

BELIEVING IT



1. Name a few people who you think have a **strong** faith in God.

2. What do you think of the following statements—do you **A** (agree) or **D** (disagree)?

- Faith will take away all your doubts forever.
- Faith is a crutch for most people.
- Faith isn't easy to have today, like it was in Bible times.
- Faith will help me pass my math exam.
- Faith isn't required by God all the time.
- Faith would come easier for me if I saw a miracle.
- Faith will heal you when you are sick.
- Faith will make everything in your life easier.

3. How much does your faith in Christ affect each of things listed? Rate these from **not very affected (1)** to **very affected (10)**.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra curricular activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Free time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dating | <input type="checkbox"/> Future plans |

4. Below are a few statements of Christian faith. Which ones do you believe completely (**circle these**)? Which ones do you have doubts about (**put a question mark by these**)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. I believe in God. | f. I believe that God loves all people equally. |
| b. I believe Christ rose from the dead. | g. I believe that the Holy Spirit lives in me. |
| c. I believe the Bible is true. | h. I believe that I'm a sinner. |
| d. I believe I will go to heaven when I die. | i. I believe in Jesus Christ. |
| e. I believe God answers prayer. | j. I believe that hell is a reality. |

5. Check out the Bible verses below, and complete the sentences in your own words.

Romans 10:17
Hebrews 11:1
Hebrews 12:2
James 2:18-19

Faith comes from—
Faith is—
Jesus is—
Faith is shown by—

BELIEVING IT [f a i t h]

THIS WEEK

High school brings a lot of change to the lives of teenagers. Some will question their beliefs as they think about the world they live in. And they may question the beliefs of their parents or other adults in their lives. Some may be confused about their faith in God. Others may reject the faith that they've been raised in. This session allows your group to discuss the concept of faith and what it means to Christians.

OPEN

Start this session off by having your group make two separate lists on a whiteboard or poster board—one list of things that they can be sure of, another of things that they can't be sure of. For example, they can be sure that the sky is blue, that milk comes from cows, and that fire is hot. But they can't be sure of things like when the world will end, when they'll die, or who they'll marry.

Now go through both lists and put check marks next to those that we have control of as humans (for instance, "I know that I will fail if I don't study"). Then star those that others have control of ("I don't know if my teacher likes me"). Finally, circle those that God is in charge of (basically everything).

Ask your group which ones are scary to them—usually the ones they aren't sure of. What are they scared of? How do they feel knowing that they have no control over situations? What is hard about believing in something you can't see? You'll probably get answers like "because I doubt it" or "because you can't prove it." How do they feel knowing that someone has control of circumstances? Finally, what do they think faith is? Is it only believing in God or can you have faith in other things, like people or events?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Ask each of your kids why they chose the people they listed. How can they tell that they have a strong faith? What characteristics do they have? What kind of relationship do they think these people have with God?
2. Each of these statements examines faith from a different angle. Let your kids share their choices and why they chose them. You may want to keep your opinions until the close of the session.
3. This will get your kids thinking about how their faith affects their lives. Don't make them share their ratings—maybe ask the group to rate them together, based on their answers and those of teenagers in general.

4. These will help your kids examine and reflect on their beliefs. You may also use these statements to start a discussion on the basic beliefs of the Christian faith. If so, you might want to pass out copies of the Apostles' Creed or your church's statement of faith for review. Use this time to affirm the things that your kids believe in strongly. Communicate that having doubts is normal and human—even John the Baptist had doubts, as is described in Luke 7:18-19.

5. Have some of your kids volunteer to read the sentences aloud. Or have them write them out on a large piece of white paper or poster board. Discuss each of the verses and then talk about each passage, its context, and what it says about having faith.

THE CLOSE

Having doubts is normal—in fact, people often grow in our faith through their doubts. Challenge your group to think about what they believe—outside the beliefs of their parents. Ask them to examine how faith and beliefs relate to their everyday lives. What changes does their faith make, if any? How do they incorporate faith into their everyday lives? Point out that the Bible teaches that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-17)—what does this mean to them? What kind of actions does faith lead to?

Close with a time of prayer and give your group time for silent prayer. Challenge them to think about their beliefs and what God means to them. If you sense that some group members may not know the gospel of Christ, use this time to go through the plan of salvation. Remind them that God is waiting with open arms—he loves them more than they know.

MORE

- Hold a faith Q & A time with your group. Have the group write down any questions they have about the Christian faith on 3x5 cards (anonymously). Then collect the cards and have your kids take turns picking out questions. If they feel comfortable, have them try to answer it or pass it on. Discuss the questions as a group and encourage them to use the Bible for back up to their questions and answers. To liven things up, invite your senior pastor to a meeting and put him in the hot seat for a question and answer session!
- Have your kids e-mail or talk with one adult this week about their belief in God, life after death, the Bible, miracles, prayer, and so on. This could be a parent, relative, teacher, or adult friend.