

COMING CLEAN

1. Do you think it's easy or hard to cover up something wrong that you've done? Why?

2. What are the top five reasons people cover up the things they do wrong?

- ☐ They're afraid that others will think they are weird.
- ☐ They're ashamed of what they did.
- ☐ They're afraid of what their parents will say.
- ☐ They think others will see them as hypocrites.
- ☐ They're afraid of punishment.
- ☐ They don't want to be humiliated in public.
- ☐ They're afraid they will get a police record.
- ☐ They're afraid they will get a bad reputation.
- ☐ They'll have to stop doing what they are doing.
- ☐ They think it's more fun if no one knows about it.



3. Alex was caught shoplifting. As part of his punishment, his parents made him go to the manager and each person who worked in the store and apologize to each one of them.

Do you think the punishment was—

- ☐ Fair and just
- ☐ A sure way to cure shoplifting
- ☐ Too harsh
- ☐ Child abuse
- ☐ Too embarrassing
- ☐ Stupid and ineffective

4. Check out **Proverbs 28:13**, **Isaiah 29:15**, and **1 John 1:8-9**. What do these verses say about hiding your sins?

5. Should people ever confess their wrongdoings to someone else? Why or why not?

If yes, who should people confess to?

If you wanted to confess your wrongdoing, who would you go to now?

COMING CLEAN

[confessing their sins — Proverbs 28]

THIS WEEK

Kids—like most human beings—find it hard to confess when they've done wrong. Sins can stay to haunt and make people feel guilty. That's one reason that the Bible urges confession. It's a healthy cleansing process—the beginning of mercy and forgiveness. There's no reality check like admitting their failures. This TalkSheet session will encourage your students to be honest about their spiritual failures. Your kids will be challenged to quickly admit their sins to God.

OPENER

You may want to use this illustration (or one like it) to start things off. Before your meeting, fill a backpack with some large rocks. On each rock, write a sin (either on the rock or a piece of tape on the rock)—examples include lying, cheating, stealing, swearing, etc. Zip up the backpack or bag. During your intro, ask for some volunteers to come up to the front of the room. Have them put the backpack on and describe how it feels to have the pack on. Make a master list of the words that they use to describe the weight or how it feels to have the pack on. Then open up the backpack and pull out the stones. Point out that each stone has something written on it—a sin that needs confessing. Point out that just like the backpack, unconfessed sin wears people down—it's a burden that they carry around. Use this activity to jumpstart your discussion on confessing sins, getting forgiveness, and letting God carry the load.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Is it easier or harder for your kids to hide or to conceal wrongdoing. Why? What does God think about confessing sins? How can this bring you closer to God?
2. What are the top five reasons why people try to cover up wrongdoing? What do your kids think is the worst way to try to cover something up? Why? You may want to ask for some volunteers to tell about a time when they covered up a wrongdoing and what happened.
3. Take a poll of your kids' answers. How effective do they think his punishment was? Ask if Alex's confession was valid, since it was forced. Will it keep him from stealing again? Does your group think Alex learned his lesson? Why or why not?
4. These verses discuss confession of sin and the uselessness of concealment. You may want to read the verses with the group and ask for volunteers to fill in the blanks on a whiteboard or poster board.

Point out that God is all-knowing—he knows when people mess up and sin. But he also wants to forgive and have mercy.

5. Talk about when and if people should confess their sins to another person and even ask for forgiveness. Who would your kids go to and why? How many of them would go to God first? If your kids want to talk with someone, what qualities do they look for in a confidant?

THE CLOSE

Following up from the intro, point out that God's taken sin—like the rocks—and thrown them into the deepest part of the sea. When people confess, their sins are gone. God lovingly offers forgiveness and mercy to those who learn the habit of confessing. And he's waiting for your kids to bring their distresses, concerns, and wrong doings to him. He knows about them anyway—and he's willing to listen. Encourage your kids to ask God for forgiveness—and if they need someone else to talk with, to find an adult (let them know that you're available, too). God forgives and forgets. Period. What's holding your kids back today?

MORE

- You may want to talk more about how holding sin in can affect trust and respect in relationships. How can unconfessed sin hurt a friendship, a relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend, or relationships with parents? What happens when someone is caught in a sin? What happens when someone hurts someone else and doesn't ask that person for forgiveness? Challenge your kids to get right with the people that they've hurt and to get the burden of that sin off their back.
- To help your kids to appreciate the benefits of honesty, try this activity—note that you may want a high level of trust within your group. Remind your kids of the TalkSheet ground rule about confidentiality and group trust. Then ask your kids to share one sin or cover-up of a sin (or lie) that they wish they could erase and why. Maybe jumpstart this activity by telling them one of yours.

DID YOU HEAR?

1. If you had a secret that you wanted to tell someone, who would you tell?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Friend | ☐ Stranger in an on-line chat room |
| ☐ Parent | ☐ Coach |
| ☐ Youth pastor | ☐ School counselor |
| ☐ Boyfriend or girlfriend | ☐ The class gossip |
| ☐ Teacher | ☐ Nobody |
| ☐ Brother or sister | ☐ Other— |
| ☐ Grandparent | |

2. Have you ever had someone you trust spill a secret about you?

If yes, how did it make you feel?

