

## What are the top ten cults in the U.S.?

---

 [christiananswers.net/q-aiia/aiia-top10cults.html](https://christiananswers.net/q-aiia/aiia-top10cults.html)

If you truly want to make someone look bad these days, call the group or church to which they belong a cult! Instantly, that person or group is identified with David Koresh and the Branch Davidians, Jim Jones and the People's Temple, or Marshall Applewhite and Heaven's Gate—a few of the most notorious and contemporary examples of destructive “cults” in America.

The word cult creates a great amount of confusion for many religious and non-religious people. Some would define a cult as “any group of wackos who take religion more seriously than I do.”

But what is a “cult” really?

I would contend that the term cult should be reserved for only the most recognizably destructive groups—from both a Christian and non-Christian perspective.

From the Christian point of view, there are two very important considerations in identifying a destructive or unhealthy group.

First, there is the theological consideration. How consistent are the group's beliefs with the basic tenets of the historic Christian faith? This evaluates the eternal significance of such beliefs.

Second, there is the social-psychological consideration. How are power, authority, and control exercised in the group? This evaluates techniques of manipulation and mind control.

A group may be deficient in one or both areas and thereby be considered an unhealthy and/or destructive group from a Christian perspective.

The following are the ten most dangerous groups in America today, based on one or both of the above stated concerns:

- 1. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormonism).**

A very subtle, spiritual deception started in 1830 by Joseph Smith. This aggressively evangelistic group contends that it is the only true Church, and that all Christians outside Mormonism are following a deficient Gospel and a false Christ.

**2. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses).**

Militantly anti-historic Christian tenets. This group began in the 1870s with Charles Taze Russell. They not only deny the essentials of the Christian faith, but the control exercised over the membership is highly destructive.

**3. The Church of Scientology.**

A do-it-yourself salvation, science fiction group that masquerades as the true Church, lightly sprayed with a thin veneer of Christianity. Seeks to destroy through litigation and character assassination those who speak out against the group.

**4. The Twelve Tribes.**

This group began in the early 1970s with Elbert Eugene Spriggs. They claim that salvation can only be found by giving all possessions to them and living in their community. All personal decision-making power is given over to the leadership.

**5. The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (Unification Church).**

Founded in 1954 by Sun Myung Moon, this highly authoritarian and destructive group teaches that Jesus failed on the cross. Moon is now the mediator between God and man.

**6. The International Churches of Christ (Boston Movement).**

This highly evangelistic group which began in 1978 with Kip McKean embraces most of the main tenets of the historic Church. Teaches that it is the only true Church and is highly authoritarian, with immense control over members' lives.

**7. The Family (Children of God).**

This communal group was founded by David "Moses" Berg. A strange mixture of basic Christian tenets and almost total sexual license. Very controlling and manipulative.

**8. Christian Identity Movement (Aryan Nations, Christian Identity Church, Klu Klux Klan, etc.).**

A loose-knit confederation of various small groups that are militantly anti-government and conspiracy driven. Each group holds differing, deviant Christian tenets. All hold to Caucasians being the descendants of the ten "lost" Tribes of Israel, God's true people.

**9. The Nation of Islam (Black Muslims).**

Began in 1930s by W. D. Fard. Group teaches that the black man is good, the white man is the devil, and that Jesus was merely a prophet. Highly controlling group.

**10. United Pentecostal Church (UPC).**

A highly controlling, legalistic group that was formed in 1945. This group denies the Trinity and teaches that in order to be saved one must be baptized in the name of Jesus only.

Author: Bob Pardon, Director of the New England Institute of Religious Research (NEIRR) in Lakeville, MA, and an AIIA Resource Associate. He appeared as a consultant on NBC's national news documentary, "Dateline". NEIRR may be contacted directly at 508-947-9571, or visit them at: [www.neirr.org](http://www.neirr.org). Article provided by AIIA Institute.

Copyright © 2001, 2003, AIIA Institute, All Rights Reserved—except as noted on attached "Usage and Copyright"

Published by ChristianAnswers.Net

Christian Answers, PO Box 577, Frankfort KY 40602, USA