

DOUBLE TOUGH



1

What is one choice that was tough to make when you were much younger?

2

Look through the following list of situations. Place an E in front of the easiest situations to handle and place a T in front of the toughest situations to handle.

- ☐ Asking for help with schoolwork
- ☐ Getting into trouble and not knowing how to get out of it
- ☐ Staying friends after an argument with a good friend
- ☐ Dealing with a problem with a stepparent or parent
- ☐ Being pressured to smoke cigarettes
- ☐ Choosing how to spend money
- ☐ Being picked on by a brother or a sister
- ☐ Being talked into doing something you know is wrong
- ☐ Being picked on at school
- ☐ Being ridiculed because of your glasses or braces
- ☐ Choosing what video movie to rent
- ☐ Being bothered by a gang

3

Whom do you usually talk with when you are faced with a tough choice and you do not know what to do? (Check your top two choices.)

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| ☐ A teacher | ☐ A friend your age | ☐ A parent or a stepparent |
| ☐ A coach | ☐ An adult friend | ☐ A pet animal like a dog or a cat |
| ☐ God | ☐ A brother or a sister | ☐ No one |

4

Complete the following sentence: **If I face a tough decision and make the wrong choice, I will . . .** _____

5

What do you like about making your own choices? _____

6

Read the following scrambled verses found in **Proverbs 8:33–36** by using the numbers, beginning with #1. Then write out what you believe the passage means.

3. Blessed is the man who listens to me,
1. Listen to my instruction and be wise;
5. waiting at my doorway.
2. do not ignore it.
4. watching daily at my doors.

6. For whoever finds me finds life
9. all who hate me love death.
7. and receives favor from the Lord.
8. But whoever fails to find me harms himself;

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

DOUBLE TOUGH

Topic: Handling Tough Choices

Purpose of this Session:

It goes without saying that kids today have it tougher than past generations, so adults must equip them to face the tough choices. As much as possible, we need to protect young people from the culture while at the same time prepare them to live in a society that throws tough choices their way. One of the best strategies to accomplish this is dialogue with parents and other trustworthy adults. Use this TalkSheet to discuss the tough choices your kids face and how adults can help them navigate these bumpy waters.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask the kids to list all the choices that they had to make to get to the meeting. Then tell them that you will be discussing the tough choices they face.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Here you have the opportunity to take the group's stress pulse and allow the kids to share that stress. Young people will share everything from very tough choices, like whom to live with after their parents divorce, to trading things with friends or working their VCRs. The vital point here is to validate as important all the choices kids have faced.

Item #2: Young people may ask "what if" questions. Tell them to work through these situations at face value. If there are any situations they wish to add, they can do so. As a group, determine what makes a situation easy or difficult to handle.

Item #3: You have an important opportunity here to encourage young people to talk with trustworthy adults when they face double tough situations. Keeping quiet about choices or only sharing them with peers can lead to bad decisions. That does not mean young people must tell adults everything, but tough issues need to be talked through with an adult. Go back to Item #2 and list the situations that are best talked about with an adult. Brainstorm other strategies kids can consider.

Item #4: Again, encourage young people to ask an adult for help, especially for the tough decisions. Give some examples and ask the kids for examples.

Item #5: During the preadolescent years, young people are given more freedom by their parents and teachers. Generally, they like this newfound freedom, but they are also concerned that they may make wrong choices. Discuss with them both the good and the bad consequences of decision making. Take the opportunity to talk about how God and our Christian values can direct us in making wise choices.

Item #6: The focus of Proverbs 8:33–36 on wisdom reinforces the need for young people to listen to trustworthy adults. Discuss how God's Word provides Christians with a road map that guides us through the tough choices. Another source of wisdom is the community called the church. And don't forget to talk about the importance of prayer. Young people who listen to adults, to the Bible, to God in prayer, and to the community of believers have a better chance of making wise choices.

To Close the Session:

If you feel comfortable with role-plays, you can play out different situations with volunteer young people. Ask each volunteer to choose a tough choice and come to you as the adult. These role-plays demonstrate the benefits of dialoguing with trustworthy adults. Your role-play need not be a lecture but a guided discussion where you ask a number of questions to help the young person make an informed choice.

UP IN SMOKE



1

How many kids your age do you know who have smoked a cigarette, even if it was only a few puffs?
(Put a check mark before your answer.)

- ☐ I don't know any kids my age who have tried smoking.
☐ I know one kid my age who has tried smoking.
☐ I know more than one kid my age who has tried smoking.

2

Place an X before each of the following reasons why you believe kids try tobacco.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ One or both of their parents use tobacco. | ☐ It makes them happy. |
| ☐ They want to be like their friends who smoke or chew. | ☐ They like the taste. |
| ☐ They want to show off. | ☐ They want to see what it is like. |
| ☐ They believe tobacco use is a part of growing up. | ☐ There is nothing else to do. |
| ☐ Someone they admire smokes or chews tobacco. | ☐ Other kids think it looks cool. |
| ☐ There is pressure to try a cigarette. | ☐ It is fun. |

3

From the list below, circle the five best reasons for not smoking or chewing tobacco.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| It is bad for your health. | Cigarettes are too hard to get. |
| Parents don't want kids to smoke. | Your friends will not like it. |
| God doesn't want people to smoke. | You may get into trouble. |
| It tastes bad. | Other kids will think you are weird. |
| It makes your clothes smell. | It costs too much. |
| Christians aren't supposed to smoke. | It's stupid. |
| It is not a smart thing to do. | Smokers die sooner than nonsmokers. |
| It is a bad habit. | Smoking is illegal. |
| The smoke hurts people who don't smoke. | Careless smoking could start a fire. |
| It is addictive. | It would only create a new problem. |
| It is a sin. | Smoking or chewing is not cool. |
| It might make you sick. | |

4

Do you think you may try smoking or chewing tobacco when you get older?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please explain your answer. _____

5

What is one thing you would like to say to adults about smoking? _____

6

Read the following verses and decide what message they have in common.

1 Corinthians 3:9
Ephesians 2:20-22

1 Corinthians 3:16
1 Peter 2:5

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

UP IN SMOKE

Topic: Nicotine Use

Purpose of this Session:

It is not the purpose of this discussion to condemn those who smoke, be they parents, relatives, schoolteachers, or church children's workers. Condemning smokers rather than voicing opposition to smoking can be confusing to young people, especially those whose parents and other adults close to them smoke. Use this discussion time to focus on what is in the best interests of your kids. You will need to take time to discuss the addictive nature of tobacco as the reason adults who smoke have such a difficult time quitting. Point out that most adults who do smoke would like to quit but can't. An addiction to tobacco is one of the most powerful addictions known.

To Introduce the Topic:

Collect several magazine cigarette ads that you can show the kids. Ask the group what messages these ads communicate to young people, then read the warning labels contained in the ads. Ask the group how these warning labels contradict the message being put forth by the cigarette companies. Ask which message is closer to the truth.

The Discussion:

Item #1: You will have a variety of responses depending upon the makeup of your group. This item indicates the potential peer influence for or against smoking in your community. As you begin your discussion, you will find it helpful to know that there is a significant correlation between parental smoking and a child's experimentation with smoking. Also, the children of smokers are more inclined to hold more positive attitudes toward smoking than the kids of nonsmokers.

Item #2: Ask the young people to look through the reasons and decide if any of them are good reasons to smoke. A great many young people try cigarettes or chew because they want to feel grown-up. Many of these reasons are legitimate needs kids have, but smoking won't meet those needs. Check the list again and determine how those that are needs can be met in more constructive ways.

