

“As an Ex-Mormon, How Do I Find a Church That’s Not a Cult?”

I was raised a Mormon, I now know it is a cult and totally wrong. I am Christian now. I am having difficulty finding a church I can go to as I am afraid of being sucked into another cult.

Many have asked for guidelines regarding what church they should or should not join, as well as how to recognize a cult. The question might be expanded to include a broader spectrum of religious organizations. This range could include churches that are both orthodox and healthy, orthodox but unhealthy, pseudo Christian cults, and finally organizations that claim a completely different religious tradition. The progression might look something like this:

Orthodox & Healthy → Orthodox & Abusive → Cult (Christian) → World Religion (Other religious traditions)

The goal would be to attend churches that are both orthodox in their theology and that are governed by a group of men who model a Christ-like form of servant leadership. There should be a healthy balance between building up believers and sending them out to serve and reach the world. Churches can often become unhealthy when they have a completely inward perspective. Unfortunately, there are churches with orthodox theology that become abusive due to leadership that is either immature or that chooses to lead in a manipulative and abusive manner. This can happen when a pastor lacks significant oversight by a competent board of elders/deacons or when men who are not good candidates become elders/deacons and hire a young or inexperienced pastor.

The term orthodox basically means to conform to tradition. In this case we are referring to the tradition or teaching of Christ’s apostles as found in the Bible. Some have defined it as what all Christians everywhere have believed. The first seven ecumenical councils of the church established Christianity’s theology regarding the nature of God and the person of Christ. These beliefs are a good test for orthodoxy. In general, Christians believe that there is one God who has revealed himself in three persons, Father, Son and Spirit (one essence, three persons). Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man, and has been co-equal with the Father since eternity past. It has also been believed that the death of Jesus Christ is the only atonement for sin.

A pseudo-Christian cult usually denies the deity of Christ or his humanity (Gnostics). As you know, Mormonism denies the trinity, claiming that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate gods with a similar or united purpose. There is much more that could be said about each movement (Mormons, JW’s) but you can check our articles on the web for that info. Ron Rhodes defines a cult in one of his books in this manner:

A cult may be defined from both a sociological and a theological perspective. Sociologically speaking, a cult is a religious or semireligious sect or group whose members are controlled or dominated almost entirely by a single individual or organization. A sociological definition of a cult generally includes (but is not limited to) the authoritarian, manipulative, and sometimes communal features of cults. In this type of cult, converts are sometimes cut off from all former associations, including their own families. The Hare Krishnas, The Family (“Children of God”), and Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church are examples of this kind of cult.

Theologically speaking, a cult is a religious group that claims to be Christian but in fact denies one or more of the essential doctrines of historic, orthodox Christianity (as defined in the major historic creeds of Christianity). Such groups deny or distort essential Christian doctrines such as the deity of Christ, the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and salvation by grace through faith alone. Cults that fall into this category include the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. [Ron Rhodes, *The Culting of America*, p. 5)

I hope that you find this helpful.

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