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NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

For more information on Bible study materials contact:
It Is Written
P.O. Box 0
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

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IT IS WRITTEN TELEVISION PRESENTS:
SEARCH FOR Certainty

Modern Cults Identified Five Ways!

Avoiding Deception in the 21st Century



Cults are on the rise. False religious teachers continue to attract multitudes. Sincere people are being deceived. The stakes are high. It makes all the difference who you follow. More than 900 members of the Peoples Temple followed their leader, Jim Jones, on a path of death into the jungles of Guyana in the late 1970s. David Koresh's followers died a fiery death in Waco, Texas. Members of Heaven's Gate evidently listened to their leader, Marshall Applewhite, and committed mass suicide in an affluent southern California suburb.

Why were these people deceived? Are there some clear ways to identify false religious teachers? This lesson will present five clear identifying features of a cult to help you keep from being deceived.

Are there some clear ways to identify false religious teachers?

1. What did Jesus say regarding false religious leaders at the time of the end? Matthew 24:5, 11, 24

The Bible answer: _____

_____

2. How can we be kept from the powerful delusions of the enemy? John 8:32

The Bible answer: _____

_____

IDENTIFYING FEATURE 1

Cults usually have a single powerful human leader who becomes the cult's messiah.

3. What do the Scriptures say regarding placing implicit confidence in a human being for salvation? Psalm 146:3

The Bible answer: _____

_____

4. Who is the sole source of our salvation? Isaiah 45:22

The Bible answer: _____

_____

Jesus is the only source of our salvation. Cult leaders focus attention upon themselves rather than Jesus. They manipulate the minds of their followers. They become substitute saviors or counterfeit messiahs.

NOTES

God's last-day message is a call to give our undivided allegiance to our loving Creator. It is a call to give our total allegiance to Him. God is looking for men and women:

• Who will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's pleading.

• Who will listen to His voice and follow Him in spite of the obstacles.

• Who will not devotedly adhere to the voice of an earthly religious leader rather than His voice.

• Who will not deny the voice of the Spirit to their heart to listen to some human voice.

• Who will be true to conscience at any cost. "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall" (*Education*, p. 57).

Will you be God's man, God's woman? Will you say, "Lord, I choose to listen to Your voice, and Your voice alone. I cannot, I must not, I will not allow another's voice to drown out the voice of Your Spirit. I will be loyal to You at all cost?"

MY DECISION

❒ *Dear Lord, I commit myself to doing Your will. Looking to Jesus as my personal Saviour, I choose to follow Your truth and obey Your Word.*

IDENTIFYING FEATURE 2

The cult leader's word or the teachings of the cult become absolute truth, overshadowing the teachings of the Scriptures.

5. What does Jesus say about placing the teachings of any human being above the Word of God? Mark 7:7, 8; Luke 11:52

The Bible answer: _____

_____

6. What counsel does the apostle Paul give us to help us avoid being deceived? I Thessalonians 5:21

The Bible answer: _____

_____

7. What is the only standard by which we can evaluate truth? John 17:17

The Bible answer: _____

_____

There is only one source of truth. God's Word is a reliable guide. The old poem states it correctly when it asks,

"What says the Bible, the blessed Bible to me?
The teachings of men so often mislead me.
What says the Bible, the blessed Bible to me?
This my only questions be."

IDENTIFYING FEATURE 3

Each cult uses "pressure" tactics to coerce its members into submission.

8. How does the Bible emphasize the necessity of freedom of choice? Joshua 24:15; Revelation 22:17

The Bible answer: _____

_____

The devil uses deception and force. He uses lies and pressure. He uses falsehoods and coercion as his weapons. God uses the freedom of choice, the power of truth, and the attraction of love.

IDENTIFYING FEATURE 4

Cults regularly appeal to miracles as a sign of their "divine credentials."

Certainly God can and does work miracles. False religious teachers exploit this truth for their benefit. They appeal to the spectacular, the sensational, as some sort of divine sign rather than a changed life.

9. How does the ultimate false religious teacher, the "beast power" of Revelation, deceive a majority of the earth? Revelation 13:13

The Bible answer: _____

_____

10. Can the devil perform supernatural signs? Revelation 16:13; 19:20

The Bible answer: _____

11. Why will so many be deceived by the false signs and miracles? 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

The Bible answer: _____

_____

The only safeguard against deception is a love for the truth. Truth is more important than so-called supernatural signs. Satan can counterfeit signs. God's truth provides a solid foundation for our faith.

IDENTIFYING FEATURE 5

Cults often urge these "converts" to leave their families.

By isolating family members, they accomplish their brainwashing tactics. Biblical Christianity calls men and women to follow Jesus and stand for truth, but it also calls them to witness to their families (1 Corinthians 7:13, 14; Ephesians 5:22, 23). Cults flourish because they offer broken, lonely people a family atmosphere.

12. When we are united to Christ, what does He offer us? Ephesians 1:6; 2:19

The Bible answer: _____

_____

In Christ we are accepted. We are forgiven. We are children of God. We become members of the royal family of heaven. Jesus is a leader worthy of our allegiance. His Word is a safe guide. The greatest miracle is the miracle of a changed life. In Christ we have the greatest sense of belonging.

13. Whom is God's last-day message a call to worship supremely? Revelation 14:7

The Bible answer: _____

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