How did it change your relationship with the person you told the secret to?



3. For which of the situations below would you break the confidence of a friend and tell someone else?

- ☐ Your friend tells you the he or she likes someone.
- ☐ Your friend says she is pregnant.
- ☐ Your friend confesses to cheating on the English final.
- ☐ Your friend tells you something they're ashamed of doing.
- ☐ Your friend tells you that an uncle is sexually abusing him or her.
- ☐ Your friend confesses to experimenting with drugs.
- ☐ Your friend admits to considering running away from home.
- ☐ Your friend confides in you about being HIV positive.
- ☐ Your friend tells you he or she is thinking about suicide.

4. Read the passages below and summarize each verse in your own words.

Proverbs 11:13

Proverbs 17:9

Proverbs 20:19

Ephesians 4:29

DID YOU HEAR? | Gossip — Proverbs 11, 17, 20 |

THIS WEEK

Some young people have a lot of secrets. And for some, nothing is as fun as leaking a juicy tidbit from somebody's life. Gossip is a national pastime in their culture. Adults, young people, and the media seem to revel in gossip. Although sometimes interesting, it can destroy reputations and tear apart friendships. This TalkSheet will help your group discover that only some things need to be shared with others, and that keeping a confidence will strengthen friendships and build trust between people.

OPENER

There's no better example of gossip than the media tabloid. You may want to purchase a couple of these at any grocery store or drug store and select a few short articles to read to your group. Ask your students to vote on which stories they think are true and which they think are false. What makes a story believable? Why or why not? And why do people buy into these stories and false lies about others?

Discuss what sells these tabloids. You may want to rewrite one of the stories using the names of some of the young people in your group, then talk about what it would feel like to have these kind of stories written about people.

For Internet tabloid sites (so you don't have to be seen buying one!), check out *Tabloids.com* (<http://4tabloids.4anything.com>), the *National Enquirer* (www.nationalenquirer.com), or *Star Magazine* (www.starmagazine.com).

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Who would your kids most likely to trust with a secret and why? Why is this person trustworthy and how well do you think the person would be able to hold the information in confidence?
2. How did your kids feel when this situation happened to them? Have a few willing students share what happened to them and how the situation affected the friendship (no names, please!). Has this situation changed the way your kids handle the secrets of others?
3. Go over which secrets a real friend should absolutely not keep (suicide threats or sexual abuse, for example). Be prepared for a lot of disagreement on some of these issues. Point out the potential harm that comes from not telling someone else if a friend is keeping a harmful secret.
4. Have a few willing students share their phrases (being trustworthy, betraying a confidence, promoting love, and so on). Talk to your students about the impact that breaking a confidence has

on friendships, trust, and their integrity as Christians. You may want to summarize each verse as a group and write each one on a poster board or whiteboard.

THE CLOSE

Point out to your students that people human beings are strange creatures—people love the tidbits of scandal and the lure of knowing something that others would rather keep private. It causes people to be focused on anything but the essentials of being honest, truthful, and real with others—and with God. Encourage your kids to keep a careful ear open for what they hear and to become discerning listeners as well. They can choose what to believe and what not to believe. And they carry the responsibility of what to remember and pass on to others. How would they want others to handle their deepest secrets?

MORE

- You may have some kids in your group who are holding some secrets that are eating them inside—possibly an abusive parent, failing grades, the lure of drugs or sex, or more. These are real issues that need real attention. Pay close attention to your kids during this discussion and let the group know how crucial it is to talk with a trusted adult. For more information check out www.YouthSpecialties.com for more links to sites on issues in teen's lives including rape, abuse, pregnancy, suicide and more. Or see TalkSheets *Soul Pollution* (53), *The Perfect Parent* (31), and *Is God Keeping Score?* (19) for more links and discussion items.
- God isn't a fool. He knows what is going on in the lives of your kids and their friends. You may want to talk about these psalms more in depth. How do your kids feel knowing that God knows their secrets—before they even tell him? Challenge them to get real with God and bring their fears and concerns to him. He's their greatest, most trusted friend—whether they know it or not.

Honestly



1

Which of the following do you consider the most honest?
(Write "HP" next to the "Honest People".)

- ☐ The President of the United States
- ☐ A door-to-door salesman
- ☐ A minister
- ☐ A celebrity in a television commercial
- ☐ Your parents
- ☐ Your best friend
- ☐ A school teacher
- ☐ A rock star
- ☐ A police officer
- ☐ You

2

Try to answer this question: **What is a "white lie?"**

3

Most would say the following are dishonest statements. Rank them from 1 to 6, with 1 being the MOST dishonest and 6 being the LEAST.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Lying to parents in order to get permission to go out. | ☐ Spreading a rumor when it's not true. |
| ☐ Cheating on a test. | ☐ Shoplifting. |
| ☐ Keeping the money when a cashier gives you too much change. | ☐ Giving a fake excuse to a teacher. |
| ☐ Borrowing something and not returning it. | ☐ Saying "I forgot", when you really didn't. |

4

Natalie lied to her parents about where she spent the afternoon. She knew if she told her parents the truth, they would be disappointed and angry. Her parents believed her and nothing more was said.

