

## Session 2: Your Heavenly Parent and You

*Supplies for this session: Discussion questions postable sheets, tape, highlighters, chart paper, marker, post it notes, pens, (index cards and pens/pencils (optional)).*

- **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
  - Ideas for how to build your relationship with God
- Note: 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 purpose-driven and improving your quality of life.

- **Play an Icebreaker (10 minutes)**

Choose one of the following icebreakers to get your students relaxed and ready!

- Tongue Twisters
  - Have participants find a partner
  - If there is an odd number staff should play too!
  - Then tell them to say these tongue twisters a few times quickly:
    - Blue Balloon
    - Toy Boat
    - Irish Wristwatch
    - Unique New York\*
    - Red leather, yellow leather
    - *(You may need to write the last two on the front board or on a piece of paper and tape it to the front of the room for people to see)*
      - 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.

\*You can get them to switch partners halfway through

- Index Card Towers

- Break into teams of 3-5, depending on how many participants you have.
  - Give each team 20 index cards.
  - Say, "You have ten minutes to create a free-standing tower with your index cards. However, before you add an index card to your tower, you must write down something your whole team has in common."
  - Start 10 min on a timer and say, "Go!" Walk around to make sure teams are working together and collaborating well.
  - Once the 10 min timer goes off, have someone from each team share one thing they had in common with their group.
- **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.
- **Read the Session Reading (10 minutes)**
    - Say, "We are going to read through the Session 2 Reading: Heavenly Parent and You. You are going to read in partners. Read one paragraph and then switch. When you get to the end of a section, highlight one or two sentences or thoughts from that section that stood out to you. Share what you highlighted with your partner and why. Then, continue reading."
    - *If you have an odd number of students, make one group of 3.*
    - While students are reading, walk around and sit in with them. You can listen to them share their thoughts as well. When most are just about finished, announce that they must start wrapping up.
    - When finished, gather back together.
- **Discussion: (15 minutes)**
    - Have each of the following Discussion Question print outs taped on the wall in separate parts of the room. Split students into 3 groups and assign each group to a question. Have them stand next to the question.
      1. Which characteristics of God do you appreciate most?
      2. Where do you see God in the world?
      3. What practices do you think you could do to help you build a relationship with God?

- Say, “You will have five minutes to discuss the question with your group. Make sure each person has a chance to answer. When five minutes is up, I will say ‘Switch’, and you will go to your next question. So, if you are at question 1, you will go to 2. If you are at 2, you will go to 3, and if you are at 3, you will go to 1. Okay, begin!”
  - Time every five minutes, and say, “Switch” when the time is up. As students are discussing, walk around to guide discussions.
  - **Option:** If you do not have enough students to make this type of discussion work, you can sit in a circle and toss a soft ball, or anything really. The person you toss to must answer the question. Then, they can pass it onto someone else who hasn’t answered yet. Do this style of discussion for each question.
- **Activity: Invitation for God (10 minutes)**
    - Before showing the video below, first say, “We’re going to watch a video. The best way for it to work is if you do not say anything while watching. If you’ve seen it before, just watch silently until it is finished.”
    - Play video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo)
      - If you do not have a way to project the video, you can show it on a laptop or even a cell phone. It is a short video.
    - Ask, “How many of you did not see the gorilla in the first part of the video?” Have students show hands.
    - Say, “This was a study that shows how we can easily lose sight of things if we do not pay attention, or put focus on them. This is the same with our Heavenly Parent. If we are too focused on ourselves and what we are doing, we lose sight of how present God really is, and then we lose touch in our relationship with Him/Her.”
    - Put the chart paper on the wall and write *What is one thing we can do to focus more on God in our daily lives?*
    - Say, “You will each get a post-it note. Write down one way you can put more focus on God in your daily life. Think of one action step you can do this week, write it on the post-it note, and stick it on the chart paper.”
    - Give them a few minutes to write their action steps.
    - After they are all posted, read each one aloud to share the different ideas that they came up with (do not need to say names).
  - **Personal Reflection Points (7 minutes)**
    - Allow some quiet time for the youth to answer the question below in their Il Shim notebooks. Feel free to play some quiet and reflective music in the background.
    - *Consider the areas in your life that you feel the most joy. How can you see or feel God’s presence during these activities?*

- **This Week's Homework: (5 minutes)**

- Watch this Divine Principle lecture with your parents by Gerry Servito entitled "Creation- Who is God?", [dplife.info/blog/view/dojo\\_posts/1863/](http://dplife.info/blog/view/dojo_posts/1863/)
- After watching the video, 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?
- Throughout the week, write down two ways you saw or experienced God/God's Love/Joy in your notebooks. 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.

- **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, Really?

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 in the search for faith. 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. This is 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 requires participation from each end, 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 is present and wants to be included in all of it!

**// Section Recap:** It is normal, and even necessary, to question God's existence. We can spend our whole lives understanding who God is. As we put in more and more effort into knowing our Parent, we will be able to see our relationship grow too.

### God is Present

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 is our faith's main scripture, which shares God's Truth and a deeper understanding of the Bible. In the first chapter of Divine Principle, we learn about the purpose of creation, and 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 know 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

**// Section Recap:** The Divine Principle says that God created each of us to live with, laugh with, and feel joy with. God wants to be present in our lives, and is

with us in everything we do. The relationship that he has with each of us is unique and meant just for us.

### This Relationship's A Two-Way Street

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 either been following your parents' lead as far as spirituality goes, or have been looking for something deeper on your own. It is so important to know where you're coming from in faith journey. Now that you're a teenager, however, it's time for you to take it even further. 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 in your faith journey. 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!

**// Section Recap:** Each relationship we have in our lives takes effort from each person involved. This is the same with our relationship with God. Just like you make effort to message your friends or go on outings with your family, you need to make time for God as well. Invite God into everything you do.