

Hey Youth Leaders,



Thanks so much for choosing to bring your students to Phoenix Fest 2024!

We have a team of people preparing and praying for a meaningful weekend for you and your students. One of the things we wanted to do was send out a couple weeks of small group discussion questions for you to use with your group as you get ready to attend. As students process what it means to own their faith, they need to see the authentic faith of adults who are close to them, and they need to have a safe space to voice their questions and doubts. As a team we've designed a weekend where the priority of relationships and the need for authenticity have the opportunity to move your students forward in their faith. These two lessons will help your students get the most out of Phoenix Fest. Feel free to use them with your group over the couple of weeks before Phoenix Fest. As you facilitate these discussions we pray they will move your students closer to Jesus.

**See you at Phoenix Fest!**

PS: After Phoenix Fest, we'll be posting a follow-up discussion guide to help your students unpack what they experienced over the weekend.

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**GET READY FOR PHOENIX FEST 2024  
DISCUSSION**



**Week 1: Relationships vs. Rules**

**GOAL OF DISCUSSION:** To help students understand that the point of following Jesus isn't following rules — it's to love Him, and love others.

**SUMMARY:** Rules aren't bad. God gave them to us because He loves us and wants us to have full lives. But sometimes, it's easy to think that rules are the point—that they are the things that make you “in” or “out” when it comes to faith. But Jesus taught us something very different, and it's this: Relationships are greater than Rules.

When we read about Jesus interacting with people, He put the relationship first every time. He loved rule-followers and rule-breakers. He talked to them, hung out with them, and made them feel welcome. That's what it means to put relationships ahead of the rules. That's the life of adventure Jesus is inviting us into.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 15:1-22 - especially vs. 19: “And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Would you call yourself more of a rule-keeper or a rule-breaker? Why?
2. Why do we tend to count people out if they've broken certain rules?
3. When it comes to our faith, what's the danger of only focusing on following the rules?
4. If someone asked you why a relationship with Jesus is more important than the rules, what would you say?
5. How have others influenced you moving closer or further away from Jesus? Why do you think relationships influence our decisions more than rules?
6. It can be tempting to count out people who are known as rule-breakers. What's wrong with taking that approach with them? What's a good way to respond instead?
7. What are you looking forward to most at Phoenix Fest? What do you hope to take away from the weekend?

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**Week 2: Don't Let Doubt Keep You Out**

**GOAL OF DISCUSSION:** To help students see the importance of being real and honest when they deal with doubts.

**SUMMARY:** Here's an unspoken rule we tend to live by: 'honesty about some things is good, but honesty about everything isn't'. Maybe you know someone who's honest about everything. They are probably super critical and not very nice to be around for long periods of time. Well that same unspoken rule seems to be in place at church as well. It feels like there are some things we talk about all the time, and others we don't talk about at all.

For most people, one of those areas we don't talk about is doubt. Think about it for a second: Do you ever have doubts or deep questions when it comes to God or the church? I bet we all have! The problem is that it sometimes can feel weird to talk about these questions in church. I mean, what if God hears? Would He be mad? What if other church people hear you? Will they get mad at you? Will they judge you?

Here's what we want you need to know. Whether you've been a follower of Jesus forever, or you're just here to get out of your house, this is a place where we want you to feel welcome and safe. And that includes any questions or doubts you have. We want you to know that doubts aren't necessarily bad, either. In the stories we read about Jesus in the Gospels, some of His closest friends had their doubts about Him too. The truth is, doubt is normal and it shouldn't be shameful or embarrassing. We can find strength as we talk about them and bring them to Jesus.

**SCRIPTURE:** John 20:24-31 - especially vs. 27: "Then Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"

Mark 9:14-29 - especially vs. 23-24: "What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How would you define doubt? Give an example of something you heard or seen, and thought, "There's no way that's true."
2. Why does the idea of being honest about our doubts make most of us uncomfortable?
3. Interact with this statement from Kara Powell: "Doubt isn't toxic to faith; unexpressed doubt is."
4. Thomas felt safe to honestly express his doubts with his friends. Why is it important for us to have people we can honestly share our doubts with?
5. Jesus went straight to Thomas when He entered the room. What does that tell us about Jesus when we struggle with doubt?
6. What are some amazing things God has done for you (or people around you) in the past? Why is it important to remember those things when you deal with doubt?
7. What's one way we can keep moving towards Jesus even when we have doubts?
8. What's one way we, as a group, can help each other work through our doubts?
9. If you feel comfortable sharing... What's maybe a doubt or question you are bringing with you to Phoenix Fest? What conversations do you want to have that weekend?