

# INTRODUCTION

I wrote this book after I discovered my son, Julian, had joined a religious group that presents itself as a Christian church, but I personally believe is a cult. I think you will agree with this assessment after reading this book, and most importantly, I think you will consider the time you spend reading this book as well spent to prevent your loved ones from falling into the same trap.

We were stunned to learn that our Christian son could be persuaded to believe that a man born in the 1900s could be Christ in another form. How could it be that our intelligent, educated, thoughtful, determined, playful, Christian son had joined a cult? I've asked myself this question thousands of times. Joining a cult was not another act of defiance in a series of rebellions. Never a late-night call that he'd been arrested. No binges on sex, alcohol, or other drugs. No rehab. No dropouts. No drama. I don't know where to begin to understand how this cult's outrageous beliefs found a resting place in my son's mind. The answer to what my son was searching for will unfold over time. It happened, what's done is done.

Now, my goal is to prevent this from happening to your family because once the cult gets your loved one's attention, the brainwashing takes effect quickly. Every hour spent with this cult deepened my son's indoctrination, and in a matter of three months, he abandoned his family, friends, and hobbies to live communally with other cult members. Our family is God-loving, close, and happy, and in the words of Candace, our daughter, the kind of family "this kind of thing doesn't happen to," but it did.

Deluding yourself into believing this couldn't happen to you and your loved ones is the worst thing you can do. If you haven't encountered this group yet, trust me: the cult is strategizing how to reach you and your loved ones. They are recruiting people —particularly young people —at shopping malls, college campuses, open places—wherever your children are, these peo-

ple are. Last week, my husband was shopping at a local CVS Pharmacy for a Christmas card when a young man approached him and tried to recruit him. My husband guessed the young man's age to be around 17 or 18, barely out of high school. Recruitment is heavily emphasized, and social pressure is applied to bring in new recruits. I view the founders of this cult as wolves in sheep's clothing seeking to line their pockets with the paychecks, savings, and 401(k)s of God-seeking, naïve people in search of truth.

This has changed our family dynamics. Isolation from family members and other Christians is a telltale sign that a "church" is a cult. This cult views other churches and other Christians as part of a "Big Lie." Members are forbidden to attend other churches. I believe the real motivation behind this rule is to keep members from receiving biblical truth from Christians who minister and uplift, rather than from those who deceive and subdue. Anyone who doesn't belong to the cult is "the other" and must be avoided unless you are looking to recruit them.

Fear is a well-used tool in the cult's toolkit. Fear of a personal Armageddon if you fail to abide by the cult's strict code of conduct places mental and emotional bondages that constrain far more effectively than anything physical ever could do. Mental manipulation risks no criminal liability. Members are over the age of 18 and legally consenting adults in most states; therefore, the cult's operation is impervious to family intervention. Family members have no legal recourse to protect their loved ones from exploitation. Once the cult's core beliefs are adopted as truth, members become complicit in their own exploitation out of fear and social pressure of being ostracized by the cult. A former member told me that telegram groups and social networks are employed by the cult to ensure connectivity at all times and facilitate the Fear of Missing Out (or FOMO) effect, in my opinion. When members post their activities, all can see who invited the most people to a Bible study or who completed the most lessons. Continual connectivity sparks competition among members and enables the cult to live rent-free in their heads. Although the ones paying rent are members, not top-tier cult leaders. Members are required to give substantially to support the cult, according to former members.

While reading our story, you may doubt this could happen to you and your family. Now, it's your time to be deceived. Yes, it can. Yes, Mom, Dad,

grandmother, grandfather, sister, brother, auntie, uncle, cousin, it can happen to “THAT” child. It is a person’s openness and search for God that makes him or her an easy target for cults.

## THE PURPOSE BEHIND THE PAIN

To say the past several years have been challenging for our family would be a gross understatement, but there’s purpose behind the pain. I’ve personally gained a deeper understanding of Christianity by studying the cult’s erroneous doctrine. Being confronted with my son’s distorted truth caused me to dive deeper into the who, what, where, why, and how of Christianity. It was no longer enough to say that Jesus paid the price for our sins on the Cross with His Blood and that’s why we are saved. I found myself needing to defend the most fundamental Christian beliefs: why the Cross, why His blood, and even the most basic question, why Jesus? 1 Peter 3:15 challenges us to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” Christians have set apart Christ as Lord in their hearts, but can a majority of Christians defend their faith beyond an experience? A masterful deceiver can whittle away experience using scripture unless a Christian has feasted on the solid food of the Word instead of milk (Hebrews 5:12). I’ve studied the Bible for over 30 years; however, debunking the cult’s claims presented the opportunity to feast on the meat of the Word with greater detail. What the enemy meant for evil, God meant for good to preserve many people alive.

Studying this cult’s doctrine is like playing hide and seek with a four-year-old child. Playing hide-and-seek with a child that young requires little to no effort on the seeker’s part. Why? Because the child will soon give away their location. As soon as you close your eyes and count down from 10, before you reach “1” and yell out “here I come,” a muffled giggle can be heard that starts you in the right direction to seek. As you inch closer to the child’s hiding place, a little voice will scream out, “Don’t look in the closet!” Bingo! Now, you know the child is hiding in the closet, game over. The child screamed, “Don’t look in the closet,” to deceive you, but in doing so, led you directly to their location. The child’s attempt to deceive uncovered the very information you needed to accomplish your goal.

This is how satan uses cults. It pains me to draw a comparison between a four-year-old and satan, because children are a gift from God and the oppo-

site of demonic, but the analogy speaks directly to the dynamic of cults and their deceptions. The devil represents the child in my hide-and-seek scenario, and the hiding place represents God's truth, *not* the cult's truth. The enemy throws out false doctrine, false beliefs, and lies in the very areas that will lead Christian's to victory. If we look beyond the false doctrine, false beliefs, lies, and fake gods, and into the Bible and rightly divide the Word of God, we will find areas in Christianity where satan is most vulnerable. Hiding God's powerful truth is why the enemy brought deception into those particular areas. Finding the truth where the enemy has brought deception is finding truth that destroys the enemy's camp...