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Avoiding Cults and Embracing Christ: The Importance of knowing Your Church's Doctrine



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After years of hearing the Apostle's Creed, one day, to my surprise, I was able to recite it as a young adult by heart: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead and buried, on the third day he arose from the dead, and sits on the right hand of God the father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen." The Apostles Creed was constructed from important passages of scripture in the New Testament, and it was an affirmation of my faith in God within the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Unfortunately, many people

have visited or joined churches which do not have a written, biblical and consistent set of beliefs. These people are often unable to clearly state the doctrine or covenant of the church, and they readily admit that the pastor or religious leader seems to "make up" beliefs at his or her discretion. Some of these people have told me that their "church" or group has exploited them for money or taken advantage of them in other ways. In short, it was difficult for them to determine if they were attending a church or involved with a cult.

Churches are organized around the teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ. Cults are often built around the personality of the pastor. Churches often have a written set of beliefs based on biblical scripture. Cults often do not have a written biblical, doctrine or covenant, and their teachings are often based on the leader's beliefs. Churches seek to

give to others based on their understanding of the agape love of God and their demonstrative love (ministry) for their neighbor. Cults often seek to take from people so that the people leading the cult can have more of what they covet. Churches embrace the body of Christ throughout the world. Cults say that their particular "church" is the only way to get to heaven. Churches celebrate human life and look forward to eternal life with God. Cults often label human life as miserable, and seek to get their members to end their lives. We should always remember that the church is based on the life, teachings and ministry of Jesus Christ. If we do not understand what we believe, we should ask our pastor to explain our beliefs to us and to direct us to passages in the bible.