Item #3: Let kids add any reasons not found on the list. Point out that there are many good reasons not to smoke and really no good reasons to smoke, yet young people every day try smoking. Explore with the group why this is so.

Item #4: Most kids will answer no to this question. Some may already have tried it, and some may say yes. Do not use this item to morally beat kids over the head. Rather, take this opportunity to reinforce saying no to smoking. Research indicates that young people who have puffed on cigarettes as children are more likely to further experiment as they grow up. Take this opportunity to help shape a more positive attitude toward saying no.

Item #5: This item helps young people affirm a negative stand toward the use of tobacco.

Item #6: Ask the group to write a statement that summarizes the passages of Scripture.

To Close the Session:

Summarize what has been said during your discussion. You will not want to preach against smoking as much as you want to emphasize what is in the best interests of your kids. Lecturing against the evils of smoking only serves to push kids toward the thing you want them to avoid.

WHAT, ME LIE?



1

Whom do you feel kids lie to the most?
(Circle your top three choices.)

Parents	Schoolteachers	Friends
Police	Baby-sitters	Sunday school teachers
Coaches	Club leaders	Recreational leaders
God	Brothers or sisters	After-school program leaders

2

Place an X before each of the reasons listed below that explain why you usually lie.

☐ It is easier than telling the truth.	☐ I want to protect a friend.
☐ I want to hurt someone.	☐ It gets me what I want.
☐ It gets me accepted by my friends.	☐ It helps me cover up a mistake.
☐ I want to avoid getting into trouble.	☐ I want to exaggerate the truth.
☐ It is fun.	☐ It makes me look cool.
☐ I don't want to get hurt.	☐ It helps me get along with my friends.

3

Answer the two questions below as honestly as you can.

a. How do you feel when someone lies to you? _____

b. How do you feel when you lie to someone? _____

4

As Diandra walked into her classroom, she realized she had forgotten to do her homework assignment. She knew Ms. Collins would ask for it at the start of class. Ms. Collins had already spoken to Diandra about not completing other homework assignments. She would have remembered if her grandparents had not come for the weekend, but Diandra knew her teacher would not accept their visit as a good excuse. "I know," thought Diandra, "I'll just say I was sick all weekend. Then she will give me one more day to do it."

What do you think might happen to Diandra if she lies to her teacher?

5

Read two of the following Bible verses from the book of Proverbs. Then write down what you learned.

Proverbs 12:13
Proverbs 19:5

Proverbs 12:19
Proverbs 21:6

Proverbs 12:22
Proverbs 24:28

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

WHAT, ME LIE?

Topic: Lying

Purpose of this Session:

Preschoolers and younger children love to make up stories—to pretend. They have difficulty telling the difference between reality and fantasy. Most people don't worry about their half-truths. But during the 4th–6th grades, lying can become a serious problem and, if left unchecked, a dangerous pattern can develop. Lies at this age are like those of adults, often told to deceive, conceal, or manipulate. And lying leads to more lying. Use this TalkSheet to discuss the consequences of lying and the advantages of honesty.

To Introduce the Topic:

Before the meeting begins, ask three volunteer young people to write down four statements about themselves, three that are true and one that is false. Make sure these statements are in good taste. They can be about anything from the color of their eyes to where they spent their last summer vacations.

Have each kid read his or her statements to the group. After each kid finishes, challenge the group to pick the statement that is a lie. Announce that you will be talking about lying.

The Discussion:

Item #1: This question establishes the fact that kids lie. You do not need to admonish the young people when they begin admitting to all the lies they tell and to whom they tell them. In fact, research indicates that punishment, especially harsh punishment, does not deter kids from lying. Rather, it increases the incidences of lying.

Item #2: Explore all the reasons why kids lie as well as why adults lie. Then talk about the consequences of lying related to each of the reasons. For example, if someone lies to protect a friend, is the friend really protected, or can this kind of lie actually hurt a friend in the long run?

Item #3: Contrast the difference between how kids feel when someone lies to them versus being told the truth. Discuss the difference between how kids feel when they lie to others versus telling them the truth.

Item #4: Use this situation to discuss again the consequences of lying versus the advantages of honesty.

Item #5: You can also talk about our God of truth and honesty (Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 146:6) and how we can depend upon him and trust him because of this. Also talk about God's forgiveness when we lie.

To Close the Session:

Point out that God wants us to be honest because honesty protects us in the long run. Remind the group of the story of the boy who cried wolf. His word could no longer be trusted. This hurt him in the long run because when he needed the townspeople, no one believed him. Create a list with the group of all of the benefits of telling the truth. Encourage them to consider these benefits the next time they are tempted to lie. Young people need to know that honesty really is the best policy.

"!#*X/#" AND OTHER WORDS



1

How many kids use swear words at your school?
(Circle only one answer.)

- Very few kids
- Some kids
- About half of the kids
- Most of the kids
- All of the kids

Now go back and put a box around the number of kids at your school who take God's name in vain.

2

Place an X in front of the statements below that you believe explain why kids at your school use swear words.

- ☐ Kids use swear words because it gets them attention.
- ☐ Kids use swear words to make adults mad.
- ☐ Kids use swear words because adults like kids to use them.
- ☐ Kids use swear words so other kids will think they are cool.
- ☐ Kids use swear words to show how grown-up they think they are.
- ☐ Kids use swear words because it is fun.
- ☐ Kids use swear words _____
(give another reason here)

3

In the following sentences, fill in the blanks with the words *should* or *should not*.

- a. A kid _____ be allowed to watch movies that contain swear words.
- b. A kid _____ be allowed to use swear words around other kids.
- c. A kid _____ be allowed to listen to music with swear words.
- d. A kid _____ be allowed to have friends who use swear words.

4

What would you do if someone you were with used swear words?

5

Place an X through one of the following set of numbers. The set of numbers you pick represents a Bible verse you will study. Your leader will tell you how to find your verse in the Bible.

1 20 15 28

2 10 5 4

2 11 4 8

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

“!#*X/#” AND OTHER WORDS

Topic: Profanity

Purpose of this Session:

Profanity and taking the Lord's name in vain have become common on the elementary school playground. Children have had good teachers—today's adults. In past generations, adults used bad language, but they protected kids from it. Today this is no longer true. Kids need an opportunity to talk with adults about the use of profanity and how it can adversely affect them.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask the group members to list a number of movies (either presently showing in theaters or available for home rental) popular with their age group. Write these down on newsprint or on a chalkboard for everyone to see. Then ask the group to identify those movies that contain swear words. Circle these as group members identify them. Point out how many of today's popular movies contain swear words. Affirm and support those group members who have not seen many of the movies that contain profanity. You do not want to support these movies; rather, you want to point out that these movies are adversely affecting your group members. Do not talk about these negative effects at this time. Use the session closure time to call attention to the detrimental effects of today's popular movies. Tell the group you will be talking about profanity. Pass out the TalkSheets and ask the kids to fill them out as honestly as they can.

SPECIAL NOTE: Be careful if you choose to use profanity during the discussion. It can be appropriate to use examples of profanity but not to shock kids. When profanity is used as an example, it can demonstrate that you know the words. This takes the fun and mystery out of the words. You do not have to use the words as examples, but avoid the mistake of elevating the words to the totally forbidden. When talking about the profane, we can avoid the words to such a degree that it becomes enticing and exciting to use profanity.