What do you think of Natalie's actions? _____

What would you do if you were Natalie? _____

5

Decide which of the following scriptures are examples of honesty and which are examples of dishonesty.

Acts 5:1-2

1 Samuel 12:1-5

2 Corinthians 8:19-21

Genesis 12:10-13

Amos 8:4-5

Luke 19:8-8

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

HONESTLY

Topic: Honesty

Purpose of this Session:

It is important to discuss honesty with young people because during adolescence, dishonesty becomes more than just "telling lies". Children tell fibs and lie to get what they want, but adolescents begin to wrestle with the issue of honesty as a value. They must decide whether or not they will choose to be a completely honest person.

To Introduce the Topic:

A good lead-in is to play the game "Whopper". Have the students write three statements about themselves, two of which are true and one of which is not. The rest of the group members try to guess which of the three is a lie. If the students choose two truths that sound like lies and a lie that sounds plausible, they will be successful at fooling the group.

Another idea is to conduct a "lying contest". Have a contest to find out who can tell the biggest lie. After each student has told his fib, vote on the best "tall tale". Give a prize to the winner, or announce you will present a new car to the owner, then later admit you lied.

The Discussion:

Item #1: The main focus of this item is "trust". Who do we trust to tell us the truth? If there are those on the list the students perceive as dishonest, ask them why. It will probably be due to a past experience with dishonesty. Trust takes time to develop and we destroy it when we are dishonest with each other.

Item #2: Allow enough time for the group to share and discuss their opinions. You may want to discuss "white" and "black" lies, asking the students to give examples of each and why they feel they are permissible lies or not. You may want to discuss the kind of lies that are considered "good" — such as telling someone they look nice when they don't, or lying to protect a friend from harm. Is this right or wrong?

Item #3: Ask the students to share their rankings and to give reasons for their choices. There may be considerable difference of opinion here, so allow time for debate.

Item #4: This "Tension Getter" will give you a true-to-life situation to discuss with the students. Ask them to decide what Natalie should have done and what she should do now. Ask them to consider all the possible consequences of this kind of dishonesty. Even though Natalie "got away with it", there is no way of knowing what might happen as a result. On the other hand, everyone knows the result of being completely honest.

Item #5: These scriptures examine different aspects of honesty. Discuss each one as you study what God has to say about honesty.

To Close the Session:

Summarize what has been discussed. Focus some of your concluding remarks on the consequences of honesty and dishonesty. Being dishonest is like playing with dynamite. It can blow up in your face. Help the students understand one lie tends to lead to another. "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!" Being consistently guilty of misrepresentation can destroy your reputation and your sense of self-worth. Being consistently guilty of misrepresentation can destroy your reputation and your sense of self-worth. One of the key characteristics of a Christian is honesty and being trustworthy. Jesus said "I am the truth" and we need to imitate Christ by being truthful people. Remind your students God will forgive them for past untruths.

Outside Activities:

Invite the students' parents to a youth group meeting for a panel discussion on honesty. Have them share instances when they were not completely truthful as teenagers, and what happened as a result. Insist on complete honesty! Have them discuss how they deal with dishonesty now, at home or at work.

HONESTY COUNTS!



1. Would you go to a doctor who cheated his or her way through medical school?
Why or why not?
2. Check three of the following that you would consider to be the most dishonest.
 - ☐ Telling someone that your mom isn't home when she just doesn't want to come to the phone
 - ☐ Giving false information about yourself on an Internet chat room
 - ☐ Saying that you like your friend's haircut when you really don't
 - ☐ Keeping the extra change that you've accidentally been given
 - ☐ Telling someone that you're busy after he or she asks you out
 - ☐ Bootlegging or copying a CD or video for your own use
 - ☐ Spilling a secret about a friend that you promised to keep
 - ☐ Taking the blame for something you didn't do in order to help another person save face
 - ☐ Taking the credit for a report you copied from another source
 - ☐ Telling your parents that you're going to the mall and then go somewhere else
3. When you're dishonest or lying, what do you worry about most?
4. Check out **Proverbs 10:9**. Do you agree with what it says? Why or why not?
5. On a scale below, put an X on the spot that indicates how honest you think you are.



I'm totally honest all the time

I'm the epitome of dishonesty
6. Check out what the verses below have to say. Then draw a connecting line between each Bible verse and its summarizing statement.

