated their NWT they had to ignore proper Greek grammar to follow the teachings of their founder.
 - The NWT also mistranslates all other passages that could teach Jesus to be God in the flesh like Colossians 1 and John 1:1 among others.
 - However, the JW will point to their interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 as support for their believe that Jesus is a created being and not God. The problem here is that they also have a new interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 that is not supported by the context of Proverbs 8 or the rest of the Bible.
 - The Hebrew word used for “created” can also be translated as “begat” or “birthed”. In fact Proverbs 8:23-25 clearly show that the context of Proverbs 8:22 is the idea of Jesus being born or begotten and not created as JW would like to believe.
- Finally, the JW believe that reading their Watchtower books is more important than reading the Bible. They believe that “the Holy Spirit invisibly communicates with Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Publicity Department” as they write and publish their Watchtower books.
 - Their founder, Mr. Russell, said that “people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself”. In another quote Mr. Russell said if someone had refused to read the Bible but read their publications instead, they would have the full light of the Scriptures.
 - Before they had made the NWT, their Watchtower books would often teach false things about the Triune God by quoting Bible verses out of context, or quoting them wrongly, and by leaving out all other Bible passages that would teach the truth. Now that they have their own bible in the NWT they can quote their own verses.
- The persistence of the JW to follow the teachings of Mr. Russell even though proper study and translation of the Bible would go against Mr. Russell shows that they have an unbiblical source of authority. In fact, they created a new source of non-biblical authority by making a new and wrong translation of the Bible.

3. JW Has New Interpretations of Scripture

- One very important thing to know about the Jehovah’s Witness in the Watchtower is that they have their own translation of the Bible called The New World Translation (NWT). They believe they follow the Bible but they really only follow the NWT. The NWT makes many mistakes and changes to the original languages of Greek and Hebrew in order to support their peculiar beliefs.

- Therefore, when you bring your Bible to discuss with them, they will not listen because they believe all other Bibles are wrong. They will only listen to teachings from the NWT.
- To understand why they have their own translation of the Bible you must understand how they started. A man named Charles Taze Russell started teaching a group in 1870. He taught many strange doctrines and wrote many books with these teachings. This is how the Jehovah's Witness began. Their NWT was published in 1961. They went almost 100 years without their own strange translation but they felt all the other translations of the Bible were wrong because they did not teach what they believed. Therefore, instead of changing their beliefs to match the Bible, they decided to translate the Bible the way they wanted.
 - You can see here that they went far beyond having their own interpretation of Scripture. In fact, they failed to teach their doctrines from the Bible through new interpretations. They were forced to just write the Bible again so that it matched what they believed. As we study more about JW you will see that there is no way they can be considered a Christian church because they refuse the foundations of the Christian faith and force the NWT to say what they want.

4. JW Has a Different Jesus

- We have mentioned already but now we will discuss more fully the fact that JW do not believe Jesus is God in the flesh. They do not believe that Jesus is equal with God as a part of the Trinity. They believe Jesus is the first being that God created. When he was first created he was Michael the archangel. When he came to earth he changed to be Jesus. They also believe that Lucifer was Jesus' brother who rebelled against God.
 - They also believe that after Jesus died, resurrected, and ascended to Heaven, he returned to his former state whereby he has no body. They believe that today, Jesus is again a spirit as he was before he was born of Mary.
- JW say the Bible supports their beliefs about Jesus but the Bible clearly teaches the opposite of what they say.
 - **John 14:28** – JW say this verse shows that Jesus is not equal to God. However, in this verse Jesus is referencing His voluntary submission to God the Father as the Head of the Trinity. He is not saying He is less divine but that He has taken a temporary lesser rank while He is on earth.
 - **Revelation 3:14** – The JW translate this verse to say that Jesus is the first created being. However, proper exegesis and study of the Greek shows that Jesus is explained to be the source of creation. Since God created all things and Jesus here refers to Himself as the source of all creation, Jesus is claiming to be equal to God as a part of the Trinity.
 - **Colossians 1:15** – The JW point to this verse as proof that Jesus was created first as they believe. However, they ignore the rest of the context. When we read Colossians 1:15-17 it is clear that Jesus is not a mere created being but He is the one who created all things just as God did. Thus, in saying that He is the “firstborn” of all creation Paul is speaking of the way God has chosen to regard Jesus as the firstborn much like Joseph was treated like the firstborn

although he was not. There are several times in the Bible that a latter born son was given the rights and blessings of the firstborn by the will of God. This is the same concept in regards to Jesus in this verse.