SPECIAL, SPECIAL NOTE: Many kids have parents who curse and misuse God's name on a regular basis. This can be confusing to children when you talk about the negative effects of profanity. Mention to the group that some parents do curse, but this does not make it appropriate for kids to curse. Some parents smoke, but this does not make it right or healthy for kids to do so.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Poll the group to see the extent that profanity is used by kids. Ask the kids, “When you hear profanity, what do you usually think?” Ask kids if they would misuse God's name or use profanity if God were around. Point out that God is with us. We tend to forget where God is.

Item #2: Have the group decide the three most popular reasons kids use bad words. Some additional reasons might be to get more friends, to be a part of the group, to show off, to be like their parents, or because they are mad.

Item #3: If most of the group members feel that kids should be allowed to watch movies that contain profanity (and many will), you will need to support those kids who feel that they should not be allowed. Take time to discuss the swearing in movies. Pay special attention to the statement, “A kid ___ be allowed to use swear words around other kids.” Often young people believe bad language is appropriate as long as it is not used around adults.

Item #4: Brainstorm with the group all of the possible responses, from ignoring the profanity to asking that person not to use bad language. You may want to role-play responses with the kids.

Item #5: Explain that the first number represents the Old or New Testament (1 = Old Testament; 2 = New Testament), the second number represents the book of the Old or New Testament, the third number locates the chapter, and the fourth number indicates the verse. The three verses in order are Proverbs 15:28; Ephesians 5:4; and Philipians 4:8. Ask for volunteers to read each of these verses. Discuss how each relates to the use of bad language. Also look at the third commandment (Exodus 20:7) to discuss misusing God's name.

To Close the Session:

Make a list with the kids of the adverse effects of profanity. The following is a sample of some negative effects:

1. We become so comfortable with profanity that it becomes a part of us.
2. Profanity puts others down.
3. Using profanity is an inappropriate way to deal with anger. We need to learn more constructive ways to deal with anger.
4. Profanity hurts people.
5. The misuse of God's name hurts our relationship with God.
6. Cursing demonstrates how immature we are.

CHANGING CHANNELS



List three of your most favorite and three of your least favorite TV shows.

MOST FAVORITE

LEAST FAVORITE

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

How much TV do you watch? (Put an X before the statement that applies to you.)

DURING THE WEEK

ON WEEKENDS

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Less than most kids my age. | ☐ Less than most kids my age. |
| ☐ About the same as most kids my age. | ☐ About the same as most kids my age. |
| ☐ More than most kids my age. | ☐ More than most kids my age. |

Answer the following questions to find out what your life might be like if you could not watch any television.

- a. What would you do after dinner once your homework was done? _____

- b. What would you do on Saturday mornings? _____

- c. What would you do when the weather was bad and you had to stay inside? _____

- d. What would you do when your friends talked about TV shows? _____

What rules do you have in your family regarding TV viewing?

(Circle all that apply.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. No TV is allowed. | d. Only a certain number of shows can be watched each day. |
| b. I must ask a parent or guardian before watching. | e. Other rules: _____ |
| c. No TV is allowed until homework is done. | |

Fill in the blank in the sentence below with the word *always*, *sometimes*, or *never*.

_____ watch television shows that I know are not good for me.

Read Ephesians 2:10 and answer the following question: How can TV interfere with God's plan for you? _____

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

CHANGING CHANNELS

Topic: Television Viewing

Purpose of this Session:

Young people watch hours and hours of television every week. This generation of kids has been raised primarily on visual media. Since television has such a powerful influence on our children, use this TalkSheet to discuss with your kids how it is shaping their lives.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask the group members to name all of the channels or stations they watch on television. Write each of these down on a chalkboard or on newsprint for everyone to see. This will give you the big picture concerning the general content of your group's television diet. See which stations are watched the most—public television, movie channels, sports, news, MTV, and so on. Take a poll to see how many kids live in homes with cable or satellite television. Also ask how many use VCRs to tape and view programs.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Young people will swap stories about their most and least favorite TV shows. Generally kids have an easier time thinking of their most favorite. Some kids may have only one or two favorites, which is okay. In fact, you want to affirm those kids who do not watch much television, but do so without making them look like nerds in front of their peers. Some young people will mention shows that others in the group are not allowed to watch. If this occurs you may hear "Your mom lets you watch that?" or "My dad won't let me watch that!" You do not want kids to put each other down for what can or can't be watched. If this happens use it as an opportunity to talk about appropriate content. You could ask questions like, "Why might parents not want their children to watch _____?" or "Why do parents want their kids protected from certain TV shows?" When the kids have had a chance to share their choices, ask them what makes a program a most or least favorite.

Item #2: Explore why kids watch so much television. You may have a wide variety of responses, from the kid who says, "Our family doesn't own a TV" to the child who states, "Our TV is on all day."

Item #3: Take each question one at a time. You will have many kids say that they would go to their friends' homes to watch TV or that they would substitute other media, such as video games or radios. Explore alternatives other than the media, like playing, reading, church involvement, sports, family activities, and so on. Ask the kids what they would miss the most and why. You can tell the kids they sound like people who are trying to get off drugs in their "withdrawal" comments. Ask how healthy this really is.

Item #4: Talk about the fairness and unfairness of each of the rules. Use this opportunity to support parents in their quest to monitor and sensibly use the television. Ask the kids to create their own list of rules they think would be pleasing to God.

Item #5: Most kids will declare they always or sometimes watch television shows that they know are not good for them. Explore what they mean by a TV show not being good for them. The kids will say things like, "I learn bad words" or "There is too much violence." Ask how negatively influenced we are by what we watch on television. Young people do not believe these shows will adversely affect them. Create a list of negative consequences from viewing these programs (more comfortable with violence, don't get exercise, don't learn to study).

Item #6: Many kids have never considered God in their TV viewing. Explore with the students the plans God has for them, for the present as well as the future. Then discuss how TV can hurt what God wants them to do. Some responses are that TV encourages them to put off doing their homework, it teaches them things that are wrong, commercials teach them to be materialistic, TV takes them away from their families, and so on.

To Close the Session:

Summarize what has been covered during the discussion. Then ask the group to plan a week of TV viewing for a pretend average fourth, fifth, or sixth grader. Use a TV listings booklet from your local newspaper or a TV Guide to help. Take into account all the other activities your pretend kid is involved in. You can then create a large Monday through Sunday schedule on the chalkboard or on newsprint. This gives you the chance to guide the students to think about their TV choices.

REPORT CARD FOR MY SCHOOL



1

If you could be principal for a day at your school, what is one change you would make? _____

2

Circle the grade you would give your school. **A+** is the best and **F** is failing.

A+	B+	C+	D+		F
A	B	C	D		
A-	B-	C-	D-		

3

Put a check beside the five biggest concerns you have at school.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Talking out of turn | ☐ Being treated cruelly by other kids |
| ☐ Being teased | ☐ Not having enough friends |
| ☐ Getting hit | ☐ Having rumors spread about me by other kids |
| ☐ Daydreaming | ☐ Mean teachers |
| ☐ Being embarrassed | ☐ Getting pressured to do things that are wrong |
| ☐ Feeling like I don't belong | ☐ Not getting good enough grades |
| ☐ Difficult tests | ☐ Changing schools |
| ☐ Being bored | ☐ Class work that's too hard |
| ☐ Not having enough books | ☐ Not being part of the popular group |
| ☐ Not being liked by kids | ☐ Getting called bad names |
| ☐ Losing a friend | ☐ Having problems on the school bus |
| ☐ Not having enough homework | ☐ Not understanding the teacher |
| ☐ Being harassed by gangs | ☐ Too much homework |
| ☐ Eating food that's not good | ☐ Other: _____ |
| ☐ Getting another new kid in class | |

4

It is easy to be a Christian at my school.

