

CORNERSTONE 2017 RESOURCE

I Swear to God I Don't Believe in God! *Evening Activity*

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SUMMARY:	There are many exciting ideas about what God is (or whether God is) – and you have an important place in this ongoing conversation! Using games, discussion, and texts from many perspectives, we will explore how you can, and do, live an authentic and engaged Jewish life with your evolving conceptions of God. - Submitted by Kate O'Brien, Seth Braunstein, Teri McGuire, and Dan Libenson
TOPIC(S):	God, Atheism, Conceptions of the Divine, Relationship/Non-Relationship with God
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	The topic of God can be complicated, wonderful, and difficult, but it is a fascinating and essential discussion for all of us. Just as all of us are allowed to have our own view of God, we as a Jewish camp community have a right and a responsibility to enter this conversation.
AUDIENCE:	Campers (bat/bat mitzvah+), young adults (CIT/SIT), and other adults; cap at 30 participants
TIMING:	75 minutes
APPENDICES:	Perspectives about God/Not God: Theologians in the Field Page with names of God
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.5x11 sheets blank paper of different colors (100 pages) • Copies of handouts (on white paper) • Quotations printed on white paper to post around the room • Names of God page • Masking tape • 2 small beach balls • Black sharpie • Mini Post-Its (2 colors; 150-200)
SET-UP DETAILS:	Location can be inside or outside, as long as there is a flat wall nearby. Chairs, bean bags or other place to sit for each participant arranged in a circle to start.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Prior to Participants' Arrival

- Hang quotations from theologians/philosophers on the wall with the words facing the wall (so words are hidden from sight)
- Arrange up to 30 seats in a circle
- Write questions on "God Ball"
- Coordinate handouts

Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

- Use blank beach ball to toss to participants and state name, camp, and why they are here
- Explain the general outline of the evening and the goal of the program
- Set ground rules together (this can be a sensitive discussion)

Initial thoughts about God/Not God (25 minutes)

- Attendees surface their ideas of God/not God privately (God is... God does... God is like...)
- Write them on colored pieces of paper
- Turn and talk between pairs of participants; share ideas
- Get up and tape thoughts on wall between theologians' quotations about God.
- Turn theologian's/philosophers' quotations forward -- have participants do a Museum Walk. At the same time, hand out mini-post-it notes of two colors.
- Each participant has post-its to affix to quotations with which they agree and which they do not agree (designate one color for each).
- When participants are finished, collect the pages and focus on 2 or 3 with the most positive and most negative "reviews"; discuss as a large group

God Ball (originated by Mara Berde) (25 minutes)

- Get participants in a circle and explain that when the "God Ball" is thrown to them they should catch it, read the question aloud that is that is closest to their right thumb, and answer the question. Then they throw it to another person.
- Play until everyone has caught the ball and answered a question.
 - Recommended "God Ball" questions:
 - Do you think that there is a God?
 - Do you talk to God? Why or why not?
 - If there is a God, what would God look like?
 - Do you feel close to God at camp or at home or elsewhere?
 - Have you ever felt angry at God? When? Why?
 - If you had to assign a color to God, what would it be?
 - Have you ever felt God talking to you, or have you ever felt God's presence?
 - Has your concept of God been the same since you were younger?
 - When does God feel furthest from you?
 - If you could give God advice, what would it be?
 - Does God answer or listen to your prayers?
 - What was God's role in creation of the world?
 - What is a miracle? Do you believe in miracles?
 - Do you believe in life after death?
 - Do you believe God punishes some people and rewards others?
 - What are some of your doubts about God?
 - If God is good, how can God permit evil in the world?
 - If you were God, what would you do differently?

Who is the God You (Don't) Believe In? (15 minutes)

- There are how many names for God? Have them guess (Answer: 157).
- Share some of the names of God on a page
- As a large group, debate and discuss the images and associations.
- What new names or pictures or concepts can the group generate?
- Using markers, crayons, pens, pencils, etc. have the participants draw a symbol that represents their relationship with their favorite image of God on the back of the page. Share out with the group.

Closing (5 minutes)

- Have participants reflect on how they could bring these activities back to camp.
- Thank the group for their honesty and openness.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

You can use piece of this program with various age groups and modify it to serve your campers' needs.