

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUS

SIMPLIFY

JANUARY 17, 2024

Week 2 of a 4-week series
about what Jesus said
matters most

BOTTOM LINE

Loving God = Living like Jesus

SCRIPTURE

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

- John 14:9a NIV

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

- 1 John 5:3 NIV

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to take a step toward loving God by getting to know Jesus and following His example in their lives

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: During your conversation this week, students will be given the chance to talk about some of the questions they have about Jesus. It's possible that students may brainstorm questions you're not sure about or even equipped to answer right away. That's okay! Remember, your job isn't to answer all their questions definitively for them. The first goal is to get them comfortable with their questions as a way to grow their faith rather than stop or stunt it. And second, it's to teach them how to find those answers in Jesus Himself. You're leading your students in skill development by guiding them to feel safe asking questions, but also in knowing how to look for the answers themselves by turning to Scripture, prayer, and more. Encourage your group to focus specifically on the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—to start. These books give us real accounts of what Jesus did and said while on Earth. So, as you talk about them, remind your students that these are more than just stories. They're real things that happened when Jesus really was alive on Earth. They're real glimpses of what God is really like.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's one thing you wonder about God? (Small group leader, you go first!)
- What's one reason someone might have questions or doubts about God?
- How might asking questions be good for our faith?
- How might getting to know Jesus help answer our questions about God?

DO THIS:

On each of the three pieces of provided copy paper, write one of these words: "KNOW," "WONDER," "LEARN." Pass the papers around your group and ask your students to write down something they know about Jesus, something they wonder about Jesus, and what they want to learn about Jesus. When finished, read through everyone's responses together and pick out a theme or common question from the "WONDER" or "LEARN" papers. Use the subject index in a Bible or the search bar in a Bible app to find a Scripture passage that could answer your students' questions or give more context about what they wonder or want to learn about Jesus. Read and discuss what you find.

DISCUSS THIS:

- What's one thing you can do this week to continue getting to know Jesus?

STUMIN

SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

HIGH SCHOOL FOCUS

SIMPLIFY

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matters most

BOTTOM LINE

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GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to take a step toward loving God by getting to know Jesus and following His example in their lives



>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Your students may have a lot of questions about God and what it actually means to love God with the way they live. That's okay! Questions are actually a great place to start because they motivate us to look for answers. And this week, the goal is to point your students to find their answers in the person of Jesus. The more they learn about and get to know Jesus, the more they'll understand what it means to love God and show God's love to others. So, lean into their questions in this conversation. Encourage them to keep asking, but ultimately, to keep looking to Jesus for the answer.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- In your own words, describe what it looks like to love God.
- What makes loving God complicated or difficult at times?
- How do Jesus' words in John 14:9 simplify what it means to love God? How does 1 John 5:3 bring further clarification/simplization?
- Using Emily's story as an example, share an example from your own life that illustrates this statement: *When you love someone, you care about what they care about.* As a group, brainstorm a list of things you think God cares about, including why you think God cares about it.
- What's one thing you've learned about God by getting to know Jesus?
- What would be different about the way you lived if you followed the example of Jesus?
- What's one way you can love God by giving a little of your...
 - Time?
 - Money?
 - Attention?

TRY THIS:

As a small group leader, you have the opportunity to play a lot of roles in the lives of your students. You can be a mentor, coach, friend, or cheerleader. This week, consider leaning into a mentorship role and take an opportunity to share what you've learned in life about loving God. Keep it short and relatable, but don't be afraid to share your own challenges about learning how to love God and get to know Jesus.