☐ True ☐ False

5

When you have a problem at school, whom do you normally talk to?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ My teacher | ☐ An adult at school other than my teacher |
| ☐ A friend | ☐ My mom, dad, stepparent, or guardian |
| ☐ The principal | ☐ An adult at church |
| ☐ God | ☐ No one |

6

Read the following scrambled verse found in Proverbs 3:5-7.

6. Do not be wise in your own eyes;
2. with all your heart
7. fear the LORD and shun evil.
1. Trust in the LORD
5. and he will make your paths straight.
4. in all your ways acknowledge him,
3. and lean not on your own understanding;

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

REPORT CARD FOR MY SCHOOL

Topic: School Life

Purpose of this Session:

Kids are required by law to attend school. Adults and kids will tell you that schooling is important. Yet for many kids, the joy and excitement they felt when they began school in kindergarten diminishes each year they attend. By the upper elementary school years, students not only lose interest in their course work, they also perceive their teachers as being less caring than in earlier grades. Much of the concern and disinterest kids express about school is due to their inability to change their circumstances. They feel powerless to control a large chunk of their day. Give your students the opportunity to talk with each other and with adults about their school experiences. Use this TalkSheet as an opportunity to listen and to create an environment where your kids can feel God's grace extended to their school life.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask four volunteer young people who represent two different schools to come to the front of the group. Seat each of them in a chair with the students from opposing schools facing each other. Tell them they are going to participate in a school competition. They each have 30 seconds to say as many positive things about their schools as they can. The group can vote on which school received the most compliments. The school with the highest number of positive statements wins.

The Discussion:

Item #1: List each of the suggested changes on a chalkboard or on newsprint. Ask the group why these changes are necessary.

Item #2: The same school might get an A+ and an F from different students, depending upon their experiences. Let the group members share their grades and their reasoning.

Item #3: Create a master list of the concerns checked by the students. Narrow these down to the five biggest concerns.

Item #4: Ask the students what it means to be a Christian at their schools and how Christ could make a difference there. You will find that many students have never thought about this issue before.

Item #5: All students need someone to talk with about their school frustrations. Assure kids that they can talk with you. Point out that keeping problems to themselves is not a solution to their problems. Even if a talk can't solve their problems, they will feel better knowing that someone else knows, cares, and appreciates what they are feeling.

Item #6: This passage encourages us to commit the school day and every day to God. Just as adults worry about their daily tasks at work, young people worry about their school day. Will I do this worksheet correctly? I need to look at my spelling list before the test! Why won't Brad play with me? Explore with the kids how they can trust and acknowledge God during their school day.

To Close the Session:

Close the session by asking the kids to identify the different parts of school. They might mention athletics, social activities, schoolwork, and homework. Place the headings they give you on a chalkboard or on newsprint. Under each heading have the young people identify a series of problems that kids face in that aspect of school. Then engage the group in a problem-solving session around these identified issues. Challenge the group members to see themselves as a Christian community that is solving these problems together.

GROWIN' UP IN CHURCH



1

Fill in the blank in the sentence below with the word *more* or the word *less*.
I wish kids my age had _____ things to do at church.

2

In the rectangle below, write down your favorite church activity.

3

Answer **YES** or **NO** to each of the following statements.

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. A kid should attend church every week. | ☐ YES | ☐ NO |
| b. A parent should make a kid attend church. | ☐ YES | ☐ NO |
| c. Church is usually boring. | ☐ YES | ☐ NO |
| d. I feel I learn many new things at church. | ☐ YES | ☐ NO |
| e. Church is one of the most important things in my life. | ☐ YES | ☐ NO |

4

Complete the following sentence: **One thing I would like to see my church do differently with kids is . . .** _____

5

What would you lose if you were told you could never attend church again? _____

6

Read the following scrambled verse found in **Luke 4:16** by using the numbers, beginning with #1. Do you feel Christ liked or disliked church attendance and participation as much as you?

4. as was his custom.
3. and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue,
1. He went to Nazareth,
5. And he stood up to read.
2. where he had been brought up,

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

GROWIN' UP IN CHURCH

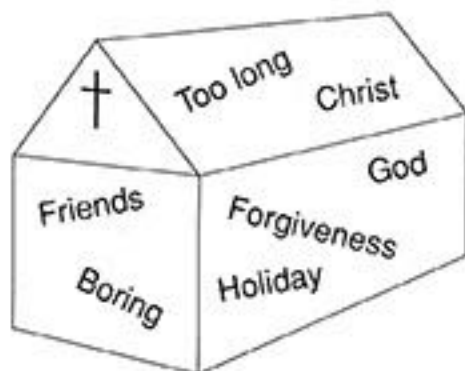
Topic: Church Participation

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.

PRAYER POWER



1

How often do you pray other than at church or before meals? (Underline one.)

Never

Rarely

Once a month

Once a week

Several times in a week

Once a day

Several times in a day

2

Complete the following sentence: **Usually I pray when . . .** _____

3

The prayers of adults are more important to God than the prayers of kids.

___ True ___ False

4

How is prayer like talking with a friend on the phone?

5

Rearrange the following words found in **1 Chronicles 16:11** so that they make sense.

to strength; the Lord and seek his face Look his always.

Date used: _____

Group: _____

PRAYER POWER

Topic: Prayer

Purpose of this Session:

Young people at this age are becoming more aware of their prayer lives. Unfortunately, for many of them, prayer becomes a chore as they grow older. But prayer need not be something they have to do or only do when they are in trouble. Prayer is God's invitation to have a relationship with him. Take this TalkSheet opportunity to expand your kids' views on prayer.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask the kids to describe how they prayed when they were much younger. Then ask them to describe how they pray differently today. Their views on prayer, at least for many of the kids, will have changed. When they were younger they asked for stuff (which they still do as older kids), but they have broadened their views of God and talking with him. He is becoming more of a friend. Kids will also mention that when they were younger they thought the position they prayed in was really important, that their prayers were really simple, that their prayers are now more complicated, or that now they talk more with God.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Obtain a group consensus on the number of times the kids pray. Ask how much of this is "have to" and how much is "want to."

Item #2: Ask the kids to share their answers while you create a list of the responses. The focus, aside from before meals or at bedtime, is often on things like, "I'm in a tight spot," "I know someone who is sick," "I've had a bad day," "I'm worried," "I feel down," "something bad has happened," and so on. Kids have gotten a distorted view of God with these perceptions of prayer. Create another list that focuses on developing a relationship with God through prayer of which needing help is only one slice of that friendship.

Item #3: Most young people know and will say that the prayers of adults are not more important than those of kids, but they often feel that adults discount their prayers. One girl responded, "Kids have just as many problems as adults, and God listens when kids tell him about these problems." Use this opportunity to validate the importance of the prayers of kids.

Item #4: Create a list with the kids of all the things they talk about on the phone with their friends. Then create a list of all the things they talk with God about in prayer. Compare the list and discuss how prayer is like talking with their friend, God. Ask why people have so much difficulty talking regularly with God as a friend.

Item #5: 1 Chronicles 16:11 says, "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always." Other good prayer passages to discuss are Matthew 6:7-13 and Hebrews 4:15, 16. Stress that we can talk with God any time, anywhere, about anything.