- It is also important to know that the NWT adds the word “other” in Colossians 1:16-17 so that the JW can maintain their rejection of Jesus as God. They say “for by him all other things were created” and they say “and in him all other things hold together”. They say “other” so that Jesus can be classified as a created being just like all other things. Again, this is a bad translation as they have allowed their belief to change the translation instead of allowing the clear Word of God to change their beliefs.
- Without a proper and biblical faith in Jesus as the second person of the trinity, the JW cannot be considered a true church. The Bible teaches clearly and often that Jesus is God in the flesh and we must believe that in order to know we are believing in the true Jesus of the Bible. Since they base their beliefs in Mr. Russell’s teachings and in their own version of the Bible and since their understanding of Jesus is so different from the Jesus of the Bible, the JW have a different Jesus.

5. JW and Double-Talk

- The one thing that Jehovah’s Witness has going for them is that they do not indulge in deceptive double-talk like some other cults. They truly believe the things they teach, and they will boldly proclaim it to everyone. The sad fact is that the Watchtower shares false teachings with more boldness and more faithfulness than do the churches who teach the truth of the Bible.

6. JW Reject Orthodox Christianity and Refuse or Change Christian Teaching on the Trinity

- Since they went as far as to make their own translation of the Bible and they reject all other accurate versions of the Bible, it is clear that the JW have rejected common Christianity. Many of their beliefs are very strange and different as well.
 - They deny that Jesus is God in the flesh. They deny that the Holy Spirit is God. They believe salvation is by works that make you worthy of salvation. They believe Jesus is Michael the Archangel who changed to be Jesus.
- We have already discussed that they teach something different about Jesus. The JW also teach that the Holy Spirit is not divine as well. They teach that the Holy Spirit is not a part of the Godhead or the Trinity. They believe the Holy Spirit to be a thing instead of a personal spirit.
 - In order to support the teachings they received from Mr. Russell regarding the Holy Spirit, they translated Ephesians 4:30 and John 14:26 differently from faithful Bible translations.
 - In both Ephesians 4:30 and John 14:26 they say “by which” instead of “by whom”. Other faithful Bibles say “by whom” to show that the Holy Spirit is a person within the Trinity. The JW say “by which” to show that the Holy Spirit is a thing and not a person.
 - However, the context of Ephesians 4:30 proves that the Holy Spirit is a personal spirit instead of an impersonal thing. The context is giving

instructions not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Things cannot be grieved. You cannot grieve an axe. No, only personal beings can be grieved. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is indeed a personal being.

- It seems that the JW do not deny the eternal existence and divine nature of the Holy Spirit but they do deny His personhood. Therefore, they say the Holy Spirit is a thing that is eternal but it is not God and there is no Trinity.

7. JW Has a Faith and Practice that Changes

- We discussed earlier how the Watchtower changed its beliefs on the return of Jesus. At first, they believed that Jesus would return visibly to earth and set up His kingdom. After their prophecy of the return of Christ in 1914 failed, they changed their theology about the return of Jesus to be a secret and invisible return.
- Changing theology does not seem to be a habit of the Watchtower but it is clear that changing theology is not a strange idea to them. Since their beliefs are rooted in the teachings of Mr. Russell, it does not seem that they will change their theology anymore since he is dead now.
 - They prefer to continue changing their version of the Bible called “The New World Translation”. Each time they find something in the Bible that teaches against what they believe, they edit their own NWT to say what they want. This is not changing theology but it is just as perverse.

8. JW Has a Strong Leadership

- There is no doubt that Mr. Russell was a strong leader when the Watchtower was starting. However, now that he has died, the church still continues with his teachings. In this way, it cannot be said that the Watchtower has strong leadership but rather that they had strong leadership and he left a strong foundation.