Exodus 23:1 Leviticus 19:11 Psalms 37:21 Proverbs 14:5 Ephesians 4:25	A truthful person doesn't deceive. Speak truthfully to each other. Do not steal. If you borrow, be sure to repay. Don't spread false stories.
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HONESTY COUNTS! | integrity — Proverbs 10 |

THIS WEEK

The integrity of young teens is challenged—and compromised—daily. Will they be true to their word? Will they cheat at sports, games, or schoolwork? The battle to live a life of integrity never ends. Naturally, God sets high standards for integrity. But as high as they are, they are achievable and rewarding—especially when living with integrity becomes a habit.

OPENER

Play a few rounds of Balderdash. In this adapted version of the board game Beyond Balderdash, make a list of nonsense, very obscure words—but real words nonetheless (just look in a dictionary). A few examples from Dictionary.com (www.dictionary.com) might be—

- Coquette—a woman who flirts with a man
- Defenestration—an act of throwing someone or something out of a window.
- Doppelgänger—a ghostly double.
- Fop—a man who is much concerned with his appearance.
- Restate—to move like a reptile; slither.
- Triskaidekaphobia—fear of the number 13.

You can either play as a large group or split your group up into small groups of 4 or 5 people per group. A player in each group begins by choosing a word from the categories, including words, people, objects, or any other one you want to include. All of the other players then write down a bluff, false answer to the word in the hopes of fooling each other. Shuffle the real answer in with all of the other players' phony answers and read each one aloud. A group scores points for guessing the real answer—and for also duping their peers into believing their answer is correct. Each person's task is to create a false definition for the word. Encourage your kids to try to make it sound realistic—and to be creative.

Afterwards, vote with your group for who made up the most believable, yet false definition for a word.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Let your group point out the obvious—why they wouldn't trust a doctor who cheated through medical school. Throw in a few more examples, such as a president who lied to get into office, an athlete who set a world record while using illegal drugs, or a police officer who took bribes from rich crooks. Point out that honesty is one of the pillars of society because trust between people is essential.
2. Which of these items are the most dishonest? Which ones aren't really dishonest? Let your kids defend their ideas and decide as a group, under

which situations one of these would be considered completely dishonest. You'll probably have some disagreement here—every situation noted doesn't necessarily have a black-and-white answer.

3. What is the downside of being dishonest? What problems or consequences come from frequently lying? Most liars, cheaters, promise breakers, and thieves live in fear that they will be caught or discovered—and later may feel extremely guilty
4. How did your kids summarize this verse? Do they agree or disagree with what it says? Why? Take some time to discuss how this verse applies to your kids today.
5. How honest do your kids think they are? Are they more to the left or to the right? Do any of them formed bad habits that have left them feeling dishonest? Point out that your kids aren't alone—nobody is perfect when it comes to maintaining integrity. In fact, if any of them have rated themselves as perfect, they're probably being dishonest with themselves!
6. You may want to read these verses as a group and summarize what each passage says. Point out that God lays out the standards for integrity. He is willing to forgive all shortcomings, but he wants honesty to become the habit of their lives.

THE CLOSE

Most junior high or middle schoolers know that honesty really is the best policy—even when it's painful. Take some time to talk about the pros and cons of honesty—why do some people think it's easier to lie? Why is it sometimes more hurtful or harder to tell the truth? Why is dishonesty promoted in culture sometime? And why do dishonest people get away with so much? Take some time to talk about these and some other issues with your group.

MORE

- Where do your kids see dishonesty in the media? You may want to bring in a few clips of a few movies or TV shows. What do these clips deal with? What are the causes and consequences of lying? Are these examples of big lies or little ones—and is there a difference in these? Challenge your kids to think about these questions through out the week.
- Ask your kids to look at some of the following verses from Proverbs on honesty—11:1, 11:3, 11:8, 12:5, 12:13, 12:19, 12:22, 14:5, 14:25, 16:13, 20:7, 20:10, 20:17, 20:21, 21:3, 21:6, 28:18, and 28:23. What do these proverbs say about the virtue of honesty? And how can your kids apply these verses in their lives today?

LETHAL LIES



1. What was the worst thing that happened to you because you lied?
2. Check out these verses from Psalms. What do they say will happen to liars?
 Psalm 5:6
 Psalm 5:10
 Psalm 12:2-3
3. Read **Psalm 109:1-5**. What bad attitudes and unfair actions do you see in the liars that attacked David?
4. What did David do when these liars slandered him? Take a look at one of these verses, then rewrite it in your own words.

Psalm 5:2	Psalm 109:4	Psalm 109:30-31
Psalm 5:7	Psalm 109:28	
5. Your friend has bluntly lied to your face (or told a lie about you) and you've found out about it. What could happen in this situation if you—
 Ignored the lie and tried to forget about it?
 Got revenge and told a lie about your friend?
 Cussed your friend out?
 Told your friend you forgave them?
 Prayed for this friend?
6. Check out **Ephesians 4:25, 29**. What do you think these verses say about telling the truth?

LETHAL LIES | Slander — Psalm 5, 12, 109 |

THIS WEEK

Everyone knows that it's wrong to lie—and it's no fun to be lied to. This TalkSheet will foster an open discussion on lying, being the target of lies, and what God says about it all.