To Close the Session:

Close by spending group time in prayer. Ask each group member to think of one word he or she could say to God in a one-word prayer. Give examples like love or thanks or help. With the group sitting in a circle (break large groups into smaller ones), have one young person begin and move around the circle. Close with your own word and "amen." Let the group make some observations about what occurred. Often the focus is on mechanics. Did we hold hands correctly or say the right words? Try this same one-word group prayer again. This time you will find the group relaxing and getting more genuinely involved in the prayer. Again, make some observations about what happened.

You may now want to spend additional time in prayer after creating a group prayer list that all the kids can see as they volunteer to pray.

THE I CARE PROJECT



1

Circle the following examples of caring projects that you know exist in your community or church.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Animal shelter | Food collection |
| Nursing home volunteer program | Recycling aluminum cans |
| Shelter for the homeless | Tutoring for kids |
| Clothing collection | Hospital visitation |
| Mentally retarded ministry | Sponsoring a needy child |
| Christmas gifts for the needy | Prison ministry |

2

Kids are too young to do anything important for Jesus Christ in making the world a better place to live.

_____ I agree _____ I am not sure _____ I disagree

3

Write down in the box below the name of a caring project that interests you.

Now answer the following questions about your chosen project:

a. Are there any good reasons you should say no to helping with this project? _____

b. How would your involvement in this project help you grow as a Christian? _____

c. How would this project make a difference for Jesus Christ? _____

d. What would your parents think of your helping with this project? _____

e. How could you get involved in this project? _____

4

Why do more kids not get involved in caring projects?

5

Read the following verses and decide what message they have in common.

Isaiah 1:17

Titus 3:8

Job 29:15, 16

Zechariah 7:9, 10

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

THE I CARE PROJECT

Topic: Christian Social Action

Purpose of this Session:

Christ has called Christians to the task of transforming the world. We make a grave error in focusing only on personal salvation (Romans 3:23, 24) and transformation (Romans 12:2). The kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17), or a transformed world that takes seriously the love, forgiveness, justice, and mercy spoken of by Christ, is the will of God for our society now, not just in the hereafter. Use this TalkSheet to examine the role kids can play as God's servants in transforming society.

To Introduce the Topic:

Bring with you to the group meeting a number of recent newspapers. Pass these out to small groups of kids. Tell the kids they have three minutes to look through the papers and identify as many societal problems as they can within the time limit. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil to write down the identified problems. List these problems on a chalkboard or on newsprint as kids read them aloud, one group at a time.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Have the group members list additional caring projects that exist in their community and church. Explore with the group what your community would be like if none of these caring projects existed.

Item #2: Young people believe they can sometimes make a difference, but they are skeptical about the state of the world. They have been exposed at school and through the media to a world filled with crime, pollution, and problems. Ask for examples of how kids can make a difference. Refer back to the problems identified in the introductory activity, and ask which ones young people could help solve.

Item #3: After discussing each of the questions, take one or two projects the kids might want to do together and plan out, step by step, what they'll need to do for the caring projects to be successful.

Item #4: You will also want to discuss why more adults don't get involved in caring projects.

Item #5: Justice, mercy, and compassion to the oppressed are not common sermon themes, but they are the will of God. Examine these concepts with the kids, and ask why these are important to God.

To Close the Session:

Return to your newspaper problems and explore further how Christians can have a major impact on these societal problems. End with a reading and short discussion of the parable of the good Samaritan found in Luke 10:29-37.

Challenge the young people to get involved. Tell the kids that in the past there was a motto that said kids should be seen and not heard, but today young people are needed to help change the world for Jesus Christ.

WORLD KIDS



1

If you could choose any of the following careers, which four would you choose? You can write in others that are not on this list. (Circle or write in no more than four.)

Professional athlete
Schoolteacher
Pilot
Missionary
Fire fighter

Doctor
Construction worker
Counselor
Secretary
Musician

2

How many missionaries does your church support? (Check only one.)

_____ None
_____ Several
_____ Lots
_____ I don't know

3

Complete the following sentence by circling as many endings as you want: I can know that God wants me involved in missionary work if . . .

- a. I am excited about telling others about God.
- b. I don't mind living with cockroaches.
- c. I am a Christian.
- d. I want to work in another country.
- e. I want to give up everything.
- f. I like danger.

4

Underline a missionary word below that you would like to learn more about.

Frontier missions
World Christian
Mission field
Culture
Missionary call

Hidden Peoples
Gospel
Missionary conference
Evangelize
The Great Commission

5

Read one of the Bible passages below that talk about being a missionary.

Matthew 28:18-20 Acts 1:8 Acts 8:4 2 Corinthians 4:5

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

WORLD KIDS

Topic: Missionary Work

Purpose of this Session:

The title of this TalkSheet is taken from the concept of the World Christian. David Bryant says, "World Christians are day-to-day disciples for whom Christ's global cause has become the integrating, overriding priority for all that He is for them." Young people can never catch a vision for Christ's global cause if they are never introduced to what God is doing in the world and how they can be a part of transforming it for Christ. This TalkSheet introduces kids to global missionary work.

To Introduce the Topic:

If you have access to a globe or a map of the world and a magnifying glass, ask your kids to take a closer look at the world. Different young people can name specific regions and cities they see through the magnifying glass. If you don't have a map, a globe, or a magnifying glass, have the kids list all the different places they are familiar with around the world, and write them on a chalkboard or on newsprint. Then talk with your young people about the kids who live in these faraway places. What concerns do they have? Do they worry about the same things kids in our country worry about? Do they have similar problems? What might it be like to be a kid in another country? Then tell the group that you are going to talk about the world, God's plan for it, and how each and every young person in attendance fits into that plan.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Kids will see by this activity that the work of a missionary is a career choice available to them as Christians. Too often, we don't talk with kids about this as a career option. Missionary work is no holier than other professions. Kids need to know that we need Christian fire fighters, lawyers, and sales clerks. But the church also needs to send out missionaries. Explore with the group some of the positions missionaries hold as they share the Gospel—nurses, doctors, writers, printers, pastors, engineers, schoolteachers, secretaries, and more.

Item #2: Ask the kids if they believe missionary work is still needed. You can explain that a missionary is someone who goes to another culture and tells people about God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Bring some information you can share with your group about the missionaries your church supports and why. Answer any questions the group may have about these missionaries.

Item #3: Point out that God wants all Christians involved in missionary work. Make a list with the group of the things the kids can do to get involved.

Item #4: You will need to do some personal research or ask someone familiar with these and other terms to talk with your group. A good starting point is the book listed below.

Item #5: Explain that missionary work was the emphasis of the early church because it is the center of God's plan for the world.

To Close the Session:

Write individual letters or a group letter to the missionaries your church supports asking the questions the young people have raised during your discussion. When they are returned, discuss the responses with your group. Close by reading John 3:16–21.

*David Bryant, *In the Gap: What It Means to Be a World Christian* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 1979), 63.

UPGRADED



Complete the following sentence: I am looking forward to being in middle/junior high school because . . .

Place an X on the lines before the following questions about entering middle/junior high school that are a concern to you.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Will homework be more difficult? | ☐ Will I get picked on? |
| ☐ How will I get along with the older kids? | ☐ Will I have problems with my locker? |
| ☐ Will I be tempted to smoke? | ☐ How will I do at sports? |
| ☐ How much privacy will I have in the shower? | ☐ Will I dress the right way? |
| ☐ Will I be bothered by gang members? | ☐ Will I be offered alcohol or drugs? |
| ☐ How tough will the classes be? | ☐ How difficult will it be to make friends? |
| ☐ Will I have time to get to my classes? | ☐ Will I get into trouble? |
| ☐ Will I be pressured to do things that are wrong? | ☐ Will it be hard to be a Christian? |

When you get into middle/junior high school, how involved will you be in your church?

