

Ways of Knowing – Data and Belief: Theological and Scientific Methods

SESSION SIX LEADER GUIDE

This leader guide is designed to follow each page of the sixth session: “WAYS OF KNOWING – DATA AND BELIEF: THEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS” with background for the leader and helpful references for expanding the learning. This sixth 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:

Define the scientific and religious ways of knowing about the world

Incorporate both a scientific and religious perspective into

knowing about the world

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**

TO BEGIN:

Gather youth and provide an overview of lesson(s) to be covered in WAYS OF KNOWING – DATA AND BELIEF: THEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS 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 – WAYS OF KNOWING – DATA AND BELIEF: THEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

Begin the session by discussing how students experience the world and how we generally know about the world. Compare and contrast knowing facts from having experiences that support our beliefs. Ask the group to recall a time when they learned something new or had an experience that supported their faith or belief in God. Ensure that other group members allow each member to share personal views without judgment. Encourage the group to explore ideas rather than simply placing judgment onto another person.

Ask the following two questions:

What are the differences in these two ways of knowing?

How are these related to the scientific and religious

ways of knowing?

Allow all answers.

Review with the class the website information on the area of PAGE ONE prior to the link.

Next: Have the group watch the video clip in the link: “Sesame Street: One of These Things.” *Allow discussion about the learning process following the video as time allows.*

Review with the class the remaining information on the area of PAGE ONE after the link.

Next, discuss with the group their ideas of why a person might develop faith, as suggested by author Barrett. Continue the discussion by asking the group to share any experiences they might have had as a child when they began to have either a religious and/or scientific view of the world.

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 METHODS, 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 differences between scientific and religious ways of knowing about the world. Encourage students to bring this information back to future sessions.