

R. Kelly, Brainwashing and Christian Cults

R&B singer R. Kelly flat out denies allegations he's holding young women in an "abusive cult" that brainwashes women. Kelly's attorney is working "diligently and forcibly to pursue his accusers and clear his name."

I won't accuse or defend Kelly. I will use this opportunity to dive into the world of Christian cults.

I'd highly recommend heading over to Mike Bickle's teaching library and listening to the message for yourself. I've summarized the points of "How to Recognize Cults: 7 Characteristics" below in order to get the message out to more people. When I first heard Mike's teaching on Christian cults, it really opened my eyes. I pray this will open your eyes, too.

Seven Characteristics of a Cult

Bickle defines a cult as, "a group that deviates from the doctrines and practices of historic Christianity and has an inordinate loyalty to one leader, whose beliefs are not found in Scripture (as affirmed by historic Christianity).

"Cult leaders, or false teachers, often believe that they alone possess the truth. If a group displays even one of these seven characteristics, it is a cult or has cultish tendencies." Here are the seven characteristics of a cult as Bickle outlined them:

1. **Oppose critical thinking versus demanding that people think for themselves:** Cult members must accept what the cult leader believes without ever challenging their doctrines. They do not want their members to think critically for themselves.
2. **Dishonoring the family unit versus insisting on the**

biblical priority of the family unit: Children are taught to be more loyal to the leaders than to their parents. Women are taught to be more loyal to the leaders than to their husbands, and husbands are taught to accept this as normal behavior.

3. **Isolating members and penalizing them for leaving versus helping them to do God's will:** Cults isolate their people from their families, the church and society. They reject any who leave and warn them, saying that they will be judged by God or will lose God's best if they leave. People are taught to make lifelong commitments to the group. Some groups teach that their members must get permission before joining another ministry.
4. **Seeking inappropriate loyalty to their leaders versus loyalty and connecting people to Jesus:** Cults seek to connect their members to the cult leader and require loyalty to him instead of to Jesus. Loyalty is defined as not questioning the leader. It is very dangerous, when the leader cannot be questioned.
5. **Crossing biblical boundaries of behavior versus walking in purity and financial integrity:** Cults cross biblical boundaries of behavior especially in immorality and finances. False teachers can be detected by their covetousness and immorality (2 Pet. 2:3-18).
6. **Separation from the church versus a culture of honor towards the church:** Cults separate from the wider church and operate with an elite spirit, believing that they alone have a special status with God. They have a polarized mentality of "us versus them." They criticize the larger body of Christ and often claim to be the only ones truly saved. They view all other ministry and denominations as being in error.
7. **Emphasizing special revelations that contradict Scripture versus loyalty to Scripture:** Cults emphasize the special revelations of their leader that contradict the Scripture.

Saints, hear me. I've been very close to two cults and escaped both before falling into the deception headlong. It's not always easy to recognize the fruit of cults at the surface. You have to dig down to the roots. Sometimes the cultish behaviors don't manifest until you are integrated into the community. At that point, it's harder to escape—but Jesus can set you free if you set your heart to go through the door into true Christianity. Amen. {eoa}