

Tough Questions KIDS Ask

(Designed for use during a training session but can be reviewed individually as well)

Introduction-

Over the years some kids have asked some tough questions. They are open and honest, and they bring their life experiences into the conversations.

Scripture tells us in 1 Peter 3:15b

¹⁵... *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

We want to be **prepared** to give an answer. The children we serve deserve our best and when we find ourselves in a critical opportunity, we want to deliver.

Remember, the children have had to **live these questions**, all you have to do is **answer them!**

Teaching-

Here are some principles for answering tough questions before we start.

- a) Pray before the week begins that God will give you the right words in due season.
- b) Affirm the question. "Wow, that is such a deep and remarkable way to think..." might be the beginning of the answer. Jesus himself asked questions (I count 187 of them in the gospels). Asking the kids some questions to help answer might keep the conversation alive.
- c) Kids need it simple, not deeply theological and yet the theology behind the simple words matters deeply. Don't immediately start talking. Think, pray and give a clear and short answer. The conversation may go on for a while, but don't start with a long answer.
- d) Affirming God's unconditional love and undeserved, 'never to be paid back' grace is the first part of every "answer". We would encourage the use of this to start. The reality that God loves even when we don't 'get it' or love back is the beginning of our hope.
- e) Some of your BEST answers are answers about your journey. How in fact has God moved in your life, how has God shown His love to you, how has God revealed himself to you? How do you reconcile your own suffering with God's love? Your journey can be a road map for others. Again, shorter answers are better.
- f) Context really matters for some questions. You may offer a similar answer to, "How do you know God exist?" Questions may vary widely to "Why can't I come home with you?" (based on context)
- g) No one has all the right answers, but the group can usually come up with pretty good answers so if you don't have an immediate answer you feel comfortable with, tell them you'll think about it and get back to them. Then share with your team and follow up with the child.
- h) Practice with your team, study some good materials for answering some of the basic questions about God. There's already a lot out there.
- i) What about that rare question that seems to have no answers like, "Why did my Dad abuse me but not my siblings?" When the only thing you can say is "I don't know," follow that by telling them what you DO know. "I know God loves you, I know people care about you; I know you are special and amazing and you are going to be amazing in the future."

- j) If you think you blew it, remember that God can redeem people and He can redeem answers too! No one can communicate perfectly. Try to remember that people who ask questions are seeking and “those who seek will find... as the door will be opened to them” (Matthew 6). The Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of the questioner.

Responses-

Ask the group **“What are some of the tough questions that kids have asked us?”**

(List them on a white board or large sheets of paper or make copies of the questions below.)

(If your group does not come up with any, here are some samples)

- *“Can God use people who have gone to jail?”* Marion, OH
- *“Just what has God done for you?”* Oklahoma City, OK
- *“How can you believe in a God you cannot see?”* San Jose, CA
- *“My brother breaks one of the Commandments; will he be able to go to heaven?”* St. Clairsville, OH
- *A camper tells you she used to hide while her Father beat her Mother. She asks, “How could she believe that God is real, because she asked Him to help her, but nothing ever got better?”* Brea, CA
- *A Counselor walks into the cabin on Friday just before leaving camp. Her little camper has emptied the Counselors suitcase onto the floor and is now sitting IN the suitcase, she exclaims, “See I don’t take up very much room, can you take me home?”*
- *“Why don’t you adopt me and let me live with you?”*
- *“How do you know the Bible is for real?”*
- *“Do miracles still happen? Why doesn’t God answer my prayers?”* Akron, OH
- *“Why does God let horrible things happen to kids...?”* Cleveland, OH
- *“How do you know that you really belong to God?”* Lake Co., OH

Small Group Discussion-

Depending on the size of your training group, either break up into smaller groups of 8-12 or complete this part all together.

You may want to have a Pastor and a Social Worker / Child Specialist on hand to help give input from their areas of expertise. They may be available to wander around each group and see if people need assistance. Their input could also be valuable for the larger group’s discussion at the end.

Find a Facilitator for each group and have them ask the questions to the group. Give each Facilitator a copy of this handout as a reminder of the principles, especially the one for short answers. **This is where it gets real, no more hiding in the pews.** Volunteers need to know this is a place where they can try and fail in a comfortable and encouraging environment. Few great answers will be found immediately, most of the best answers will arrive after there has been dialog and discussion.

If your Camper asked you, *“How can you believe in a God you cannot see?”* What would you say?

The discussion is so valuable. Practice now so there is a ready answer later. Remember the short answers and your own journey. The group may refine the answer that is best. Watch and listen for phrases that resonate with your own understanding.

After working through the questions and potential answers as a small group, take time for each small group to report to the larger group how they came up with their best answers. Everyone will learn more from this broader discussion especially if well moderated by the Director, a Pastor and Social Worker / Child Specialist.

It might help to make some flash cards with key points to questions.

End in prayer for each other to be ready to give an answer that represents God as love, truth, beauty and power.

Thank you! The children deserve you taking time to be prepared!

Bibliography:

Our theology informs us that pain and suffering is a part of God's divine plan. It would help the kids (and all around us) to keep growing ourselves:

God (Author), [The Book of Job](#)

God (Again), [The Psalms](#)

Paul Little, [Know what you Believe](#)

Joni Eareckson Tada, [When God weeps](#)

Randy Alcorn, [If God is Good](#)

Fleming Rutledge, [The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ](#)

H, Norman Wright, [Helping Those in Grief: A Guide to Help You Care for Others](#)

Jerry Sittser, [A Grace Disguised: How the Soul Grows through Loss](#)

Philip Yancey, [What's so amazing about grace](#)

Philip Yancey, [Disappointment with God; three Questions No One Asks Aloud](#)

CS Lewis, [The Problem of Pain](#)

CS Lewis, [A Grief Observed](#)

Adam Hamilton, [Why? Making Sense of God's Will](#)

Adam Hamilton, [On How to Read the Bible](#)

Peter Kreeft, [A Handbook of Apologetics](#)

William Lane Craig, [On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Passion](#)