

False 'Cult' Accusations Leave True Captives in Bondage

Just because you don't agree with a ministry's doctrine doesn't make that ministry a **cult**. In eternity, I imagine we'll discover no single denomination or ministry had the interpretation of every jot and tittle 100 percent accurate 100 percent of the time. There's a difference between honest error and a spirit of error.

I wrote an article Thursday called, "IHOP Is Not a Cult, but Cults are Rising." Some responses to that article made it clear that some in the body of Christ—or maybe they are wolves in sheep's clothing running smear campaigns (the Lord knows)—are painting the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Mo., with cult status just because they disagree with Mike Bickle's theology.

Some theological points are worth debating. If a church denies the deity of Christ, for example, I'd call it a cult or a **false religion**. Scripture is crystal clear that Jesus is the Son of God. There is no wiggle room for misinterpreting that one. But differences in other theological points, such as the rapture or end times, are not as crystal clear. There is so much symbology that well-respected ministries come to different conclusions about what the Bible says regarding the rapture or eternity. I wouldn't label a ministry as a cult just because I don't absolutely agree with their **end-times theology**.

A Vicious Spirit

What especially disturbs me about people who make definitive cult accusations against the likes of IHOP-KC—and many others—is their ignorance about what the ministries teach,

their lack of biblical understanding about the theology they criticize, and the vicious spirit in which they launch their verbal attacks. There are many different theologies in the body of Christ. As a Christian, you can't possibly agree with them all. But that doesn't mean everyone who doesn't agree with you is a cult. In fact, one of the earmarks of cultish thinking is the attitude that you are the only one who has the truth on a matter of Scripture.

Paul told Timothy to avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife (2 Tim. 2:23). *The Message Bible* puts it this way: "Refuse to get involved in inane discussions; they always end up in fights." And the Amplified Bible says "refuse (shut your mind against, have nothing to do with) trifling (ill-informed, unedifying, stupid) controversies over ignorant questionings, for you know that they foster strife *and* breed quarrels."

Applied to the current **cult debate**, you could say that getting into arguments over areas of Scripture that aren't clear—where there is room for more than one interpretation that is still in line with the whole canon of Scripture—is foolish and counterproductive. And labeling another ministry a cult just because they don't believe the same thing you do about the end times or the rapture is, I believe, libelous at best. As I've said before, I wouldn't want to stand before the Lord and answer to making such a false accusation.

Setting the Captives Free

To be sure, calling a ministry a cult is an extremely serious allegation. Yet every major ministry has witnessed this persecution. Kenneth Hagin has been accused of leading a cult. Joyce Meyer has been called a heretic. John Hagee has been deemed the leader of the "Left Behind Cult." Joel Osteen has been called a false prophet and a cult leader. Would you believe that Billy Graham has even been accused of cult association? The list goes on and on.

There are plenty of legitimate cults out there. My concern is that all the internal cult accusations within the body of Christ are confusing the matter. Instead of attacking ministries because we don't believe in a point of theology, why not raise awareness of cults and false religions that deny the virgin birth, death, and resurrection of Christ? Why not, better yet, get busy about spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ? All the in-fighting in the body of Christ is only damaging our witness to the world. Meanwhile, there truly are millions held in bondage to cults and false religions that need to hear the truth that will set them free. Amen.

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *Did the Spirit of God Say That?* You can email Jennifer at jleclaire@charisma.com or visit her website [here](http://www.jenniferleclaire.com). You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.