OPENER

For this activity you'll need three index cards—on an card write, "Give a false answer to every question, but try to make your lies sound believable." On another write, "Give a truthful answer to every question." On a third card write, "Lie on the first three questions; tell the truth on the rest. Try to make your lies sound believable." Pick three volunteers to sit at the front of the room, and give each volunteer one of the cards, instructing them to do as it says.

Then ask the following questions of each volunteer, allowing each to answer the first question before going on to the second, and so on.

- ⇒ Are you related to a famous person? If so, who?
- ⇒ Have you ever won anything worth more than \$100? If so, what was it?
- ⇒ What is your favorite hobby?
- ⇒ Where is the most interesting place you've ever been?
- ⇒ What is your favorite color?
- ⇒ Have you ever been mentioned in a newspaper or on TV? If so, what was the reason?

After your volunteers have answered, reveal which contestant was always telling the truth, which was always lying, and which did both. Your group can then check their charts for accuracy. The student who was the best at distinguishing lies from the truth wins.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Let some of your group members share their experiences. What were the consequences of their lies? How did these situations turn out? Point out that the negative consequences of lies outweigh any positive benefits.
2. What did these verses say about lying? What are the Biblical consequences of lying? How does this apply to the lives of your kids today?
3. Take some time to talk about the characteristics of the people who lied to King David. You may want to make a list of these for the group to see. How do these liars relate to the liars in the lives of your kids?
4. Break your group into pairs or groups of three and assign a passage to each group. Help students to understand David's response to the

liars. He prayed for them, did good to them, and showed them friendship. Though David expressed his desire to see these liars come to ruin, it's important to note that David never tried to bring that about himself. Instead, he turned it over to God to handle.

5. The purpose of this is to discuss the different approaches to handling lying. Each reaction could bring a different result. Talk about each response and the pros and cons of each one. In your kids' opinions, what is the best way to handle a situation like this?
6. Point out that Ephesians 4:25 speaks about replacing the negative (lying) with the positive (telling the truth). In essence, Paul is telling people how to get rid of a bad habit—don't just stop it, replace it with something godly. Verse 29 tells people to replace any unwholesome speech (lies, gossip, berating) with words that encourage and build up another person.

THE CLOSE

Every one of your students has been the victim of a lie, in some form or another. Question 4 explains how to handle it. What can your kids do if they hear a lie about someone else?

What difference can your kids make through their actions today? Ask them to take a look at their lives. How would they rate themselves on a scale of 1-10 (1 being "I'm a true liar", 10 being "I'm 100% honest")? Challenge them to change their approach to lying and see how it affects themselves and their relationships with others.

MORE

- In consideration with this discussion, how does lying affect relationships with others? How has the media portrayed lying? What myths have been formed about lying from commercials, TV shows, or movies? How have on-line chat rooms and Web pages made it easy to disguise oneself and lie about others? What other examples of slander and lying have your kids seen in the media and in society today? And how does this apply to the psalm that you've discussed?
- Too often people aren't praised for being honest and trustworthy. Challenge your kids to thank their friends and family members for being honest with them. Encouragement makes people feel good! Encourage your kids and thank them for being honest with you. Imagine how God feels when he sees people upholding the truth!

LOOKING FOR LOVE



1

Love is _____. (Choose the word you think best from those listed below.)

patient
forever

courteous
honest

caring
accepting

trusting
exciting

helpful
obedient

jealous
giving

romantic
kind

2

It is impossible to love certain people.

_____ True

_____ False

3

Rank the following from the **easiest** to love (1) to the **most difficult** to love (5).

_____ mother

_____ sister/brother

_____ father

_____ God

_____ best friend

4

Check any of the following you consider examples of Christian love.

_____ Making a joke out of a mistake someone makes.

_____ Giving money to the church.

_____ Trying to help someone who is in trouble.

_____ Being nice to people who are nice to you.

_____ Eating lunch with someone who is a "loner".

_____ Doing your chores at home.

_____ Getting even with someone who has hurt you.

_____ Not squealing on someone who has done something wrong.

_____ Sharing your faith with your friends.

_____ Talking about someone behind their back.

_____ Letting someone copy your homework.

5

Read I John 4:7-12 and write a one-sentence summary of it below:

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

LOOKING FOR LOVE

Topic: Christian love

Purpose of this Session:

Love is something we talk about often but the subject still confuses many young people. They often think it is some kind of gushy, sentimental emotion you have toward someone else rather than an act of obedience to God. This TalkSheet will help you find out what your students think about love. It will also give them a chance to talk about practical ways they can put love into effect.

To Introduce the Topic:

Most of today's popular music deals with romantic love. Begin this session by listening to a song together or by watching a music video that deals with love.

Another lead-in is to have the students make an "I Love. . ." bumper sticker — with a red heart instead of the word "love" — and complete the sentence any way they wish. Have each person share their "love" with the rest of the group.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Have the students share their choices and explain why they chose them. Save your comments for later.

Item #2: Young people often believe love is finding something about another person that is lovable and only then can they love that person. Christian, or agape, love says we don't look for a lovable quality, but we love in spite of lovable characteristics. Talk about this concept of love with your group.

