

Session 2: Your Heavenly Parent & You

Supplies for this session: Construction paper & markers.

1. Welcome & Check In (5 minutes)
 - Welcome everyone to their second session!
 - Introduce what the session will be about:
 - Who our Heavenly Parent is
 - Having a relationship with God
 - Taking ownership over your spiritual life
 - Share what they can gain from their investment into the session:
 - A deeper understanding of God
 - **Idea's for how to build your relationship with God**
 - If you have members in your group that do not believe in God you will need to be sensitive as you go through each section. Some youth with this belief will be fine just following along, but if you have youth who are very adamant about their belief you will need to modify the session to include them. You can focus the discussion questions and activity on being intentional and improving your quality of life in that kind of scenario.
2. Play an Icebreaker (10 minutes)
 - *Tongue Twisters*
 - Have participants find a partner
 - If there is an odd number staff should play too!
 - **Tell them they have to stare into their partner's soul**
 - Then tell them to say these tongue twisters *They should start laughing so **it isn't awkward***
 - Blue Balloon
 - Toy Boat
 - Irish Wristwatch
 - Unique New York*
 - Red leather, yellow leather
 - The Sixth Sick Sheik's Sixth Sheep is Sick
 - One Smart Feller, he was Smart. Two Smart Fellers, they were Smart. Three Smart Fellers, all Felt Smart.
3. Review Homework from Last Week (10 minutes)
 - **Last week's homework was to go over the II Shim packet and write down any** questions that the youth or parents may have. Spend a few minutes answering the questions from their homework and making sure everyone knows what the requirements of the II Shim program are.
4. Read the Session Reading (10 minutes)
 - **Read through the "Session 2 Reading."**
 - Make sure to read it out loud and to pause between paragraphs to summarize or clarify points.

- Ask thoughtful questions that connect the content to the lives of the participants. Make sure they connect the dots of how this reading can actually make a difference in *their* lives.
 - **Take turns reading paragraphs so the youth aren't listening to one person's voice** the whole time.
5. Discussion: (15 minutes)
- Split into small groups or discuss as one large group. Make sure each person has an opportunity to share. The point of discussions is to allow each person to share their **personal thoughts and feelings on a topic, so no answer is right or wrong. It's a good idea** to acknowledge each person after sharing and thank them for having the courage to do so.
- Which characteristics of God do you appreciate most?
 - Where do you see God in the world?
 - What practices do you think would help you build a relationship with God?
6. Activity: Invitation for God (10 minutes)
- Give everyone a piece of paper and markers.
 - Ask everyone to think of something they are doing this week that God would like to enjoy with them. It can be anything from doing homework to eating a meal.
 - Then have everyone make an invitation for God with the supplies provided. They should answer the following questions on the invitation:
 - Who: (Who are you inviting?)
 - What: (What are you inviting them to?)
 - Where: (Where will this be taking place?)
 - When: (When will this be taking place?)
 - Why: (Why are you inviting them?)
 - Take a few minutes at the end of the activity to share your invitations with the group.
 - Encourage them to put these invitations somewhere that they can see regularly to remind them to invite God into their daily activities.
7. Personal Reflection Points (7 minutes)
- Allow some quiet time for the youth to write and/or think about these questions in their II Shim notebooks. Feel free to play some quiet and reflective music in the background.
- **Consider the area's in your life that you feel the most joy, can you see or feel God's presence during these activities?**
 - What is one thing you can do this week to grow your relationship with God?
8. **This Week's Homework: (5 minutes)**
- Watch this Divine Principle lecture with your parents by Gerry Servito entitled "**Creation- Who is God?**", http://dplife.info/blog/view/dojo_posts/1863/ After watching the lecture, discuss these questions with your parents and write the answers down in your packet:
 - What is the "heart" of God?
 - What makes God a "personal God"?
 - How can our surroundings help us to understand God?
 - At the end of each day this week write down one way you saw or experienced **God/God's Love/Joy. It's ok if you are still figuring out where you stand with**

God. This journaling exercise is meant to be an opportunity to discover who God is and where you might find Him/Her.