9. JW Teaches Salvation by Works

- The Watchtower faith does not believe salvation is a free gift from God through Jesus. They believe salvation is a reward for good works and obedience.
 - Their literature says, “They must be recovered from blindness as well as from death, that they, each for himself, may have a full chance to prove, by obedience or disobedience, their worthiness of life eternal.”
 - Another book of theirs says, “All who by reason of faith in Jehovah God and in Christ Jesus dedicate themselves to do God’s will and then faithfully carry out their dedication will be rewarded with everlasting life...”
 - Many Watchtower friends might say they are saved by Jesus but they do not believe that faith in Jesus alone can save. This is why they are so serious about distributing their books and telling people about their faith. They believe that if they fail to do these things, they will not receive salvation.
- The Jehovah’s Witness do not understand or believe Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; John 3:16; and Romans 6:23. According to these verses from the Bible, salvation is a free gift from God to people who put all their faith in Jesus alone for salvation. When the Jehovah’s witness trust in their good works and their obedience, they stop trusting in Jesus alone.

- No one is worthy of salvation and no one can make themselves worthy by working for salvation. Jesus saves us just as we are when we put all our faith in Him alone. That faith brings true repentance. In this way we are born again and the Holy Spirit can renew us and change us.

10. JW Has False Prophecies

- The Watchtower and Mr. Russell prophesied that Jesus would return visibly and set up His kingdom on earth in the year 1914. However, the year 1914 came and went with nothing significant taking place.
- They changed their interpretation of their own prophecy to mean that Jesus set up His kingdom in Heaven and so fulfilled the prophecy to establish His kingdom. Now, they do not believe that Jesus is coming back again. They believe that He already “came” in 1914 even though He did not really “come back” as they originally prophesied.
 - So, instead of admitting that they were wrong about their prophecy in 1914, the Watchtower changed their beliefs about the return of Jesus to something that is not even in the Bible. They decided to change their belief about the return of Christ to say that Jesus’s return was secret and invisible.
 - However, the Bible teaches that Jesus’ return will be visible by all people on earth (Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:26-27; Revelation 1:7). Since the Jehovah’s Witness wrongly predicted the return of Jesus, they are guilty of false prophecy. They also, now believe something about the return of Jesus that is wrong and can be considered a “new truth”.

Part 2 – Discussion on Jehovah’s Witnesses

- 1. Now that you know what the Watchtower believes, how would you share the gospel with a member of the Watchtower? What Bible verses would you use?**
- 2. Why do you think the Jehovah’s Witness Watchtower share their faith with more faithfulness and boldness than our own members?**
- 3. What can we do to encourage our members to be more bold and faithful, in sharing the true Gospel?**

Lesson 4 – Is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Mormons, a Cult?

Introduction

The presence of Mormons who call their church the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is much smaller than some other groups in Zambia. They numbered around 4,700 in Zambia in 2019 with 13 congregations. However, as we have learned previously, cults usually grow quickly due to their new and strange messages, double-talk, and leadership. The Mormons are no different. If Zambian Christians do not prepare in advance by learning about Mormon teachings, then there is likely to be a great growth of Mormons in Zambia in the future.

Part 1 – Characteristics of the Mormon Church

1. Mormons Claim to Have a New Truth
 - The Mormons were founded upon the idea that all other churches in the world are wrong and that they alone hold the truths of God. In the United States of America in 1820 Joseph Smith, Jr. was 15-years-old. He had never really put his faith in any teachings from any churches but he decided to pray to find what church was best. As he prayed, he had a vision where someone who looked like an angel of light told him that all the churches were wrong and that all their teachings were an abomination. Therefore, from here Joseph Smith was set on a path that led to starting the Mormon's group based on new truths, new scriptures, new prophecies, and many other strange teachings.
 - Three years later in 1823, when Joseph Smith Jr. was 18-years-old, he had another vision where an angel named Moroni told Mr. Smith there were some ancient tablets in the USA that were placed there by Native Americans before Europeans came to settle. These tablets contained the “fullness of the everlasting gospel”. The tablets were written by the Native Americans because Jesus came to visit them after He resurrected. However, the tablets were made of gold and the writing on them was in “reformed Egyptian”.
 - Smith claims to have eventually found these tablets and translated them. However, there are many problems with his story. Jesus did not go the USA. Jesus commissioned the Apostles and said they would be His witnesses in all the earth. Also, why would Native Americans write on tablets in any form of Egyptian? They did not know the Egyptian language. Smith did not know Egyptian either but he claims that he translated the tablets by the help of God.
 - Finally, Smith claims that when he finished translating the tablets and printing the book in English, the angel Moroni took the tablets back to keep them safe. So, no one else can ever see the tablets to confirm their existence or translate them into another language. All of this is very strange and cannot be proven true.
 - All of the Mormon teachings can be considered New Truth. The Mormons started by rejecting all other Christian teachings in favor of their own teachings from new tablets

