

# Recognizing Spiritual Abuse

According to psychologist and researcher Margaret Singer, Ph.D., author of *Cults in Our Midst*, abusive religious groups use six steps to establish mind control over their members:

- Keep the person unaware of what is going on and how she or he is being changed a step at a time.
- Control the person's social and/or physical environment, especially the person's time.
- Systematically create a sense of powerlessness in the person.
- Manipulate a system of rewards, punishments and experiences to inhibit behavior that reflects the person's former social identity.
- Manipulate a system of rewards, punishments and experiences to promote learning the group's ideology or belief system and group-approved behaviors.
- Institute a closed system of logic and an authoritarian structure that permits no feedback and refuses to be modified except by leadership approval or executive order. □