Item #3: Have the students share their reasons for their answers. Make this a fun activity.

Item #4: Go through this list and see how many selected each one as an example of Christian love. Discuss those in which there is not complete agreement. Brainstorm additional examples of love and talk about them in terms of practical ways to demonstrate Christian love.

Item #5: Have the students share what they learned from reading this passage. Focus on the idea that we love others because God loves us all.

To Close the Session:

Challenge your students to look at people the way Christ did. Every person is a child of God, created in the image of God, and is someone for whom Christ died. Our culture teaches using people and loving things, but the Christian way is just the opposite.

Help your students see that love is not a feeling or an emotion, but a decision we make. The Bible doesn't ask that we "like" our neighbor, but it does command us to love even those we don't like. That is the mark of the Christian — that we love others as we love ourselves.

Outside Activities:

1. Have each group member choose one person they think is difficult to love. During the week, they can try to express love in some fashion to this person.
2. Have your students visit elderly congregation members to clean their yards and homes as expressions of love.

ONE IS A LONELY NUMBER



1

Circle any of the following words that best describe LONELINESS to you.

depression rejection hurt boredom time with God
happy peaceful sadness quiet frightened fun

2

TRUE or FALSE?

- ____ a. Being alone is the same as being lonely.
____ b. Being bored is the same as being lonely.

3

Do you **AGREE** or **DISAGREE** with the statements below?

- | | AGREE | DISAGREE |
|---|-------|----------|
| a. Everyone is lonely at times. | _____ | _____ |
| b. If you are with other people, you won't be lonely. | _____ | _____ |
| c. If you feel lonely, it's your own fault. | _____ | _____ |
| d. Jesus felt lonely. | _____ | _____ |

4

Who are the loneliest people in the world? (Rank the following from "1" — loneliest — to "6" — least lonely.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| ____ widows and widowers | ____ young people |
| ____ famous people | ____ old people |
| ____ divorced people | ____ Christians |

5

Read I Kings 19:9-18, then see if you can write a comforting postcard to Elijah.

Dear Elijah,





Date Used: _____

Group: _____

ONE'S A LONELY NUMBER

Topic: Loneliness

Purpose of this Session:

Adults tell young people the teen years are the best years of their lives. Adults forget these years can be very lonely in the midst of the carefree fun. This TalkSheet offers your group the chance to talk about their lonely feelings, the causes and cures of loneliness and how God can help.

To Introduce the Session:

Tell the students they are going to make up a progressive story about loneliness. Begin the story by saying, "Skip was getting ready to go to school, when. . ." then let a student proceed with the plot, continuing around the group. The only rules are the story should be kept clean and be about loneliness. You will end up with a lonely story and a good lead-in to the discussion.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask the students to share and explain their choices. Ask if any other words came to mind and make a master list of all the words thought of.

Item #2: Young people often assume if they are bored or alone, then they are lonely. They need to understand they don't always have to be entertained or be with a crowd. In fact, they can be entertained or with their friends and still feel lonely.

Item #3: Focus on "b" and talk about being alone and being lonely. A person can be alone and not be lonely. Also focus on the fact that Christ felt lonely. (See Matthew 13:53-57, Luke 4:24-30, Mark 14:22, 27, 31, 50, Mark 15:1-34.) In today's world, young people believe they must be entertained constantly. They suffer from stimulus overload and don't know how to deal with periods of being quiet or being alone. Help them understand they need times of "aleness" and that these "lonely" times are not bad. They can be very healthy. Learning to be content when alone is one of the first signs of real maturity.

Item #4: Have the students share their choices and explain why they ranked them in the order they chose. Ask how loneliness could be remedied for each type of person.

Item #5: Help the students understand Elijah's situation. After they have had some time to write their postcards, have them read them aloud. Ask if they have ever felt like Elijah. Brainstorm practical and concrete solutions to loneliness. Some possible solutions are prayer, not comparing oneself to others, enjoying solitude, reading a psalm, talking with parents, and reaching out to help others.

To Close the Session:

Help the students understand when they are lonely, Christ is with them. They may feel lonely, but they are never alone. Encourage them to remember to take advantage of their lonely times by taking time for prayer.

Emphasize that the main reason we experience a feeling such as loneliness is our gregariousness. God created us to have good and close relationships with other people. We were created to live in families and in community with others. That's why it's important to protect our relationships and to do whatever we can to improve them. Close by using a community-building activity. Hundreds of them can be found in the *IDEAS* series published by Youth Specialties.

Outside Activities:

Have the students schedule an hour of their time in a "lonely place", away from everyone, without radio, television or any other distraction. Have them concentrate on being alone with themselves, just sitting and thinking or praying. Have them share their thoughts about the experience afterward.

STRESSED OUT



"Stress is bad and should be avoided at all costs."

