Small Group Time: What If My Friends Aren’t Christian?

**November 11th, 2020 @7:15-8 pm**

*Instructions*

*Be sure to start on a positive note. Welcome each learner by name. Let them know you're glad they're here! If anyone is absent, mention you'll be praying for that person together. Small Group Time is for give-and-take discussion. Your main job is to draw learners out and get them talking about the theme. Ask open-ended questions that will provoke responses. Once the conversation begins, intervene only to bring it back on track or to stimulate more talk.*

Bible Text: Genesis 17:1-7; 21:1-21; Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 15:21-28; Acts 10:1-35

Lesson Focus: Christians who are knowledgeable and confident about their own faith can communicate and collaborate respectfully with people of other faiths.

Big Question: How are Christians supposed to interact with people of other faiths?

Key Words: JUDAISM, HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, ISLAM, MUSLIM

Discussion Time

*Use the following questions to kick off a conversation about the theme:*

1. Help youth dive into the Key Words by asking for definitions and/or providing these definitions:

-JUDAISM: a monotheistic faith founded on a covenant made by God with Abraham and Sarah. They were “blessed to be a blessing” to the world.

-HINDUISM: a faith that sees this world as an illusion and seeks to help people become one with a divine being that is understood through many forms.

-BUDDHISM: a faith that is founded on the teachings of Gautama Buddha and seeks to help people become enlightened or achieve Nirvana.

-ISLAM: a monotheistic faith founded on the revelation of Allah to the prophet Muhammad that guides how people should live so that they will enjoy paradise after their death.

-MUSLIM: a person who follows the teachings of Islam.

2. What could cause you to end a friendship with someone?

3. How can you spread the love of Jesus to people who aren’t Christian?

4. What would it be like if you brought your friends to confirmation?

5. What can you learn from people of other religions?

6. What are the most important qualities you look for in a friend? Is religion among those qualities? Why or why not?

7. Do you feel called to talk about Christianity with non-Christian friends? Why or why not? How does this go along with being a good friend?

8. Jesus and his followers welcomed people from many faiths and ethnic backgrounds. How can we follow Jesus’ loving example in our lives?

9. How should you respond when you meet someone of another faith? What would be the most challenging thing about explaining your faith to that person?

**Open the Bible**

1. Read Galatians 3:28. How can you maintain your Christian identity while respecting the beliefs of others? Do you think that would be hard to do? Why or why not?

2. Have students open their Bibles to Genesis 18:1-15. Invite students to act out this story. Students will take the parts of Abraham and Sarah, the three messengers from God, the “voice of the Lord,” and a narrator. Invite the students to list the surprising things that happen in the story, such as the appearance of the three messengers, the promise that Sarah will give birth to a child, the Lord asking why Sarah laughed, the actual conception and birth of the child, etc. Take a moment to explain that the Jewish people consider themselves to be the “great nation” promised to Abraham and Isaac.

3. Have students turn in their Bibles to Genesis 21:1-21. Instruct them to listen for the actions of the people and to consider why they might have done those things as you read the story. When you have finished reading, ask the students to work in pairs and provide them with sheets of paper. Instruct them to make three columns on the paper—the first labeled “Who Acted,” the second labeled “Action Taken,” and the third labeled “Why Taken.” Remind them that God is also an actor in this story. Give them several minutes to review the chapter and write down who did what and why. When the students are finished (or you call time), summarize what the students shared in their pairs. Take a moment to explain that the Muslim people consider themselves to be the “great nation” promised to Ishmael.

4. Turn to Isaiah 11:1-10. How does this passage inform us of what it means to be a “great nation” in the eyes of God? Christians believe that Jesus came to usher in this “peaceful kingdom.” List the qualities of greatness that are to be true of this kingdom. How do other world religions promote similar qualities? There are bound to be questions about other religions, but be honest with the students. If you don’t know an answer, don’t fake it. Write down the question and talk about how you or they might be able to find an answer. During the next week find the answer and bring it to the next class session so that you can share it with the students.

5. Have students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 15:21-28. Choose readers or ask for volunteers to read this story (narrator, Jesus, the Canaanite woman). Ask other students to listen especially for Jesus’ words and actions. Keeping this page marked, have students turn to Acts 10:1-35. Choose readers for this story, and ask the other students to listen carefully for Peter’s responses, words, and actions. What do the Canaanite woman and Cornelius have in common? How are they different? How are Jesus’ responses and Peter’s responses similar? How are they different? Ultimately, are the results the same or different?

6. Look up the following verses. God made promises to both Isaac and Ishmael. The Jewish people have received the promise to Isaac (Genesis 17:1-7). The Muslim people have received the promise to Ishmael (Genesis 21:12-19). What similarities do they have with each other? What differences do they have from each other? How do they both relate to the hope that Christians have in Jesus (Isaiah 11; Revelation 22)?

7. Look up Romans 2:14-16. Paul says that God’s law is written on the hearts of everyone. The “Golden Rule” is one example of this. Can you make a list of other values and behaviors that all human beings share, regardless of race, nationality, or religion?