

Reproducible
Handouts
Included

the top 13
unwritten
questions
about

MOOD

How can I tell if my child is depressed?

Intense Discussions
For Youth Ministry

How can I help my child deal with depression?

the top **13**
questions
about
GOD

Intense Discussions
For Youth Ministry

Group
Loveland, Colorado

Group resources actually work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's



Relational

Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them up to 9 times longer than what they simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Learner-based

Learners understand and retain more when the learning process takes into consideration how they learn best.

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

—Matthew 10:16

The Top 13 Questions About God: Intense Discussions for Youth Ministry

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Introduction

We're Not Going to Lose Them Anymore

"I was raised in the church, but there are just so many things about the Christian faith I find so unbelievable. How could a loving God send people to hell? Why does he allow so much pain on earth? There are millions of Muslims in the Middle East who believe in Allah with all their hearts. Are you going to tell me that they're all *wrong*?"

So many of the young adults in our youth groups return from their first year in the "real" world downcast and doubting. Ask anyone you know who grew up in the church and has fallen away from the Christian faith why he or she doesn't trust and believe in Jesus Christ. The person will either point to the behavior of Christians or to one of the questions found in this book. Is the message of the gospel so illogical? Is Christian morality and truth so stale and easily forgotten? Why are we losing the ones we have worked so hard to bring to Jesus?

Whether you're a youth pastor or a volunteer youth worker, your group must *prepare* for the philosophical onslaught that is soon to come. This book offers the opportunity to help your students grapple with the big questions of Christianity in a safe Christian environment. Christianity is not illogical, irrelevant, or untrue. The discussions in this book will help your group see how rational and vitally important Christianity is today. Use this book to prepare your group. We're not going to lose them anymore.

How to Use This Book

Before each meeting, photocopy the Christian perspective, the "Faith Challenge" page, and the "My Response" page for each person.

This book is designed to provide the "substance" of your meetings. You may want to begin your meeting with food, drinks, and fellowship. For the last ten minutes of the food time, have group members read the Christian perspective of the lesson and complete the journaling section that follows. If you don't have time to do this during your meeting, have group members complete the reading and journaling before the meeting. You might also want to suggest that everyone in your group memorize the Scripture following the journaling section before the meeting. But if you have time,

have group members memorize the Scripture during the meeting. Test each other on the Scripture throughout the meeting time.

Then use the rest of the lesson to lead discussion. Before you start discussion, you may want to set down some rules. You can come up with these as a group or use the following suggestions.

- Only one person in each group should be talking at any given time.
- You are welcome to disagree, but please don't argue or fight.
- Never attack a person for his or her opinion.
- Listen before you speak.
- It's OK to say "I don't know."
- If the leader changes plans or interrupts a discussion, be flexible.

Before the discussion, pray that God will help you understand and find his truth. Ask God to take your group where he wants it to go.

During your discussions, you may encounter difficult questions that no one in your group can answer. When this happens, encourage your students to investigate the questions through outside reading, prayer, studying Scripture, discussion with their pastor, discussion with their parents, or discussion with respected adults in your church. Make sure you follow up on the question the following week. It's OK to have questions about faith, but it's foolish to let the questions linger without a sincere attempt at finding accurate answers.

But sometimes it takes a considerable amount of time and study before you arrive at an answer that satisfies the question. As your students search and wait, help them remember the prayer that one man said to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

“You can keep a faith only as you can keep a plant, by rooting it into your life and making it grow there.”¹

—Phillips Brooks

Phillips Brooks

A Few Particulars

As you help people overcome the intellectual challenges they have regarding Christianity, some group members may want to become Christians or reaffirm their commitment to Christ. To help a person do this, consider using the following model.

- Admit that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness.
- Acknowledge that Jesus paid the price for your sins through his death.
- Ask God to forgive you for your sins.
- Tell God that you want him to take control of your life and that you give him control of your life.
- Thank God for forgiving you and making you his child.
- Tell someone about the steps you took and why you took them.
- Talk to your pastor about what it means to belong to a church.

If circumstances arise in your group that you feel are inappropriate or out of control, notify your pastor as soon as possible. If a group member reveals suicidal thoughts, physical or sexual abuse, or identifies himself or herself as a runaway, consult your pastor immediately.

It is our prayer that this book will help you and the members of your group come to truly know Jesus, to put your trust in him, and to come to an understanding of why you believe what you believe.