

## **Good and Evil – Biology and Theology: Sinner or Saint?**

### **SESSION FIVE LEADER GUIDE**

**This leader guide is designed to follow each page of the fifth session: “GOOD AND EVIL – BIOLOGY AND THEOLOGY: SINNER OR SAINT?” with background for the leader and helpful references for expanding the learning. This fifth lesson may be taught as one longer continuous session, such as at a retreat setting, or as separate sessions (approximately one hour) that cover each page of the session. You may wish to have youth view the website, or individual pages, on their own, then gather as a group to discuss and explore the learning. The website is also useful within the classroom as a teaching tool to introduce the material, then youth may revisit it later to reinforce learning at home.**

**While the curriculum offers prompts for guiding conversation and offers direction for teaching the material, it is important to prepare your own answers for questions and notes for discussion. Sharing your personal experience and insight with the group is a valuable resource for these lessons.**

### **OBJECTIVES**

**At the end of this session, the students will be better able to:**

**Develop a more broad understanding of the causes of good and evil in the world**

**Compare scientific and religious perspectives on the origins of good and evil**

## THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The conversation between faith/religion and science can be difficult to navigate with youth who live in a world where they are bombarded by a great amount of information and opinions. It is important to first set a safe learning environment where differing opinions are respected and confidentiality is secured.

You may also want to consult with parents/guardians prior to beginning this session to alert them to the concepts taught in this session, and invite them to preview the website. Many adults are unfamiliar with ways to talk about both science and religion, or may have beliefs that are challenged by this learning.

Within any group of youth you will find a wide range of maturity and development levels. In general, adolescent-aged students (12-14) are able to engage in more complex thinking, reason deductively, and are better able to form concepts about the past, present, and future than their elementary counterparts. As adolescence is achieved, they can synthesize values and beliefs with their own experiences to create meaning and understanding for life. This is also a time when a sense of personal identity is being formed, and this extends to their identity as it relates to the concepts of science and faith.

## SUPPLIES FOR SESSION ONE

- Computer and access to Internet
- Bible *optional*

## **TO BEGIN:**

Gather youth and provide an overview of lesson(s) to be covered in **GOOD AND EVIL – BIOLOGY AND THEOLOGY: SINNER OR SAINT?** session(s). If this lesson is held separately from the previous lesson, review the need for a safe and confidential environment (See Lesson 1 – Leader Guide). Ask youth to recall ways for their group to honor one another's opinions and to keep shared ideas in the group. If possible, review these ideas previously listed on a white board, or a computer document and read the completed list. Ask all present, youth and adults, to agree to follow these guidelines for the duration of the learning time together.

## **PAGE ONE – GOOD AND EVIL – BIOLOGY AND THEOLOGY: SINNER OR SAINT?**

Begin the session by discussing the general concepts of good and evil as they apply to humans. Ensure that other group members allow each member to share personal views without judgment. Encourage the group to explore the biological and theological causes as a way of understanding good and evil rather than simply placing judgment onto another person.

**Ask: How do you define evil? *Allow all answers.***

**How do you define good? *Allow all answers.***

Ask the group to think about situations where people behaved in either a good or an evil manner. Discuss the possible reasons for why a person might commit acts of good or evil. *Allow discussion to continue for a long*

*as time allows.*

Review with the class the website information on the area of PAGE ONE prior to the link, and encourage discussion on the information presented. If necessary, review the story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis in the Bible (Chapter 3, verses 1 - 24).

Next: Have the group watch the video clip in the link: "Jekyll and Hyde - creative response" with the sound turned off in order to focus on the words that appear in the video. Next, turn the sound on, but have the group listen with eyes closed to only hear the lyrics of the song.

Allow the group to share their initial reactions to the video, and then discuss the following questions/issues presented in the video:

Who decides what is good and bad in society?

The video states that everyone has two sides, one evil and one good. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Does either good or evil always win or overpower the other?

*Encourage the group to give examples of each option as they see it occurring in society.*

If time after the discussion, have the group watch the video clip again and discuss any other ideas or questions they might have on the topic of good and evil.

**Next, discuss with the group why they feel that some who follow a religious tradition and some scientists disagree about the claims for either the biological or theological source of good and evil in humans. Be attentive to the need for each group member to honor the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of each other. Allow the discussion to continue for as long as interest is maintained. You may continue on with the lesson to PAGE TWO - THE TWO SIDES, or bring the session to a close.**

**If the session will end, encourage students to keep track of any conversations they observe or have experienced with friends or family regarding the claims the causes of good and evil. Encourage students to bring this information back to future sessions. Ask the group to look for reported events of behavior that they consider to be good or evil and bring any related information back to the next session.**