____ TRUE ____ FALSE

Listed below are some real "stress producers". Check those which would cause a lot of stress for you:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ____ Your parents finding out you lied to them. | ____ Arguing with your brother or sister. |
| ____ Flunking a test. | ____ Having no money. |
| ____ Hearing our country has declared war. | ____ Moving away. |
| ____ Getting bad grades on a report card. | ____ Getting a bad haircut. |
| ____ Seeing your parents fight. | ____ Fighting with your parents. |
| ____ Being called upon by the teacher when you don't know the answer | ____ Not having enough time. |
| ____ Doing something you know is wrong. | ____ Worrying about sex. |
| | ____ Other: _____ |

Answer this question: **What is the best way to get rid of stress?**

Dear Diary:

Today was horrible! The worst day of my life! I can't believe my problems. Nothing went right. My best friend turned against me. I flunked a social studies test. Everyone laughed at me during P.E. because I was so clumsy. I can't take it anymore. I hate myself. 'Bye for now.

Leslie

Have you ever felt like Leslie? _____

What did you do when you felt like her? _____

What could you tell Leslie to help her feel better? _____

Look up one of the scriptures below and decide what it has to say about stress:

Proverbs 3:5,6

Matthew 6:33,34

1 Peter 5:7

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

STRESSED OUT

Topic: Stress

Purpose of this Session:

Stress is a fact of life to young people as well as adults. Unfortunately, teenagers face an undeserved amount of stress today, most of which was not formerly encountered until adulthood. This TalkSheet will help your group talk about stress and how a Christian can best handle it.

To Introduce the Topic:

Perform a "stress test" on a balloon. Blow it up as far as possible, then blow some more air into it, stressing the surface. If too much pressure is applied, the balloon will pop (demonstrate this if you wish). If you release some of the pressure, the balloon is under less stress.

Make the point that we are like the balloon. If there is too much pressure upon us, we become stressed out. Some people reach the breaking point and that's not good. We need to find ways to relieve the pressure and to reduce stress in our lives. That's what this session is about.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask for a show of hands on this True or False question. Explain the best answer would be "false" because (1) some stress is normal and actually beneficial — the anxiety caused by stress is a warning system that helps us respond properly to whatever is causing the stress; and (2) avoidance of all stress is extremely unhealthy. For example, some people turn to drugs or alcohol as a way of escaping stress, which creates even more stress.

Item #2: This activity brings the topic closer to home. Rather than have the students tell you which items they checked, ask "How many of you checked more than three of these? More than five? More than eight?" You can give some sort of "super-stressed" award to the one that checked the most. You might ask the group to vote on the one or two items they think most teens are faced with. Ask them why this is so stressful. Focus on how your students feel when faced with pressures and how they have handled stressful situations.

Item #3: Have the group share their ideas on this. Talk about practical things they can do when they feel overwhelmed by the pressures in their lives.

Item #4: A good way to deal with this "Tension Getter" is to have two students role-play Leslie and a friend who is trying to help her. Or, you can play Leslie and the entire group can advise you. You can give excuses such as "I already tried that" and "That would never work for me", just to keep the ideas generating.

Item #5: Divide the students into smaller groups for this exercise. Each group should take a different Bible verse and come up with a statement about what the Bible says concerning coping with stress.

To Close the Session:

Emphasize the fact that stress is normal, but that unresolved stress can wear them down, both physically and mentally. Stress needs to be dealt with and resolved.

Make sure your students understand if stress, worry, or pressure is getting the best of them, to the point where they are feeling depressed or ill, they must talk to someone about it. Let them know you and other responsible adults are available to listen. Sometimes just talking over a situation can help things get better. A shared load is lighter than one you carry alone.

Help the students realize, too, their parents may be under a great deal of stress at times and they need to be supportive and understanding of them. When their father or mother comes home from work and acts grumpy and upset (and maybe takes it out on them), it might be best for them to stay out of the way and try to be as helpful and positive as they can. Chances are it is just a temporary situation.

Remind your teenagers to set aside time every day to be alone with God. This is not only a great habit to develop, but is a healthy way to handle stress.

Outside Activities:

1. Ask your teens to call three people in their youth group during the coming week and encourage them.
2. Have the students ask their parents how they handle stress as adults and how they handled it as teenagers. They can share what they found out with the group.

What, Me Worry?



1

Mark an "X" next to all the things on the following list you worry about from time to time. Put a star beside those you have worried about recently.

☐ what others think of me
☐ my grades
☐ what high school will be like
☐ how I look
☐ nuclear war
☐ parents divorcing
☐ making friends

☐ my body changing
☐ sex
☐ family fights
☐ my relationship with God
☐ not having enough money
☐ world problems
☐ other: _____

2

Complete this sentence: The more I worry about something . . .

☐ the worse it becomes
☐ the better it becomes

☐ the more I realize it doesn't change a thing
☐ the worse it gets in my mind

3

What would you say to a friend who was worried about:

- a. Their parents getting a divorce. _____
- b. Failing a class. _____
- c. A bad haircut. _____
- d. Getting caught cheating on a test. _____

4

How can a person get rid of worry? Write your answer:

5

Read the following verses and summarize each in five words or less:

- 1 Peter 5:7 _____
- Philippians 4:6-7 _____
- Romans 8:28 _____

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

WHAT, ME WORRY?