- ☐ I will be more involved than I am now.
- ☐ I will stay involved about the same as I am now.
- ☐ I will be less involved than I am now.

What is one question you have about attending middle/junior high school that you would like answered? (Write out your question below.)

Read the following verses and decide what message they have in common.

1 Corinthians 3:1, 2
1 Peter 2:2

Ephesians 4:14
2 Peter 3:18

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

UPGRADED

Topic: Transition to Middle/Junior High School

Purpose of this Session:

Excitement! Panic! Curiosity! Anxiety! All these words are descriptive of the transition to the next level of schooling kids face. No matter how the transition is managed in your community (fifth or sixth graders moving to middle school; sixth graders moving to junior high), the move to the next level worries and frightens kids. Kids fear everything from trouble with their lockers to their Christian faith being ridiculed. You can create a climate of acceptance and help kids cope with their transition fears by talking through this TalkSheet with them.

To Introduce the Topic:

Begin by revealing some of your own growing-up fears. This sets the tone for young people to also share their fears. Allow the group to swap concerns for a few minutes. Then announce that you want the young people to write letters to an eighth grader describing some of the fears they have of their upcoming move to middle/junior high school. If you wish, you can give them to eighth graders who have agreed beforehand to answer them. Or, you can announce that they will not actually be distributed to any older students. Whatever you decide, guarantee privacy. The young people do not have to write their names on the papers. You may ask permission to collect and read them, but you must guarantee privacy. If you choose to ask some trustworthy eighth graders to answer these private letters, set aside group time to talk about the answers when your kids have received their responses. (You can number the letters and ask the kids to remember their numbers, or they can use their birth dates or street address numbers.)

The Discussion:

Item #1: Start this discussion on an exciting note by asking group members to share their thoughts. Record these for all the group to see. You can refer to these later in the discussion when the group becomes preoccupied with the negative.

Item #2: Ask the kids to list additional concerns in the blank spaces. Have the group members compile a top five list of their biggest worries. Examine all of the concerns the group members identified with a special focus on the top five.

Item #3: Ask the young people how their relationship with Christ and the church may change through middle/junior high school. Take time to dialogue both the ups and the downs of the reported changes. Don't just focus on statements reporting a move away from God.

Item #4: You can have a panel of eighth graders available to answer questions, or you can record all questions to be answered by a panel the following week.

Item #5: These passages focus on transition and spiritual growth. Talk with the students about their transition to the next level of education as an opportunity to grow in their relationship with Christ.

To Close the Session:

After reviewing what has been discussed, describe for the kids what the church (or club) has available for them when they graduate into middle/junior high school. You can ask the middle/junior high school leader of your youth group as well as some members of the youth group to describe on videotape or in person what the next level has in store for them. The group members can also write questions on 3 x 5 cards listing any concerns they may have that can be answered later by their new leadership.

BEING A KID IN A GROWN-UP'S WORLD



1

What are the two best and the two worst things about being a kid?

BEST THINGS

WORST THINGS

a. _____

a. _____

b. _____

b. _____

2

Respond to each of the following statements by placing an X before either **YES** or **NO**.

a. Grown-ups are more important than kids.

___ YES

___ NO

b. Grown-ups do not understand kids.

___ YES

___ NO

c. Kids can do things that grown-ups cannot.

___ YES

___ NO

d. Grown-ups decide too many things for kids.

___ YES

___ NO

3

What will you not do or say to kids when you are a grown-up? (Check your top five choices.)

___ Swear at kids

___ Be rude to kids

___ Yell at kids

___ Boss kids around

___ Tease kids

___ Make kids do things they don't want to do

___ Embarrass kids

___ Get mad at kids about little things

___ Spank kids

___ Take things away from kids

___ Be too busy for kids

___ Say to kids that adults know more than kids

4

Do you think it is easier being a grown-up or easier being a kid?

___ It is easier being a grown-up.

___ It is easier being a kid.

Why? _____

5

Why do you believe God puts grown-ups in your life?

6

Read one of the following Bible passages, then write down three things you feel kids can do as a ministry.

2 Chronicles 34:1-2, 31 Samuel 2:18 John 6:9

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

BEING A KID IN A GROWN-UP'S WORLD

Topic: Childhood

Purpose of this Session:

Being a kid can be frustrating, especially in a world designed for adults. Young people need the opportunity to share what it is like for them in a grown-up's world. Too often, kidhood is seen as prep time for adulthood, and young people are rushed through childhood. But it is okay to be a kid! This TalkSheet structures a discussion that supports kids in being kids.

To Introduce the Topic:

A good lead-in to the discussion is to ask the kids to share their parents' when-I-was-your-age stories. The young people will have an enjoyable time sharing "adult" stories about growing up. Tell the group that you will be discussing being a kid in a world of adults.

The Discussion:

Item #1: First, kids will mention things they do not have to do, such as pay bills, go to work, or do laundry. Then they will identify things they cannot do, such as drive, watch certain movies, or go to bed anytime they wish. Kids may mention some painful situations, like dealing with divorce. Keep the group a safe place where kids can share their difficult situations.

Item #2: The statement "Grown-ups are more important than kids" helps young people articulate their feelings of insignificance in an adult world. The statement "Kids can do things that grown-ups cannot" focuses on why kids are as important as adults. Explore how God can work through kids. Many kids have not considered what they can do for God.

Students typically agree with the statement "Grown-ups do not understand kids." As an adult, listen to why kids agree with this. Kids feel that adults today do not understand what is happening in their world. They feel grown-ups do not take the time to listen to them. You probably felt the same way when you were their age.

The statement "Kids can do things that grown-ups cannot" provides the opportunity to examine kidhood in general. Too often, adults view kids as adults in training. Kids have to do this and learn that to become adults. Preparing for adulthood is only one of the tasks of childhood.

Young people can have a kid relationship with God, great friendships, and even ministries. By getting good at being kids, young people are preparing for adulthood.

The statement "Grown-ups decide too many things for kids" will be met with enthusiastic agreement. Explore with your students the things that are under their control and the things that adults control. Then discuss how they can make better decisions regarding the things under their control.

Item #3: Remember that list you created in your head of all the things you said you would never do to kids when you became an adult? Think back on it so you can be empathetic with the kids as they share those things that parents and other adults say and do that they do not like. Encourage the kids to ask their parents if there was anything they said they would not do to kids when they grew up.

Item #4: Interestingly, many kids believe they will handle adulthood better than they have kidhood. They feel that once they are out on their own, they will make better decisions. Explore with the kids how getting good at being a kid will help them in adulthood. If they can make good decisions now, they will make good decisions as grown-ups.

Item #5: Create a list of roles adults play in the lives of kids: protector, guide, teacher, listener, comforter, and so on. Point out that adults make mistakes just like kids do.

Item #6: Each of the Scriptures speaks of a ministry young people had in Bible times. Read the passages, then discuss ministry opportunities kids can involve themselves in today.

To Close the Session:

Review what has been discussed. Use this time to let the adults in the group encourage and build up your kids. Adults can share how well they feel the kids are doing at being kids.

FAMILY FRICTION



1

How much time do you spend with your parent or parents during an average week? (Circle one.)

- a. Hardly any time at all c. Six to ten hours a week e. More than 15 hours a week
b. Less than five hours a week d. 11 to 15 hours a week

2

When you are together with your parent or parents, how do you get along together? (Underline one.)

