

OH, GOD [G o d]

THIS WEEK

How familiar are you with your kids' beliefs? Do you know about their reasons for believing in God? This discussion will allow you to talk about what your student believe—what they think God is like and how their belief in God makes a difference in their lives. You'll want to make sure that your group members are comfortable with each other before you tackle this discussion. Sometimes it's not easy for them to open up about their beliefs, so be sure to provide a warm environment where they feel supported.

OPEN

You can introduce this in many different ways, depending on the size and maturity of your group. You may want to split them into two groups—one group believing there is a God and one that doesn't. What proof or thoughts do they have that God does or does not exist? How do they defend their answers? What characteristics of God come through during this debate? Keep a master list of their main points for discussion later on.

Or share a story with them about God. Have your kids act out the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11-27) while you read the story, either from the Bible or another version of the story. How does the parable describe God? What characteristics does God have from the parable? How about the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7)?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. On the whiteboard or poster board, list all the words suggested. Some people have the wrong picture and may think of him as a cosmic cop, an old bearded man, or a heavenly Santa Claus.
2. Let the kids share their questions and try to answer them as a group. Some simply won't have answers—that's okay. Help them understand that God has answers to our questions, even though they don't always know what they are.
3. Ask several kids to share their e-mails. Did this help them understand God better? What did they learn about God? Emphasize that God has already written us a letter—the Bible. In it, he tells us stories and gives us advice on all kinds of stuff. Challenge your kids to dig in and start getting to know God better.
4. Use this scenario to discuss practical ways to have a better relationship with God. Make a master list of all the suggestions they come up with. You may want to add some of your own. Tell the kids to choose the three they think are the best and to select one of those to do this week.

5. Some maybe will share and some won't—that's okay. What do some teenagers in general think? What questions do your kids have about a relationship with God?

6. These verses list several attributes of God. Make a master list of these qualities. Are there more that aren't in these verses?

THE CLOSE

God thinks so much of all his children. You may want to read a verse or two to the group that describes how much God loves them. Point out that they each are the jewel of God's eye. If he had a computer, their picture would be on the screensaver. He hangs out with them all the time—how often do they hang out with him? If they could chat with God on the phone, what would they say?

Close with a time of prayer. If your group isn't comfortable with praying aloud, then give them some time for silent prayer.

MORE

- It's important to set goals for getting to know God better. Challenge them to do more than just pray and read the Bible—to set specific goals, like praying for ten minutes everyday, reading a chapter from the Bible every other day, or meeting with you and a small group every couple weeks. Encourage them set these realistic goals and write them on a 3x5 card to keep. Remind them that they can come to you with struggles or questions that they may have—everyone needs to be encouraged spiritually.
- Set up an e-mail or snail mail resource for encouraging prayer and scripture. Have your kids e-mail each other or you their favorite verses, new things they've learned, or prayer requests they have. Challenge them to encourage each other to learn more about God. Collect and distribute the e-mails or letters once (or more) a week.