

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

GROWIN' UP IN CHURCH

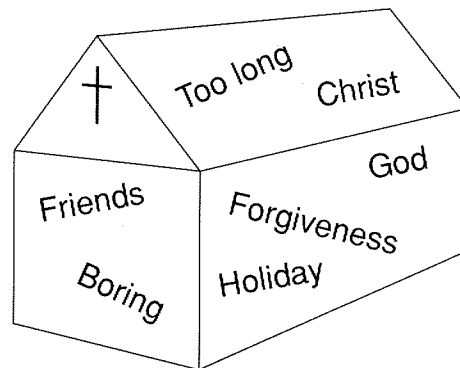
Topic: Church Participation

Purpose of this Session:

Church or some form of religious instruction is a part of life for the majority of American 4th–6th graders. Most kids report that religion is an important influence in their lives. Use this TalkSheet to support the role church can play in the lives of young people as well as a tool for getting ideas on how your church can improve on its work with kids.

To Introduce the Topic:

Draw a simple outline of a church on a chalkboard or on newsprint. Make it large enough to write inside. Ask your students to call out words that come to their minds when they think of the word church.



The Discussion:

Item #1: You will hear grumbling from some kids that they are made to go to church. Don't discount these complaints but listen to them as real. You may want to take some time to explore this with the group if it appears to be a major issue. Keep the discussion positive, supportive of parents, and validating for the young people—no easy task. Ask what other things kids have to do. Explore why parents might see church as important for kids.

Item #2: Ask the kids why these are favorites. This activity can indicate what your church is doing right and how it can be strengthened. Create a master list of all the favorites to see if a pattern can be identified.

Item #3: You will need to define what you mean by church here. Usually kids see it as the worship service and Sunday school. Ask the group to react to each statement, then spend time on those that stir up controversy or discussion.

Item #4: Take these suggestions seriously and you will find that kids will take ownership to plan and carry them out. Some great ideas will come out of this activity.

Item #5: Focus on how kids' lives might change. Some young people may interpret this with a focus on weekly attendance. Place the focus on the relationships, values, and spiritual growth that may be lost rather than just attendance loss. Create with the group a master list of all the benefits of church involvement.

Item #6: Ask why Jesus went to the synagogue regularly. Read Hebrews 10:25, and ask why the author of this passage wants Christians to encourage each other's participation in church.

To Close the Session:

Close the session by returning to the introductory activity. Draw another church, and ask the kids to fill it with words that describe how they would like to see church. Brainstorm ways your group members could make this new description a reality.

End on a very positive note by asking volunteers to share the most important things they have learned in the last year from their involvement in church.