

ICEBREAKER: Have you ever had Jehovah Witnesses come to your house? If so, what did you do?

Recently we had a group of guests visit us for our weekly iFit devotional. It was about 12 people who came in and began talking about their goal to partner with other churches in the area for a big peace festival coming up.

For those who were here last week, what did ya'll think of the group before I sent out the warning email?

What does this Global Peace Festival group Represent?

This group of people that came to iFit are part of the Youth Council for the Global Peace Festival. They are a division of the Universal Peace Federation and the Unification Church founded by Sun Myung Moon. Beliefs of this organization include a *universal God*, the creation of a literal Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the *universal salvation of all people*, and that the second coming of Christ is a man born in Korea in the early 20th century. This *Messiah is believed to be Sun Myung Moon* by Unificationists. The initial teaches of Moon started with his book *Divine Principle* and became a much large cult organization in the 1970's. Another thing the 'moonies' are famous for are the mass weddings. Moon has presided over marriages of groups of hundreds, thousands, or even of tens of thousands of couples at once. Many of the arranged marriages paired people, who had never meet, from different countries, races, and cultures. Moon teaches that such "exchange marriages" will help build connections among the divided human family, as people stretch their hearts to love spouse, in-laws, and children.

During my conversation with one of the guests, he made the comment that all religions share roughly 80% percent of the same principles. He talked about peace, kindness, etc. And he might have a point, even in Christianity we strongly believe you should love your neighbor as yourself. However, there are some very **IMPORTANT** things that we don't match up and they shouldn't be taken lightly. In our Christian gospel, Christ is the center. There is nothing else that can bring you salvation, there is nothing else that can reconcile you with the purity of God. The effort of peace alone will not provide you with justification and sanctification.

Another thing to think about in regards to the similarities of different religions is vast majority of religions out there all have people doing works to receive salvation. This is opposite of Christianity where salvation is a free gift. This is demonstrated with the God on the mountain and the people in the valley paradigm. Many of these religions symbolize the people should scale the mountain to get to God, where in reality it is God who comes down to us. Salvation is a free give, all we have to do is accept it.



What are your thoughts about this group now that you know a little more?

Resources include:



Matthew 24:4-14

Signs of the End of Age

4Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8All these are the beginning of birth pains.

9"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.



What dangerous deceptions should Christians be guarded against? Why are believers susceptible to these?

These cults/groups are trained to pull people to their beliefs.

Research

Usually when a group like this comes to you, they've done their homework. There is a good chance they know more about your beliefs than you know about them. Do you know what Jehovah Witnesses believe? But it's a pretty good bet they know what you believe every time they knock on your door. This occurred with our guests to iFit. They researched us. They checked us out on the web, they visited iFit and Cornerstone's websites. They knew what they were coming too. Its my guess they've had some kind of training about Christians too because of the questions they asked.



Intimidation

Many cults will use intimidation to coax you. This can be in many forms, from scaring you with prophecies of burning in hell to more subtle methods. We experienced a little bit of this at our iFit meeting. This group came in with 12 people! That is more people than we had from our normal group. It can be an overwhelming sensation when you're surrounded people you don't know and they're all trying to question or request things of you.

Comfort Zone

These groups are also pretty good at pulling you outside of your comfort zone. They might ask you for contact information. They might ask for monetary donations. They could try to get to you sign up for stuff without explaining what it is. When you're outside of your comfort zone, we tend to get a little fearful and trust people who seem like credible people. These groups know this and they prey on it.

Resources include:



Deception

These types of groups are good at twisting the meaning of things. They might purposefully manipulate scripture or they might try to make you assume things that aren't true. No matter what, you need to be on your guard. An example of this also occurred when we interacted with the group which visited. Immediately when they visited the church and introduced themselves, they began explaining they were a 'God' centered group. Although this might sound like an ok thing, as it turns out this 'god' they were speaking of is not the same as God in the Christian beliefs. Since they knew about us before visiting, I'm convinced they used this description of being a 'God' centered group to try to relate to us and mislead us into a partnership.



