

Points to Ponder: Jonestown

- What lessons can we learn from Jonestown?
- Should it really be called a “mass suicide”?
- The deaths at Jonestown can be viewed as a product of obedience (of people complying with the orders of a leader) even when they wanted to do otherwise. How did he manage to get them to obey? He skillfully manipulated them – have you ever been manipulated? How are we manipulated in society today?
- What sometimes prevents people from thinking for themselves?
- Why do you think people joined “The Peoples’ Temple”?
- Do people make most of their decisions based on emotions, rather than thoughts? Please explain.
- Comment on the idea – sometimes people get in so deep they think they can’t get out.
- Why didn’t people speak up when they felt uncomfortable and didn’t agree with what was happening? Have you ever not spoken up when something was happening? Please explain.
- Did your parents remember Jonestown? What did they say about this situation?
- What do you think of the expression, “Don’t drink the Kool-Aid”? Where and when have you heard this expression used?
- Some of the survivors said, “It was like living in a dysfunctional family – you think it’s normal” - please comment on this idea.
- Why do you think people were attracted to Jim’s ideas initially?
- What were your thoughts/feelings as you listened to the survivors?