that no one else has access to. They still have prophets who bring new truth as well. Many of their teachings are very strange and different from any other religious group and yet they call themselves Christian.

2. Mormons Have Non-Biblical Sources of Authority

- Based on how the Mormons were started, it is clear that they have a non-biblical source of authority. Their authority is the testimonies and books of Joseph Smith Jr. None of his testimonies and books can be proven true. In fact, much of what he wrote can be proven false according to history in in the USA and in Ancient Near East.
- The Mormons claim to have four sacred works which they accept.
 - *The Bible* – They only believe the Bible as far as they think it is translated correctly. They believe the Catholic church took out a lot of what was in the Bible to make it what they want. When the Bible says something that does not agree with their other books, they say that there is a translation error in the Bible. Therefore, it is clear that they do not really trust the Bible. They put the writings of Joseph Smith above the Bible. They will change the Bible to follow what Joseph Smith taught and wrote.
 - *The Book of Mormon* – The Book of Mormon is considered by the Mormons to be inspired by God as we believe the Bible is inspired by God. They believe it is a book which was written by Native Americans after Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection. Then the book was translated by Joseph Smith Jr.
 - Even the Book of Mormon has passed through 3,000 changes since it was first written. These are not just corrections in translation. The book was written in English by Joseph Smith who they believe is a prophet. Yet they change the words of his book from time to time when his book seems to not agree with another one of his teachings. In the original version of the Book of Mormon a verse says “...That Lamb of God is the eternal Father and the Savior of the world...”. However, now the Book of Mormon says, “that the lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father.” The word “lamb” is no longer given respect and he is no longer the savior of the world. The emphasis of the new version is on the Eternal Father instead of the Lamb of God.
 - Finally, the Book of Mormon has been proven false by study of history and archaeology. No Mormon cities, rivers, names, inscriptions, copies of scriptures, or artifacts have been found to support the Book of Mormon.
 - *Doctrine and Covenants* – This is a record of 138 revelations revealing some of Mormonism’s different doctrines such as baptism for the dead and marriage in heaven.
 - *The Pearl of Great Price* – This is a book containing several other books. The first is the Book of Moses which is almost the same as the first six chapters of genesis. The second is The Book of Abraham which was later proven to be a false book with nothing true in it. Yet it still remains in their books. The Pearl of Great Price also includes some of Smith’s own translation of the Bible, parts of Smith’s history as written by himself, and the Articles of Faith.

- Finally, the Mormons have what they call the Living Prophets. The living prophets are considered to be most important. They believe these prophets to speak directly for God. When they say something, it is to be believed without question. When they make a plan, there is no discussion and there is no other way.
- With all of these sources of authority, it is clear that many of the things written and spoken do not agree with the Bible. However, much of what they teach disagrees with their own books as well. This is where they also rely upon the Living Prophets to bring the new word from God and bring clarification.
- The Bible teaches that no one should try to add to God's Word (Proverbs 30:5-6). The Bible never contradicts itself and the source is God Himself through the ancient prophets and through Jesus today (Hebrews 1:1-3).

3. Mormons Have a New Interpretation of Scripture

- Mormons do not rely on new interpretations of the Bible. They have many other books and their prophets that they rely on. They will often claim that the Bible has not been translated properly or that the Catholic church has removed something from the Bible.
 - However, they will try to reinterpret Bible verses when you read them to a Mormon. They start by trying to give a new interpretation using the Bible so that you will believe their message. If you continue to bring up other Bible passages that prove your point, they will stop trying to reinterpret and just say that the Bible is not translated correctly.

