

# Armed With the Truth

As Christians, our primary responsibility is to learn the truths of God's eternal Word. Because we are engaged in a spiritual battle, there is value also in learning the tactics of the enemy who would like to confuse and defeat us. We read in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This understanding provides three important strategies for Christians. First, we will not be entangled by an idea that could cause us to stumble. Second, we will have an answer for someone who challenges our stand on Bible truths. Third, we will prepare ourselves to lead someone from false doctrine to the truth that will make him free (John 8:32).

The Holy Bible is the single Authority by which a religious belief or movement can be evaluated. This Guide must be the measuring device, rather than personal opinion or preference. The Apostle Paul exhorts us in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to "prove all things" and to "hold fast that which is good." The goodness of a religion can be tested by looking at its characteristics, and the presence of any of the following indicate that the beliefs are not of God.

**The organization deifies man.** The Bible declares that God is the Creator and that we are the creation. Man is neither infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, nor omnipresent.

**The organization humanizes God.** God is the only eternal One—having no beginning and no ending. Only God is infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is not a glorified man who has attained a higher state of being.

**The organization repudiates sin.** The Bible declares that sin is present in every unregenerate heart and has negative eternal consequences. The first human beings chose to disobey God's command, and this behavior—rebellion against God—was labeled *sin*. As a result, we (their descendants) have inherited a sinful nature and are morally estranged from God until we repent and are reconciled to Him.

**The organization ostracizes Scripture.** The Bible clearly teaches that God created us and, therefore, makes justifiable demands upon us. God has revealed His guidelines in the Holy Scriptures, which also state that the Bible is the only true source of information regarding our obligations toward Him. There is no addendum or additional revelation. God's Word stands alone as the Authority.

In addition to these characteristics, we will examine specific teachings, identifying their deviation from Scripture and consequent presentation of erroneous doctrinal positions.

**1** ● With the multitude of philosophies pervading the religious realm today, we must safeguard ourselves from falling prey to their influence. The Lord has commanded us to be lights in a dark world (Matthew 5:14-16), and we can most effectively reach others if we have some understanding of those different beliefs. However, in order not to be swayed by those we are enlightening, we must be secure in our own understanding of God's Word. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He helps us to see the value of building our lives on the things that are permanent and secure—of building on a solid foundation. Keep in mind Paul the Apostle's admonition to his beloved protégé in 2 Timothy 2:15. In encouraging the young man, Timothy, Paul brought out that the

Word of God was essential to his success as a serious disciple of Christ. Consider four key words in this passage: *study*, *approved*, *workman*, and *ashamed*. How is Paul's advice, with respect to these key words, relevant to us today?

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**2.** Many false beliefs can be identified by the fact that they present someone other than Jesus Christ as God. We are warned in Mark 13:22, "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." We know that what Christ accomplished on the Cross was complete and left no need of a "second Messiah." What does Acts 4:12 say about this? What does the only true Messiah say concerning people who claim to be God? See Matthew 7:15; 24:5,11,24.

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**3.** There is a widespread teaching in our day that "as we are today, God once was." This teaching humanizes God, and claims that those who follow the teaching will one day be gods too. What do the following Scriptures help us to understand about "other gods"? Deuteronomy 4:35; 1 Timothy 2:5

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**4.** Though there are those who teach that sin does not exist, the Bible has much to say about the reality of sin. See Roman 3:23; 6:23. The Book of 1 John also is a wealth of information regarding the issue. We know sin to be a reality and that its only remedy is the Blood of Jesus. Use the following verses to write a statement disproving any theology that repudiates sin: Romans 5:8,9; 1 Peter 1:18,19; 1 John 1:7-9.

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**5.** Some of the largest religious organizations in the world today have created their own holy books, or interpretations of the Bible. Can you name some of these groups? Claims that additional revelations exist, which supplement what we have already received, were common even in Paul the Apostle's day. He zealously guarded what was revealed to him by God, and he warned against receiving "any other gospel," even if it were preached by an angel from Heaven or, indeed, by himself (Galatians 1:8). Clearly, God had firmly established the truth in the hearts of His followers in that day. What does the Bible say in Revelation 22:18,19 about altering its content? Review the following teachings

taken from some other supposedly inspired works, and use Scriptures to refute these beliefs:

Teaching: There is no Trinity.

See 1 John 5:7 and Matthew 3:16,17.

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Teaching: Jesus Christ was a created being.

See Luke 1:30-32,35 and Matthew 1:18,20.

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Teaching: The Holy Spirit is not part of the Godhead.

See Matthew 28:19.

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**6.** Review the following list of teachings which are prevalent in today's world. From a social standpoint, they might sound fair, but we could be disarmed by their benevolence. The key point is, they must be in accord with Scripture in order for us to uphold them. Explain how these concepts are regarded from the world's viewpoint and from the Christian's viewpoint. Find some other Scriptures to substantiate whether or not any of these teachings are true.

- The oneness of mankind.
- The oneness of religion.
- The independent investigation of truth.
- Religion as a source of unity.
- The evolutionary nature of religion.
- Harmony between religion, science, and nature.
- Peaceful consultation for resolving differences.
- An international auxiliary language.
- Universal education.
- The elimination of all forms of prejudice.
- Equality of men and women.
- The abolition of extremes of wealth and poverty.
- Universal peace.

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**7.** Unquestionably, we live in a world which threatens the light of Scriptural truth. This country's foundations of Christianity are being eroded, and Christians are more and more outnumbered in our society. What should our reaction be? How can we positively impact those around us and, with love, enlighten a darkened world?

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### **Key Texts**

Deuteronomy 4:35; Matthew 1:18,20; 3:16,17; 5:14-16; 7:15; 24:5,11,24; 28:19; Mark 13:22; Luke 1:30-32,35; John 8:32; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:23; 5:8,9; 6:23; Galatians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 1:18,19; 1 John 1:7-9; 4:1; 5:7; Revelation 22:18,19

### **Other Scriptures Used in This Study**

Isaiah 53:5; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 10:34; 15:8,9; 28:19,20; Luke 12:51; John 4:35; 10:1; 14:17,26; 16:13; Acts 7:26,29; Romans 3:24,25; Galatians 3:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Hebrews 13:8; James 3:15; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Peter 3:18

### **Suggested Verse for Memorization**

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. — 1 Thessalonians 5:21