

GET PLUGGED IN [church involvement]

THIS WEEK

Church—some young people love it, others do everything they can to get out of it! If your kids are like most, they're at different stages of church commitment. Use this activity to talk about church involvement in a non-threatening manner. Give your kids the chance to express their opinions about the church—both good and bad. You might learn a few things as well!

OPENER

Start by asking your kids an honest question—and ask the group for honest answers. Where would they rather be on a Sunday morning instead of going to church? What would they rather be doing? You'll get a variety of answers. Don't look down on any of your kids! Most of them would probably like to get a few extra hours of sleep. You may want to make a list of these excuses for missing church. Now ask them how they feel when they miss church. They may not feel anything different—some may say they feel guilty or empty afterwards. Talk about what is important about going to church. Is it more than just showing up and singing some songs? What else goes on a church that's important?

You may want to ask your kids how effective the church services are for them. What makes the church service and being involved in the church good for them? Or not? What do your kids like to be involved in, if anything? Why do they like being involved? What rewards do they get from being a part of a church family? What would they do if they weren't part of a church?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. How involved are your kids in their church? What are they involved in? What do they like about being involved in what they do? Why are some kids not involved? Is this a good or bad thing?
2. Provide the kids an opportunity to share their predictions about their own church involvement in one, five, and 10 years down the line. Why would their involvement be different then than now? Why do some churches put more emphasis on adult involvement than on student involvement?
3. Vote on each of these statements, debating any controversial issues that come out of the discussion. Some of your kids may have different ideas about some of these statements, depending on their church background and experiences. Spend some time on these if you have time.
4. Where are your kids at on this scale? If you don't want them to share out loud, ask them where the

average teenager their age is. Why are some teenagers on different places on the scale? Why do some see the church as an enemy and rebel?

5. You can also use this activity as a group to examine your church or churches. For every problem that is brought up, ask the group to also suggest a solution as well as how they can be a part of that solution.

THE CLOSE

You may want to close this session with a brainstorming activity. Ask your kids to create a list of all the benefits of being involved in church as a teenager. Focus on worship, service opportunities, fun times, and personal Christian growth activities. This simple activity can help your young people identify all of the positive opportunities available that they have never considered.

Point out that the church is a body of believers, although it always doesn't feel like one. The church is a giant family—and an important one too. You may want to have some of your kids find verses that talk about the church and what it means to be in a church. There are several references in the New Testament to the church. What verses can they find that describe the church?

Take some time to pray for your church, the church leaders, and the youth of your church. Encourage your kids to pray for how they can get involved in the church as well.

MORE

- You may want to invite some of your church leaders to be in on this TalkSheet discussion. This is a convenient opportunity for them to hear what the youth of the church are thinking and feeling. Possibly have a question and answer session after the discussion for the pastor, elders, or committee members to bounce ideas off of your youth and vice versa. Encourage a teamwork approach to the discussion and challenge your kids to continue making suggestions and ideas to the church leaders.
- Consider holding a special service for your kids—or have your kids plan a service for the church. What would they like to see happen in this service? Would they like a sermon on a specific topic? How singing some of their favorite songs? Encourage them to get involved in the planning. Then debrief on how it was for them to be involved and whether or not they enjoyed the service more or less.