- o Choose a song or a picture that reminds you of God and bring in the lyrics or photo to class next week.

9. Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Offer a closing prayer focusing on developing our relationship with our Heavenly Parent **and recognizing God's** presence in our lives.

Session 2 Reading: Your Heavenly Parent and You

Who is God? What is God? Is God really there?

If you've ever asked yourself these questions you are not alone; having questions about God is a normal part of a life of faith. And if you haven't asked yourself these questions yet then now is a good time to think about them! The many religious groups that have developed over the course of history may differ in their practices of faith, however, they all agree on one thing: there is **some type of higher power. And that's what we call "God."** While each person's relationship with God may be different we all have one thing in common: **we are God's Children, and that makes God our Heavenly Parent.** As Unificationists we call God our Heavenly Parent because we recognize that God has the heart of both a father and a mother.

The pretty amazing thing about God is that we can spend an eternity exploring our relationship with Him/Her. There is no end to the pieces of God we can discover. A big part of that experience is that we are continually growing ourselves. Our relationship with God is a two way street, so that means God is responding to whatever we are going through and wherever we are at in our lives. So one day God may be supporting you in a big test you have coming up, and the **next day God may be helping you work out a fight you had with your sibling. It's the same God,** just a different situation in life. God relates to all of it and wants to be a part of all of it!

Because of God's invisible nature it can be difficult to think about what it means to build a relationship with our Heavenly Parent. The Divine Principle teaches us about God's nature through the Principles of Creation. In that chapter of Divine Principle we learn that God's heart behind creating the universe was joy. God wanted to have someone to love and laugh with, and that lead Him/Her to YOU! God loves you and loves all of His/Her children with the deepest love imaginable. I don't about you, but that sounds like someone I'd like to get to know!

God made each of us as unique representations of His/Her nature. That means each one of us will have a unique relationship with God. If God created the universe for the sake of joy, then the best place to start when building your relationship with God is there; where do you feel joy? Who or what makes you smile or happy? Where or when do you feel the most joy? **Is there a place that you feel "in your element," such as sports, music, or a subject in school? You may not realize it, but these are all places that God is most present in your life.** God wants nothing more than for you to be truly happy, and He/She wants to experience that happiness with you! It may take some time to figure out the ways that you relate best with God but you will get there, have

patience. Perhaps you're not sure where to start? Here are a few suggestions to consider when finding the ways you experience God best:

- Nature & Creation
- Sports, Music & The Arts
- Passion & Expression
- Holy Environments & Religious Traditions
- Family & Friends

Just like every relationship, your relationship with God requires active participation. Imagine **you had a friend that you loved very much. Now pretend that you've tried contacting them every day for the past month but they never returned your calls or messages. That's not very much of a relationship is it?** The same is true with God. While it may be hard to recognize for now, God is talking to you and reaching out to you every day. God is playing His/Her part in our relationship but we need to do the same. We need to set aside time everyday to talk to God, connect with God, and relate with God. Some people can do that through prayer, some can do it through taking a walk in nature, and some can do by taking care of others. The point is they all work, you just have to find what works for you!

Up until this point you have been following your parents lead as far as spirituality goes. And **that's great because it's important to inherit the spiritual foundation of our parents so that we can build our own life of faith. Now that you're a teenager, however, it's time for you to step up to the plate. It's a good idea to keep practicing your life of faith with your parents but now you can take it to the next level.** Try practicing your spirituality in your own time as well as the time you do so with your parents. Take your own initiative to talk to God or invite God into your activities. Say a prayer at the start and end of your day by yourself. If prayer is hard for you, try journaling to God. Try talking to people you respect about God. There are so many ways to start growing your life of faith. If you are able to take these kinds of steps in your spiritual life then your relationship with God will grow tremendously!

God is so excited for you to get to know each other on a deeper and more personal level. In our **current society God can feel so far away from us. But that was not God's desire. God created** human beings so we could interact with our Heavenly Parent in every moment and in a natural way. **And that's what it means to have a mature relationship with God. For now we need time to** practice and develop our spiritual life so that we can build up healthy habits. So enjoy the journey and discovery of your Heavenly Parent, He/She is pretty awesome!