Excellent Really good Good Not so good Really poor

3

Check the top five things from the list below that you and your parent(s) argue about the most.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ☐ Your school grades | ☐ How you spend your allowance | ☐ Where you go |
| ☐ How you dress | ☐ What your parents expect from you | ☐ Your homework |
| ☐ Your friends | ☐ What TV shows you want to watch | ☐ Your chores |
| ☐ Your table manners | ☐ Your church attendance | ☐ Other: _____ |
| ☐ How you do in sports | ☐ Your views on different things | _____ |
| ☐ Things you want your parents to buy for you | | _____ |

4

Write one idea in the box below describing how you could get along better with your parents.

5

Read each of the following Bible verses found in **Ephesians 4**. Then decide how each can help make your relationship with your parents better.

Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:2b

Speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15a

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

FAMILY FRICTION

Topic: Getting Along With Parents

Purpose of this Session:

As kids get older, getting along gets tougher. You used to hear the complaint from young people in high school and junior high, "My folks don't understand." Now this is heard from kids in the upper elementary grades. Use this TalkSheet to discuss how young people can better get along with their parents, stepparents, or adult guardians.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask your group members to place their two hands together, palms flat. Have them slowly move their hands up and down. As they are doing this, explain that one hand represents their parents and the other themselves. When they were younger, there wasn't much friction between them. But as they have grown up, they want to move one way and their parents want them to move another. Ask them now to speed up the movement of their hands.

Explain that there will be times when this friction in their families will heat up, just as they can feel the heat caused by the friction of their hand motions. But this heat does not have to get red hot. There are things kids (and parents, too!) can do to keep things cool.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask what the ideal together time would be if kids had their choice. During this discussion you will want to listen to the young people while at the same time support the role parents play and the difficulties parents face in raising children.

Item #2: Explore with the kids the role they play in getting along with their parents. Tell the group that families are different. Some do better at different things. Some are strained by a parental job loss, a divorce, or child abuse. Brainstorm with the group how kids who lack a supportive home can find needed support in constructive ways (as opposed to destructive ways, such as acting out in school, smoking, or gang involvement).

Item #3: Address each of these issues with sensitivity. Have volunteers role-play how they can better get along. You can set up situations from stories the kids provide from their top-five lists.

Create a group list to see what the kids chose as the top five. Point out how family friction is part of growing up and that they do have some control in minimizing it. Be careful not to blame either parents or kids for the family friction. Your goal is to empower the kids to positively change their family relationships with the help of the Spirit of God working in their lives.

Item #4: Create a large list of statements from the ideas provided by the group. Ask the students to identify those at the top of the list. Then have the kids describe how they could put these into practice in their home lives.

Item #5: Ask how practical each of these biblical principles is in terms of family life.

To Close the Session:

Close by creating a list with the group of all the practical and positive benefits that kids get out of working on their relationships with their parents. The group can also brainstorm and plan an event with parents that would help the parents and kids better understand and communicate with each other.

GETTIN' GOOD AT BEIN' GOOD



1

What would your school be like if not one kid cared about right and wrong? _____

2

From the following list, pick the things you think are right and the things you think are wrong. (Check either the RIGHT or the WRONG column.)

	RIGHT	WRONG
a. Lying to parents	_____	_____
b. Copying someone's math homework	_____	_____
c. Smoking a cigarette	_____	_____
d. Forgetting to do a chore	_____	_____
e. Missing church	_____	_____
f. Gossiping about another kid	_____	_____
g. Acting up in class	_____	_____
h. Shoplifting	_____	_____
i. Hurting someone's feelings	_____	_____
j. Watching television	_____	_____
k. Always doing what you are told	_____	_____
l. Swearing	_____	_____
m. Teasing others	_____	_____

3

When you have to make a decision about right and wrong, what sources best help you make the decision? (Check your top two choices.)

___ A parent	___ A best friend	___ Rock stars
___ Another kid	___ The Bible	___ Television role models
___ Comic books	___ A coach	___ A Sunday school teacher
___ Christian adults	___ A grandparent	___ The teachings of your church

4

If you ruled the world, how would you help people learn right from wrong?

5

Circle one of the following sets of numbers. The set you pick represents a Bible verse you will study. Your leader will tell you how to find your verse in the Bible.

1 19 97 10

1 20 14 16

2 6 12 9

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

GETTIN' GOOD AT BEIN' GOOD

Topic: Morality

Purpose of this Session:

Preadolescents in the 4th–6th grades begin to experiment with behaviors that conflict with the values they were taught as children. Kids need the opportunity to talk about right and wrong choices and their struggles in dealing with these choices. This TalkSheet offers the chance for kids and adults together to discuss right and wrong and the pressures placed on kids to do wrong.

To Introduce the Topic:

Make up a distorted Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17). For example, the first commandment could say, "I am your God, but if you wish, you can put sports or television stars ahead of me." Read your distorted list to the kids, then explain that you are going to talk about right and wrong.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Kids generally respond to this question by saying their schools would be unsafe, totally mixed up, and crazy—the ultimate nightmare. People would hurt each other, nobody would learn anything, and so on. Make a list of all the responses.

Item #2: Some kids will want a middle ground between right and wrong—a sort-of-wrong category. Ask the kids to choose only between the two—RIGHT or WRONG. This forced choice gives you the opportunity to talk about how we know right from wrong. Ask the kids why they believe it is wrong to lie, cheat, and so on. Focus on the consequences of doing wrong, possibly referring back to the responses in Item #1. For areas like watching television, take the teachable opportunity to discuss how to choose good programs over bad. Explore with the group why wrong things sometimes look appealing.

Item #3: Ask the group members to choose both the best four sources and the worst.

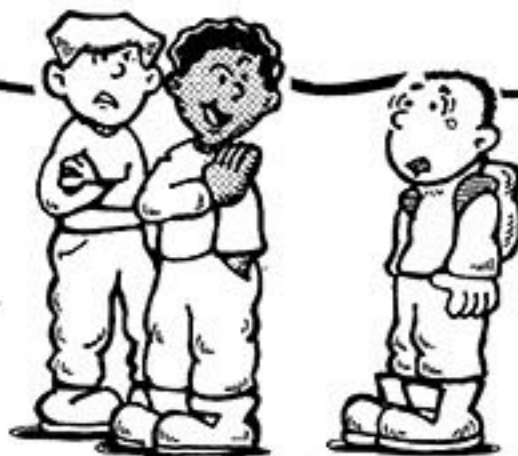
Item #4: After the group has shared its views, discuss why God's Word is important in learning right from wrong. Explain that God gave us the Ten Commandments and other rules to protect us. Refer back to the distorted reading of the Ten Commandments from the introductory activity. Ask the kids what might happen if they lived out these distorted commands, and point out the negative consequences. Emphasize God's protective nature by looking at the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12). God promises that kids will live long if they honor their fathers and mothers. If parents let kids do anything they want or if kids disregard their parents' rules, the result is rather obvious. Breaking this commandment puts a child's safety in jeopardy.

Item #5: Explain that the first number represents the Old or New Testament (1 = Old Testament; 2 = New Testament), the second number represents the book of the Old or New Testament, the third number locates the chapter, and the fourth number indicates the verse. The three verses in order are Psalm 97:10; Proverbs 14:16; and Romans 12:9. These verses warn us to hate what is evil. Ask the kids to share how Christians can hate evil and love good.

To Close the Session:

Point out that when we live by God's rules we do better than when we break his rules. Explain that Jesus summarized God's commandments into one word—love. Wrap up the lesson by reading and discussing Matthew 22:34–39.