4. Mormons Have a Different Jesus

- To understand what the Mormons believe about Jesus, you must first understand what they believe about people. Mormons believe that we are the children of God birthed by his body with a mother god. Our bodies were formed on earth and our spirits entered those bodies. This is their belief about people.
- Mormons believe Jesus was the first spirit-baby that God produced with Mary. They do not believe, as the Bible says, that Jesus was miraculously placed in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus is the firstborn of God. In this way he is the son of God but He is not special. He is just like us and we are just like him. They believe that we were also there in the beginning of creation as Jesus was.
- Mormons believe that what happened to Jesus as He became "like God" can also happen to us. We too can become like God as Jesus did.
- They also believe Jesus to be the brother of Lucifer who became Satan. In this way, Satan is also our brother. Satan rebelled against God and now is an enemy. Jesus is given respect in Mormonism because he volunteered to die on the cross to help save us, His brothers.
- From all of these teachings it is clear that the Jesus the Mormons speak of is not the same Jesus the Bible presents to us.
 - The presents Jesus as God in the flesh. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. Jesus, as God, is the only eternal being and was present with God the Father as a part of the Trinity even before the beginning. People were in existence until God created them on earth and until each of us are born on earth. There will never be another person like Jesus who was fully God and fully man yet never

sinned.

5. Mormons Use Double-Talk to Appear Like They Are Christians

- It is clear that Mormons use double-talk greatly to confuse people. They claim to be Christian but their beliefs are far from Christianity. When you talk to a Mormon, they will use all the same vocabulary that we use as Christians. However, when you study deeper you will find that they have a very different dictionary. The meaning of all their words is different from ours.
- They say they believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit but they twist these words and definitions to mean something very different. They will say they believe that “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one” but they do not mean one in Godhood like we say about the trinity. They believe they have one work of saving people but they are very different from God.
- They say Jesus is the savior but they teach about salvation by works instead.
- They say they believe the Bible but they disagree with the Bible on all major teachings and prefer their books and modern prophets first.
- If you talk to a Mormon, they will make you think they are Christians who believe the same as you but they have new truths that you do not have access to. This will make people want to learn more. However, once you enter the Mormon group, you will be tricked into believing many things that are not true and not found in the Bible. This is double-talk.

6. Mormons Reject Orthodox Christianity and Refuse or Change Christian Teaching on the Trinity

- Mormons were founded on the idea that all other Christian churches were wrong and were abominations to God. Therefore, from their start they reject all other churches. Almost all of their doctrines and faith reject the main beliefs of every other Christian church and the Bible.
- Mormons believe themselves to be the only church through which salvation can be found. They also believe that you must believe in Joseph Smith in order to be saved. It is written that, “There is no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith... If Joseph Smith was verily a prophet, and if he told the truth... then this knowledge is of the most vital importance to the entire world. No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he can not enter the Kingdom of God.”
 - Since the Mormons are the only church that believe in Joseph Smith, they believe they are the only people who can enter the Kingdom of God.
- Mormons do not believe in the Trinity. They say that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one in purpose. This means that they are unified in their work but not in their person. They are not three persons in one God but three separate and different persons with one work as they work together.
- Mormons believe that there are many gods. They believe that God was once a man like us on an earth like ours. They also believe that men on this earth can become a god like God is. These doctrines are based on the teachings of Joseph Smith.
 - However, Joseph Smith taught in other places that there is only one God. Therefore, it is clear that Joseph Smith contradicts his own teachings and causes confusion. Mormons would say that God is the only God of this earth

but there are other earths with other gods. However, the Bible says something very different.

- The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God and that we cannot become gods (Isaiah 43:10; 1 Corinthians 8:4). God, Himself, says that there are no other gods. If God the Father does not know of any other god, then there are no other gods in any place or at any time.
- Mormons believe the Holy Spirit is not a person but a force. In fact, they do not believe the Holy Ghost can be in all places at one time as God can. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is not God because it lacks this ability to be omnipresent.