2 Corinthians 11:1-15

Paul and the False Apostles

1I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. 2I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. 3But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. 5But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those "super-apostles." 6I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way.

7Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. 9And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. 10As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. 11Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! 12And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. 13For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Has there ever been a time in your life when you were misled by someone (anytime, not just religious)? How did it feel?

Resources include:



How do you know something is a fake?

The U.S. Secret Service has to deal with hundreds of forged and counterfeit bills each year. Crooks are constantly trying to update their methods of producing their own money, and they're doing a pretty good job of coming up with new ways. How does the Secret Service know if a bill is counterfeit? To you and I, a fake bill could look almost identical to the real one. So how do they do it? What methods do they use to find the fake? Do they use chemical ink testing? Do they do material analysis? Do they run the serial numbers? While they may do multiple things, their primary method is simple studying. They spend hours upon hours studying a real authentic bill. They look at the ink, the symbols, the texture, the portrait, etc. They know these things so well that if they were to be handed a counterfeit dollar bill they could almost immediately spot the flaws. On a real bill, the portrait is more clear, the saw tooth emblem is sharper, the lines in border are very clear lines, numbers are evenly space, and paper quality is distinct. Agents can't spend there time learning about all the new ways of counterfeiting since tomorrow there would just be something new to learn and the next day there will be another, and the next, and the next... Therefore, they focus solely on what is real.



Have any of you ever seen counterfeit money? How did you know it was counterfeit?

What does this mean for our spiritual lives?

We as Christians should be so focused on Christ that when something comes along we should be able to spot the fake. This isn't any easy task, especially when we already have so many things in our lives that pull us away from Christ in the first place. Having to deal with false prophets on top of our family, hobbies, work, social life, stress, etc, its very hard to do.

How do we go about knowing God so well that we will immediately spot the fakes?

Christ lead by example, and we should learn from this. Its called being a disciple. If you look up in the dictionary the word disciple, it means 'student' or 'follower.'

At Cornerstone, we call this our 'Spiritual Portfolio.' Our 'D:6' This is a list of 6 principles that we believe are big parts to our spiritual development and discipleship. You should be continuously working to improve your portfolio.



Resources include:



The D:6 are...

Prayer

Connecting with God on a regular basis by making time to be in his presence. We may speak with him, petition him, confess our sins and shortcomings to him, praise him, or simply sit silently with him, listening for his voice.

Corporate worship

Celebrating God on a regular basis as the whole church. We believe that while private worship of God is essential, something extraordinary happens when people come together to praise, worship and seek God.

Bible

Incorporating the teachings of Scripture into our lives in a holistic way that incorporates heart, mind and soul. Jesus teaches that it is not enough just to hear what he says about living life, we must also obey what he asks of us. We learn what these things are in Scripture. We believe Scripture is a source of both comfort and challenge for our lives.

Community

Cornerstone believes very strongly in “doing life together.” We offer many opportunities for this, from small groups, to church wide events, to fellowship and service opportunities, to informal gatherings. We believe in strong friendships and helping each other through life’s challenges, difficulties and joys.

Service and stewardship

Putting Jesus’ commands into practice is a primary way that we grow closer to him and better come to know who he is. That’s why using our time, talents, energy and resources for God is an important part of our walk with Jesus. Cornerstone provides many opportunities for serving within our church family, in our immediate community, and even internationally.

Multiplication

The final D:6 component involves helping others get to know Jesus, make a decision to follow him, and then walking alongside them, helping them mature along the way. We call this “making disciples to make disciples to make disciples.”

Spiritual Battle

In closing, this is a spiritual battle we’re in. We are persecuted, mocked, tempted, and misled. Its not an easy thing to determining what is right and what is faulty.

Ephesians 6:10-18

The Armor of God

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and

Resources include:



blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.



Resources include:



iFit

Cornerstone Community Church
ifit.cornerstone-d6.org