

WHO AM I? WHO IS GOD?

Bible Study Session Guide



Fuller Youth Institute

Big Idea:

Encouraging the asking and answering of these two questions propels our students on a lifelong faith process. This opportunity invites us as leaders to move past our focus on the immediate behaviors and actions of our students, and to engage them in the process of examining and re-examining their lives as they pursue the way of Jesus.

So we join students where they are and share life with them.

We help students ask the next question.

We guide them to find and trust God through every question, answer, and experience.

And we continually invite students to believe the Good News: The answers to the questions "Who am I?" and "Who is God?", which drive the entire story of the Bible, are found in the person of Jesus Christ.

– HOW WE READ THE BIBLE

In this session, you'll be creating space for students to think about how the stories we read in Scripture shape both who we are and who we understand God to be. You'll also have the opportunity to tell part of your own testimony or story. Sharing an example from your own pursuit of a Jesus-centered life invites students to join you and participate in this lifelong process.

Leader Tips:

- Questions or statements for you to say out loud are bolded in this guide.
- Resist the temptation to answer every question your teenagers pose. Sometimes it is best to ask them to think more about or to research questions on their own first.
- Be okay with saying the words, “I don’t know.” Be okay with occasional moments of awkward silence as well. Both are important when weighty matters are on the table.
- Think about the big picture. Some activities and discussion points from this session may benefit from follow up in a later session, or could become a part of your ministry’s regular rhythm of practices.

You'll Need:

-  Large sheets of paper
-  Pens or markers
-  Tape
-  Copies of the Questions for Small Groups included on p.5 of this resource

Opening Activity: The story as we see it

Cover the walls of your meeting space with blank paper. Invite students, in groups or individually, to write out or draw their understanding of the story of the Bible to create their own “Bible timeline.” When everyone is finished (we recommend setting a time limit), give students a few minutes to observe one another’s work and ask questions.

Depending on their experience with the Bible, your students may need some prompting. Encourage them to think about the stories, characters, and teachings they can remember. Thumbing through their Bibles may help jog their memories.

Large Group: God's story is an important part of my story

Tell the group a story from your own faith journey, centering around a favorite Bible character or passage. Talk about when and why the passage made an impression on you. As you share, be sure to answer these questions:

- What difficulty or challenge were you facing at the time?
- How did the passage or story tell you something about who you are?
- What did the passage or story tell you about who God is?
- In what way(s) did your relationship with God grow because of the passage or story?

EXPLAIN TO THE GROUP:

As we encounter any story, poem, prophecy, or proverb in Scripture, “Who am I?” and “Who is God?” are great questions to start with.

Perhaps those are not easy questions to answer. If so, that’s okay. Often if we look to the characters or writer of a story, we find someone we identify with. So a helpful question to ask next is, “What do we find out about the nature of the characters in this story?” and “How are the characters grappling with the questions, ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Who is God?’”

More often than not, we’ll see a little bit of ourselves in each character’s struggle or victory. This awareness can help us understand our own frustrations and joys in relationship with God.

Even if we don’t have all the answers, when we have the courage to ask these questions, we get to become participants—not just observers—in a journey that is rooted in the Bible and its characters, and has been unfolding throughout history. When we’re on this journey, which we sometimes call “spiritual growth” or “spiritual formation,” we keep growing and maturing and repeating these key questions as we go, until they ultimately become part of our own story.

Point to the students’ timeline(s) on the walls, to demonstrate how their understanding of the Bible is already part of their story. Perhaps some of what they remember was learned in youth group. For some students, it’s possible these stories and understandings go all the way back to Sunday School. Others may have shared stories that family members or key adults told them. All of these examples demonstrate how God’s story has already formed a part of who they are.

Say: Asking these key questions as we read the Bible is as important as answering them. So we’re going to give you some time to ask them for yourself.

Small Group Discussion Guide:

How do we see ourselves in God's story?

Divide students into small groups. Ask groups to look around at the Bible stories and themes on the walls once again. Invite each student to focus on one story or passage which has been meaningful at some point in their lives, then discuss with the group:

If your group is too large for each student to share, invite one or two to share or ask each small group to choose a story or theme to reflect on together.

Q. What story did you choose? When has it been significant to you?

Q. How does this story answer the question, "Who am I?"

Q. How does this story answer the question, "Who is God?"

Q. Is there a character that helps you better understand your relationship to God?

Closing Reflection: Who is God?

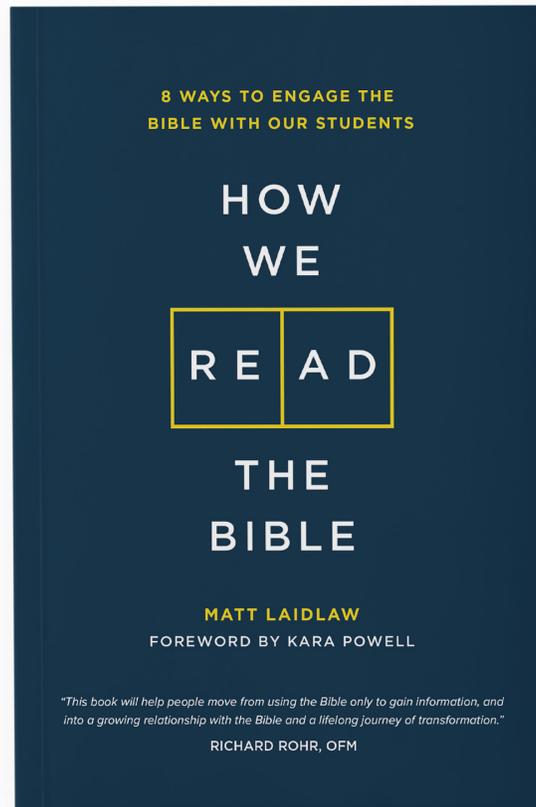
Tape a few more blank pieces of paper on the walls near the students' timeline(s). Invite them to look at their work one more time; this time reflecting on the question, "Who is God?" and writing the words or phrases which come to mind as they reflect on the blank sheets.

As you close, use words from the students' responses to form a prayer.

Further Ideas to Help Make it Stick

We understand that no two youth groups are alike. What initiates deep and meaningful conversation in one group can create awkward silence in another. Here is a list of additional ideas to help your students move the conversation from their heads to their hearts during this teaching time, or in the following weeks.

- Buy each student a new journal. On the front page ask them to write the question, "Who am I?" and on the back page write, "Who is God?" Spend some time logging responses to these two questions, and keep up the practice as you explore the Bible together through the year.
- Give your students and leaders poster boards or large pieces of cardstock paper. On one side invite them to come up with as many responses to the question, "Who am I?" as possible, and on the other side invite them to come up with as many responses to the question, "Who is God?" as possible. Keep these in a safe place, and on a semi-regular basis, get them out and let students add new responses and reflect on what they previously wrote.
- Save the Bible timeline(s) created by your students for your next meeting with leaders or parents. Use them to observe and reflect on your group's familiarity with, approach toward, and attitude regarding the Bible. What questions are they asking? What do they understand well? Where are the gaps in their understanding? Use these reflections to inform your teaching plan for the future.



This resource was adapted from chapter 5 of
How We Read the Bible: 8 Ways to Engage the Bible with Our Students
by Matt Laidlaw.

Find the book at fulleryouthinstitute.org/howweread.

A resource from the Fuller Youth Institute