REJECT!



1

Do you believe kids who usually get rejected at your school are treated fairly? (Check one.)

- ☐ Most of the time
☐ Some of the time
☐ None of the time

2

Have you ever been left out of the fun a group was having?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

3

From the following examples, circle the two worst ways of getting rejected.

- Being the last person picked for a team
- Having no one ask you to do something with them during recess
- Being made fun of in front of more than one person
- Getting blamed because your team lost
- Having someone play a mean trick on you

4

He is standing by the backstop watching you and your friends start up a baseball game. Henry is very overweight and is never picked for a team, but he likes to watch. He hopes to some day be asked to play.

"Hey Fatso, wanna play with us?" yells one of your friends. Before Henry can answer, your friend yells again, "You can be home plate!"

Henry slowly turns and walks away with his head hung low.

Now that you have heard this, what will you do as Henry walks away?

5

Read **Matthew 11:28–30** and answer the following question:

What do you think this Scripture passage teaches about rejection and acceptance? _____

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

REJECT!

Topic: Rejection

Purpose of this Session:

We all know kids can be cruel to each other, especially to their peers who stand out as different. Ridicule is heaped on the poor kid wearing the wrong clothes; on the odd-looking kid with the big nose, the chicken lips, or the wing ears; and on the kid who stutters or walks with a limp. This TalkSheet gets kids talking about rejection—a feeling they have all experienced to some degree.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask the kids to tell a group story about school rejection. Begin the story by saying, "The first week of school started off . . ." then have different kids provide a sentence, continuing the story from student to student. You may have to step in periodically to get the story back on track. You only need to keep the story going long enough to get a picture of how your group relates to rejection.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask the group to describe the types of people who are rejected. They will describe anyone who, in their perception, is different. Talk about why some kids are treated unfairly. Do they deserve this unfair treatment? Discuss a particularly tough situation—the kid who has moved.

Item #2: This question establishes that most, if not all, of your group has experienced rejection. Focus here on how your group members felt about their own rejections. You may want to role-play some of these situations to help kids take different perspectives. If young people see situations from other viewpoints, they understand their rejection experiences better and are less likely to reject others.

Item #3: Talk with the kids about how they can respond if they are rejected in these ways. Discuss how they can respond if their peers reject others in these ways.

Item #4: Use this Zinger to discuss how kids can work against rejection and still keep their friends. Ask the kids if this is a realistic situation. How often do these kinds of things happen? Then look at their response options. If this happened to your kids, they could (a) ignore it, (b) make fun of Henry, (c) decide they don't want to be a part of the team, (d) talk with Henry later, (e) talk with the team later about accepting Henry, (f) storm off angry and quit the team, or (g) pressure the kid who said "Hey Fatso" to take it back. Brainstorm with the kids ways they can befriend and help those rejected by the group without losing their own friends.

Item #5: Point out that God is not in the rejection business. Explore the following questions with your group: What is the Christian's role in preventing rejection? How can Christians face rejection? How can the group support those who feel its hurt? How can the group support those who are trying to prevent rejection from happening to others?

To Close the Session:

Research indicates that kids are cruel and demeaning to others in order to build themselves up. Cliques of young people find acceptance in each other through rejecting outsiders who are different. For example, the player who made the joke about Henry in Item #4 did it to cover up his or her own inadequacies.

Explain to the kids that when we reject others, we are really saying that we can't handle our own faults, character defects, and sin. If we can find others who appear different than us and ridicule them, then we must be okay. But this is not true. All of us need the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Instead of rejecting others, we need to look at our own lives in relationship to Jesus Christ.

TWO-WAY TALK



1

Complete the following sentence by checking one of the options: **I would like to . . .**

- ☐ talk more with my parent(s) or guardian than I do now.
- ☐ talk about the same amount with my parent(s) or guardian as I do now.
- ☐ talk less with my parent(s) or guardian than I do now.

2

In the box below, list one good memory you have of talking with your mom, dad, or guardian.

3

Below is a list of some important things that kids talk with their parents about. Put an **M** before those you would like to talk more about with your parents or guardian, an **L** before those you would like to talk less about, and an **S** before those you would like to talk about the same amount as you do now.

M = More talk with parents

S = Same amount of talk

L = Less talk with parents

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ☐ My future | ☐ What I worry about | ☐ How I am doing in school |
| ☐ My feelings | ☐ The way I dress | ☐ Questions about alcohol/drugs |
| ☐ Sports | ☐ The environment | ☐ Questions I have about Christianity |
| ☐ My friends | ☐ Questions about sex | ☐ What my parents expect from me |
| ☐ God | ☐ Temptations I face | ☐ Other races/cultures |
| ☐ My problems | ☐ Music I listen to | ☐ Problems my parents face |
| ☐ Gangs | ☐ Movies I watch | ☐ My relationship with my parents |
| ☐ TV shows I watch | ☐ Others: _____ | |

4

In the box below, write down why you think it can sometimes be hard to talk with your mom, dad, or guardian.

5

Read **Ephesians 6:1–3** and answer the following two questions.

a. Why do you believe God promises long lives to kids who honor their parents? _____

b. How does talking about important things with your parents help you honor them? _____

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

TWO-WAY TALK

Topic: Parent/Child Communication

Purpose of this Session:

It's trite, but true—communication is the key. It's no secret that without healthy communication, family life becomes strained. Children and youth workers are in an ideal position to support and encourage family communication. Take this time to reinforce the all-important, parent-kid talk that makes families work.

To Introduce the Topic:

For many kids, the traditional family is only a reality on *Leave It to Beaver* television reruns. This introductory activity gives you a group picture of the makeup of your kids' families. Ask the students to help you create a list of all the adults who are parents with whom they live or visit. Below is a sample of a typical list. Write the list on a chalkboard or on newsprint for everyone to see.

Birth mother	Birth father
Big brother	Big sister
Grandmother	Grandfather
Stepmother	Stepfather
Parent's boyfriend	Parent's girlfriend
Guardian	Foster parent

The Discussion:

Item #1: Today's kids don't have as many opportunities to talk with their parents as past generations had, but many kids report that they want more communication. Explore with the kids why they responded the way they did.

Item #2: Let the students share their memories and explain why they remember them as good. Ask how they can make these memories happen again.

Item #3: Briefly discuss each of these issues. Answer the question, "Why is this an important issue that needs to be discussed with a parent?" Examine why kids want some of these issues to be discussed less. For example, during a discussion using this TalkSheet, a fifth grader reported he wanted to talk more about his problems and less about his mother's. His mother had been divorced twice and was at the time living with her boyfriend and her son. According to this young man, she was dumping her problems on him. There was a role reversal in this family. This boy was able to get support and encouragement through the TalkSheet discussion.

Item #4: Support the kids as they share the struggles and frustrations they have experienced talking with their parents. Ask the group to offer suggestions to the problems kids report.

Item #5: Read aloud Ephesians 6:4a. This command to fathers emphasizes that family communication is a two-way street. Explain that kids have control over their part of that two-way communication. Encourage them to do their part.

To Close the Session:

Have the kids form a circle. One at a time, ask the kids to commit to the group to go home and talk with their parents about one of the issues from Item #3. Have volunteers role-play how they might do this. The kids can use your discussion time as an excuse to bring up the subject with their parents. They might tell their parents that they have an assignment to talk with them about the future, God, questions about sex, or whatever topic they choose. The group members can help each other think of questions to ask their parents to get the conversation going. At your next meeting, kids can report on their conversations with their parents.