7. Mormons Have a Faith and Practice that Changes

- Mormons are subject to changing theology because they do not trust in the Bible, they have their own books that they continue to change, and they have Living Prophets who bring new teachings.
 - Mormons used to believe that Adam was our God but now they have changed that belief even though the man who taught this doctrine, Brigham Young, claimed to speak the words of God equal to Scripture.
 - Mormons have always believed that males can become gods and they have taught that men must learn to become gods as all other gods have learned before them. However, these days they seem to be confused by this. Some are not fully teaching they can become gods but they are trying to reinterpret these teachings to mean something different. However, they cannot explain these teachings in a way that satisfies anyone.
 - Mormons used to teach that black people cannot receive exaltation to priesthood, or what they call the Celestial Kingdom like Heaven. However, in 1978, after the USA had finished desegregation of black and white people, the Mormon church new belief that black people can receive exaltation.
 - In the beginning of Mormonism, there was something called the Law of Adoption. The Law of Adoption was seen as necessary for salvation and exaltation to becoming a god. It was the practice where men could seal themselves to other men as eternal adopted sons. Each man could adopt as many eternal sons as he wished and they would live on earth as fathers and sons. However, these relationships caused too much jealousy and bitterness within the families and churches as adoption gave more status to others. The practice was finally stopped in 1894 even though it was originally required for salvation and exaltation in their beliefs.
 - The Mormons used to practice polygamy where a man can marry many wives. In fact, they saw it as a good thing because that man could stay married to his wives even after death and the wives would produce spirit babies for him so he could create his own world. However, the Mormon church changed to stop believing in polygamy and now they change the words of Joseph Smith Jr. and Brigham Young to say “wife” instead of “wives”. Even though Young and Smith are their prophets who speak the new word of God, they change the words.
 - Mormon history with Joseph Smith Jr. and Brigham Young has accounts of them speaking in tongues as well as many of their church members. However,

today the church never speaks in tongues and does not believe in doing so in church. They would likely become very upset if it was done in one of their churches today.

- United Order was a practice in the early days of Mormonism as required by God. This was the practice of every church member giving everything they own to the church and then the church would give back what portion the leaders felt the members needed to live well. Clearly, this caused a lot of confusion and frustration for Mormon members and others who were considering membership in the Mormon church. At one point, the copies of the book where Smith had written this practice were mostly burned by outsiders. Joseph Smith then changed the belief and ordered the other books where the practice was written be destroyed and the practice never taught again in the same way.
- The Word of Wisdom was a “revelation” that the Mormons received in 1833. The revelation forbids the use of alcohol, tobacco, and hot drinks. However, there are many accounts of Joseph Smith, himself, drinking and smoking without ever changing the belief. So even though this belief never changed, the founder of Mormonism did not even follow this “revelation from God”.

8. Mormons Have Strong Leadership

- When Mormonism began in 1830, they were trusting in the words and visions of a 15-year-old boy, Joseph Smith Jr. There is no doubt that Smith must have been a strong leader at the age of 28 when the church started. He was such a strong leader that now they believe they cannot receive salvation without Smith’s approval.
- Today, their strong leadership is the “Living Prophets” who the Mormons believe speaks the words of God. Mormons have no permission to question the Living Prophets. Where the Bible says we should test the prophets according to the Bible, the Mormons believe they should just trust and obey the prophets without question.

9. Mormons Teach Salvation by Works

- Mormons believe that faith in Jesus is not enough to save anyone. In addition to believing in Jesus, people must also obey the laws and ordinances of the Gospel as written in their books and trust in Joseph Smith as an authoritative prophet.
 - One of their teachers has written, “...if you will believe in your hearts and confess with your mouth Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph was a prophet, and that Brigham is his successor, you shall be saved in the kingdom of God...”
 - Again, the Bible teaches the truth and it is very different from Mormonism. Salvation is by grace through faith and without our works (Ephesians 2:8-10). We must believe in God and Jesus alone (John 6:28). Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is sufficient for salvation for all people who believe (Hebrews 7:27).
- Mormons also do not believe in Hell as an everlasting place of punishment for unbelievers. They believe there are three levels of glory that all people will enter.
 - *Celestial Kingdom* – This is the place reserved for the Melchizedek priesthood and members who will become gods.

