

GENERATE HEALTHY DISCUSSIONS

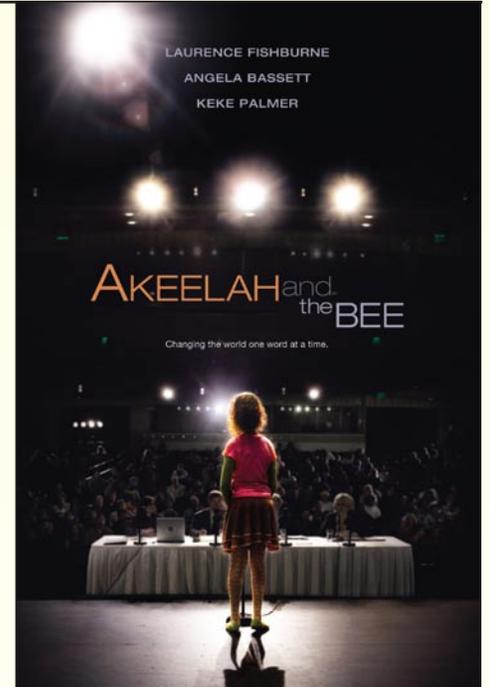
AKEELAH AND THE BEE

Changing the world... one word at a time.

Eleven year-old Akeelah Anderson is a very bright student facing many challenges in her life. Although she is a gifted student, she tries to hide her intelligence from her peers for fear of standing out. But with the help of one great English professor and 50,000 other teachers, Akeelah learns to hold her head up high and earns her way to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

PROGRAMMING SUGGESTIONS

- Coordinate a congregation spelling bee or Bible Trivia Night for fun. Get some great prizes for the winners.
- Organize a crossword puzzle competition during a retreat. You can have individual members compete or encourage them to divide into teams. Determine a time when the crossword puzzle is due and give various prizes such as first team to complete the puzzle or team with the most correct answers.
- Organize a program for members to volunteer their time tutoring children in a local school.
- Sunday School activity: Using cut-outs shaped like bumble bees, display several words used in the Bible and their definitions. Challenge the kids to use them in a sentence and explain how it relates to their lives.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Akeelah feel such a strong need to fit in and not stand out from her peers? Was she being true to herself by not using the gifts God gave her? What gifts are we holding back? Why? What effects do you think holding back our gifts have on our lives and the lives of those around us?
2. How do you handle the pressure to conform and fit in with others? How would you recommend others deal with this kind of stress?
3. Was it right for Mr. Welch to push Akeelah into the spelling bee? What were his motives? Has anyone ever pushed you to do something that you yourself did not think you could do? What did you learn from the experience?
4. What do you think motivated Akeelah to work hard? What motivates you?
5. What did Akeelah and Dr. Larabee gain from their work together? What have you gained from working with others?
6. Akeelah overcame many personal obstacles. Do you think you would have done the same? What might have held you back? How does your faith affect the way you deal with obstacles or trials? What would have kept you going? What goal in your life will make you work as hard as Akeelah did to achieve her goal?
7. Both Akeelah and Dr. Larabee lost loved ones in this movie. How did their losses affect their lives? How can your church help you if you are going through a similar loss? How can you help a friend who is going through a similar loss?
8. At the district bee, one of the students and his mother cheat when spelling his last word. What do you think drives people to cheat? What is God's view of this kind of behavior and why? What is it that brings about the need to win for some people in a competition?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED):

9. Why do you think Akeelah was unimpressed when she learned that Dr. Larabee lived in her neighborhood? Why do you think Dr. Larabee still lived there?
10. Why do you think Akeelah's mom was so against her daughter competing in the spelling bee? What challenges was she facing in her life? What made her change her mind about the bee and Akeelah's goal to win?
11. Why did Dr. Larabee decide to stop coaching Akeelah right before the national bee? How did this impact Akeelah and her goal?
12. What did Akeelah's mom mean when she said that Akeelah had 50,000 teachers? Who were some of those teachers? Who were/are your teachers?
13. How do you think Dylan felt about the pressure put on him by his father? Did this pressure help Dylan? Why do you think his father pressured him so badly? Have you ever been pressured by someone in your life? How did this impact you? Did your faith help you?
14. Why do you think Dylan was so condescending to Akeelah? What made him change his attitude in the end?
15. How did Javier and Georgia show they were good friends to Akeelah? What qualities do you look for in your friends?
16. What was it about Dr. Larabee's teaching style that worked for Akeelah? What did he do specifically to challenge her and get her ready for the competition?



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17. Why do you think that Akeelah's success was so important to her community? How did they help and support her? How can you help and support your community and congregation?
18. What fears did Dr. Larabee have in his life? What fears did Akeelah have in her life? How do you overcome the fears in your own life?
19. What made Akeelah want to allow Dylan to win the national spelling bee? What made Dylan tell Akeelah to do her best and not give up and let him win? What could have been the consequences of Akeelah throwing the contest? Have you ever done this for someone or had someone do it for you? What happened?

DISCUSS AND REFLECT ON THESE QUOTES FROM THE MOVIE:

- “You know that feeling that no matter where you go or what you do that you just don't fit in?” (Akeelah)
- “They laugh because you intimidate them.” (Dr. Larabee)
- “Sometimes your brain has to be smarter than your body.” (Akeelah's brother)
- “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” (The poem on Dr. Larabee's wall)
- “And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people the opportunity to do the same.” (The poem on Dr. Larabee's wall)