

INTRODUCTION

Belief in God can be risky because it involves placing our trust in a being that we have never really seen and that many people in society want us to believe never really existed. But for those who choose to take the risk, belief in God is what ultimately gives our life [^]meaning.
true

What should we believe? Why should we believe it? How should we act based on this belief?

These are the core questions of an adult Christian. Asking the questions and taking the time to discover the answers - that is what this course is all about. At this point in high school, you are no doubt faced with many questions about your future. Part of what you will need to discern is where God is going to fit into that picture.

This course is going to ask some tough questions. It will also demand honest answers.

The goal is for **YOU** (not your parents or teachers) to figure out what you believe about God and how you can best live out that belief.

Confirmation Class

CLASS #1

Grades 9 - 10

Intro to Faith, Belief & Religion:

Who Is God (to you)?

Images and Impressions

NEED: (Intro, Statements about God, Forced Choice Questions), CLASS NOTES, REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS, "Who is Your God?" Handout.

CLASS NOTES

1. Introduction: Belief in God - Adult perspective on God; Childhood images vs. Adult images.
2. Can anyone really define "GOD"? How would you do it? Is God definable?

3. Q: What is a METAPHOR? Can anyone tell me what a metaphor is?

A: A metaphor is a means of expression that tries to describe, by comparison with something else, a trait or characteristic of a person or thing.

Example: "O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman (Abe Lincoln described as the captain of a ship)

Q: Why are we limited to speaking about God in metaphors?

A: The mystery of God is so immensely beyond us that any description of God and how God works and relates to us can never capture all

that God is. We can only compare God with what we do know from our limited human experience.

4. Let's talk about some of our own images of God - some that we've had since childhood.

Q. Childhood Images of God: Examples:

- all powerful, possibly frightening
- thunder & lightning
- old man with a beard
- protector from all harm
- answers every prayer

Q. Adult Images of God: Examples:

- ???
- You've been hurt or seen people hurt: where's the protector?
- All your prayers haven't been answered: Why not? Where is He? Who is he?
- Cruel because he allows so much suffering?

5. Let's take a look from another angle:

Is the way you see your parents NOW the same as you saw them when you were 5 or ten years old?

Why or why not?

What's changed? Have they changed? Or have you? Or have your experiences made you see them in a different way?

Which image is correct? The 5 year old image or the 18 year old image? Is one wrong?

Will you feel like
some in 10 years?

Can they both be correct? Is your image subject to additional changes as you continue to grow?

Some people stay frozen in their childhood images - that keeps *THEM* child-like. WE ALL NEED TO GROW - OUR IMAGES AND IDEAS NEED TO CHANGE AND GROW.

All of us need to THINK & REFLECT on God, how we see Him, and how he fits into our lives.

How you see God - what you believe and how you act on those beliefs will shape your lives. YOU HAVE A LOT OF CHOICES TO MAKE.

Q: In your mind, is God a MALE or FEMALE?
Why? Why Not?

Suggests

The bible implies/says that he has both masculine AND feminine attributes. It also says that God created both man and women in His own image and likeness. ("Male and female he created them").

The pope said in 1978 "God is our father; even more, he is our mother."

Q: Do other countries or cultures have the same images of God as American Christians?

Are their images incorrect? Or are they just different from us?

Who gave us (Western Christians) the monopoly on faith and imagery?

ASK THESE QUESTIONS AND DISCUSS THEIR ANSWERS:

WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT GOD?

I WISH I COULD ACTUALLY SEE GOD.

I THINK THAT A PERSON SHOULD FEEL CLOSE TO GOD ALL THE TIME.

I THINK ABOUT GOD AT SOME POINT EVERY DAY.

MY CHURCH BRINGS ME CLOSER TO GOD.

I WONDER IF THERE REALLY IS A GOD.

I THINK THAT RELIGION & FAITH IN GOD ARE THE SAME THING.

Discuss:

- As people grow, they are able to think more deeply about certain things. Things that seemed simple as children get much more complicated and even confusing as people get older.

- This is particularly true in dealing with religious truths. Things don't get easier - they get harder, so you have to really think and reflect - and pray.

- If you don't ask any questions, you won't get any answers.

X Let's think about God in another way. Let me see what you might compare God to. I want to see what you're thinking at this point in your lives.

When I read out a question, I want you to be able to articulate the reason for your answer, so think before you speak.

[Teachers: Use as many or as few as you deem appropriate.]

IS GOD MORE LIKE...

Tell me why

* Move to side of room you think

MONTANA OR NEW YORK CITY?

A SPARK PLUG OR A BATTERY?

A CANDLE OR A LIGHTBULB?

THE BEACH OR THE MOUNTAINS?

A HOTEL OR A HOSPITAL?

FIRST & TEN OR GOAL -TO -GO?

THE CAMERA OPERATOR OR THE STAR OF THE SHOW?

A GOLF BALL OR A NERF BALL?

A CHAIR OR A TABLE?

A LAKE OR A RIVER?

>> Distribute Handout: "WHO IS YOUR GOD?"

After a few minutes to answer the questions, have the students narrow their choices down to the top 2-3 which best fit their definition of God. Take about 10 minutes to write out a definition of God, to be shared with the class.



Defn
in 10 min
words...
come back
to give
at end of
year...

In class three, start with a review of their definitions of God > see how they differ, and how hard it is to put God into words.

Who Is Your God



Below are a number of possible definitions of God. Some you have already heard; others are probably unfamiliar to you. Put a check mark in front of any of the definitions with which you can agree. Do it quickly and trust your first responses. When you are done, your leader will give you further directions.

God Is . . .

- the only person who loves me for myself
- the computer that programmed the universe
- a puppeteer who manipulates people like toys
- an energy hinted at when a baby is born or when we fall in love
- an unseen "world soul" we are all part of
- a creator who believes all creation is very good
- a force that became inert sometime between Creation and today
- a father and mother who love their children selflessly
- someone who forgives the mistakes I make
- a being so beyond me that words fail
- someone who loves us enough to die for us
- an eccentric being who created the world and forgot it
- a being who gave me life
- a lawgiver whose commands urge me to do right rather than wrong
- the future, the end of all human striving
- a being the human race will evolve to
- a ruler whose power is freedom and love rather than force
- a lover who urges me to come to the heavenly marriage feast
- an idea created by past generations to explain the world
- the peace that will reign when all persons are brothers and sisters
- the perfect one who says I am sinful and makes me feel guilty
- the one who cares that I become myself
- a clown who created laughter and made all persons free