- *Terrestrial Kingdom* – This is for those who failed the requirements of exaltation by not being in the Mormon church and following their teachings but maybe they believed in Jesus.
- *Telestial Kingdom* – This is for those who have never believe in Jesus at all.
- Even still, Mormons teach that you can move from one Kingdom to the next by doing good works after death or by having family members who are Mormon do things on your behalf. Therefore, it can be concluded that it does not matter if you are a Mormon or not. It does not matter if you believe in Jesus or not. We can all reach the best kingdom after death by our works or the works of our living relatives.
 - This is a lie from Satan. Satan wants people to relax and not seek the Lord so that they die and go to Hell. If they do seek Jesus, Satan wants them to not put all of their faith in Jesus so he deceives them into putting some of their faith in their own works. If people seek salvation through Jesus, Satan wants them to do so with a false motive of hoping to become gods themselves.

10. Mormons Have False Prophecies

- Mormons have a prophecy that when the Jews return to Israel, they will all believe in Jesus as the Messiah. However, today, the Jews do live in Israel and most of them do not believe Jesus is the Messiah.
- Joseph Smith prophesied that the Mormons would build a temple in a location he chose in the USA during his lifetime. However, two weeks after he spoke that prophesy, Mormons were chased away from that area where he chose.
- Later Joseph Smith prophesied that Mormons would return to that same location and build a temple. Yet, more than 160 years later and there is still no Mormon temple in that city.
- Based on these events, Joseph Smith is a false prophet and his teachings should not be followed and the Mormon faith is false.

Part 2 – Discussion on the Mormon Church

- 1. Now that you know what Mormons believe, how would you share the gospel with a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints? What Bible verses would you use?**
- 2. We have seen that Mormons seem to use the same Christian words as us but they have very different meanings for these words. How can we help our own church members be prepared in case a Mormon evangelist tries to convert them to Mormonism?**

Lesson 5 – Group Project, How to Disciple Former Cult Members

Introduction

In this lesson, you will make groups of 2-3 people and use all that you have learned to write a simple discipleship tool to use with your church members who have come out of a cult background. Your discipleship program should have 6 lessons covering 6 different topics. This project will be your final exam for this course. You will be graded based on whether or not you have covered the main topics that need to be covered for cult members to gain a good foundation in Biblical truth. You will also be graded based on how well you present Bible passages and verses to address each of the topics.

This project is very important and should be very helpful for you in ministry. We all have church members who have come from cults or who will come in contact with these cults. Your discipleship program tool will be helpful for you as you receive members from cults because you will be prepared to teach them the truth from the Bible and help them clear up any confusions that have remained from their cult. You will also be able to help your other church members be better prepared for engaging cult members in evangelism or defending the true faith as they discuss with spiritual topics with cult members.

You will not have time to write everything you want to say in your discipleship program tool. You are NOT writing the whole lesson. You will start by choosing 6 topics you want to cover. Then you will write an introduction for each lesson explaining why that topic is important to be covered. Then you will list the points you want to teach for each lesson and the Bible passages, stories, and verses you will use to teach the points of the lesson. You will do this for each lesson. You can make as many points as you like during each lesson and you can use as many verses as you like to teach those points. Below is an example of how one lesson might be written. You can have more or less points than the example. You can also have more or less Bible references. This is only a brief example.

Each group will present their discipleship program tools to the class. Please do not teach the lessons. You just need to read your topic and introduction. Then you can list the points and supporting Bible verses you would use to teach each point. Then you can move on to the next topic. As you listen to the other groups present their programs, you will learn some new points and different Bible references you may want to add to your tool. That is a good thing and you should do that before returning to your church to use the tool. You will also need to add more explanations in your tool so that they become proper lessons you can use in your church but here in Bible School there is not enough time to do that right now.

Example of a Discipleship Plan Outline

Introduction: Every Christian must understand that the Bible is the final authority for faith and practice. Cults often have many sources of authority that are different from the Bible. From these different authorities they learn new truths and change their beliefs. A true Christian must find their beliefs clearly taught in the Bible. When our faith is rooted in the Bible, we can know that we believe truth and our faith never changes because the Bible never changes.

1. Point number one
 - a. Bible passage – explanation
 - b. Bible story – explanation
 - c. Bible verse – explanation
2. Point number two
 - a. Bible passage – explanation
 - b. Bible story – explanation
 - c. Bible verse – explanation
3. Point number three
 - a. Bible passage – explanation
 - b. Bible story – explanation
 - c. Bible verse – explanation
4. Point number four
 - a. Bible passage – explanation
 - b. Bible story – explanation
 - c. Bible verse – explanation