Topic: Worry

Purpose of this Session:

Adolescents worry a great deal. They worry about their looks, their relationships, and their future. Because of an increased amount of stress and tension placed upon them by modern lifestyles, the present generation may have more to worry about than any other has had. This TalkSheet will help your group talk about their worries and insecurities and how their faith in Christ can be a positive force in dealing with them.

To Introduce the Session:

Play a game called "Worries Charades". Either you or someone you choose acts out the different worries you have pre-selected. The rest of the group tries to guess what kind of worry is being portrayed. Keep the worries humorous. Some possibilities: body odor, a pimple on the nose, flunking a math test, not knowing how to kiss, fly is open, can't get to sleep, going to the dentist, passing gas.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Begin by talking about some of the things that worried you as a teenager. Then let the students share things that worry them the most. Act as moderator and use effective listening. You will gain valuable insight into their lives.

Item #2: Your students will probably find a logical reason to find each answer correct. Point out that most of the time, worrying doesn't do anything to improve a situation. Only when worry leads to positive action is it worthwhile.

Item #3: Have the students share their advice with the others. You may wish to role-play the situations, with one student acting the worrier and the other giving advice.

Item #4: Brainstorm different solutions to worrying. List others on the board for everyone to see. Define the difference between worrying which doesn't change things and concern, which motivates change. Young people need to understand worrying is a waste of invested emotional energy. Concern uses this energy to solve the problem.

Item #5: After studying the scriptures, have the students choose one to memorize. They can then repeat the scripture to themselves when they next begin to worry about something.

To Close the Session:

The English word "worry" comes from a German word "*wurgen*", meaning "to choke". Worry is mental strangulation and can kill.

It is normal and healthy to have worries, but it is destructive, self-defeating and useless to worry about things over which you have no control. If you can control an outcome of a "worry", then you can do something about it in a positive way.

Help your students realize Christians need not worry about what has happened in the past, nor about what is to happen in the future. Both are in God's hands. We are forgiven the past and God is in control of the future. Jesus came to give us inner peace and a positive outlook on life. Jesus says to us, "Do not worry, little flock" (Matthew 6).

Tell the group one of the best ways to get rid of worry is to talk about it with someone else — a friend, a parent, another respected adult — someone who is willing to listen. Let them know you are available to listen and help. Sometimes all a person needs to feel more secure about something is to be able to dump their worries on someone else.

Outside Activities:

The greatest way to forget your own troubles is to help someone else. Have your youth group plan a Christian service project, such as visiting a retirement home.



YOU MAKE ME SO MAD

1

Circle three from the situations listed to the right that would make you really mad:

- Someone calls you a dirty name.
- Your parents put you on restriction.
- You flunk a test.
- You have to do two hours of homework.
- Someone steals your bike.
- You are in a bad mood when your mom asks you to help with the dishes.
- Someone bullies you.
- A friend talks about you behind your back.
- Your parents blame you for something you didn't do.
- You have lost your allowance.

2

Complete the following sentences:

When my mom gets mad, she _____

When my dad gets mad, he _____

When I get mad, I _____

3

Darrin is standing patiently in the cafeteria line at lunch time. Two guys push their way into the line, cutting in front of Darrin. He is shoved off balance, falls down, and loses his place in line.

How would you feel if you were Darrin? _____

What would you do if you were Darrin? _____

4

YES or NO?

- I have the right to be angry with someone who hurts me.
- People who lose their temper are immature.
- Anger is a sin.
- Christians should show anger differently from non-Christians.
- Don't get mad, get even.

YES

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

NO

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

5

Choose one of the following scriptures to rewrite in your own words:

Proverbs 14:17

Proverbs 15:1

Ephesians 4:26-27

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

YOU MAKE ME SO MAD

Topic: Anger

Purpose of this Session:

Anger is a difficult emotion for most people to handle, especially adolescents. A proverb states, "Anger, like fire, finally dies out — but not before it leaves a path of destruction." Young people experience anger frequently as they discover the world is not as ideal as they would like. But they haven't yet learned how to handle anger. This TalkSheet gives your group a chance to study anger and decide how a Christian should handle it.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask for a volunteer actor to help you introduce this session. Before the meeting, have him or her "bug" you incessantly. During the opening of the meeting, the music, the announcements, games, etc., he/she will annoy you constantly and disrupt the meeting. Just before the discussion begins, pretend you have lost your patience and blow your top. Tell the student actor to get out and never come back, in no uncertain terms. Then let the group in on the ruse and announce you are going to talk about anger.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Allow enough time for the students to share the items they circled. Explain they can rise above certain circumstances and choose not to get angry. They do not have to let other people or circumstances make them mad.

Item #2: Oftentimes, we handle anger the same way our parents do. This item may help your students understand their own reactions. Let individuals talk about the different ways in which they and their parents handle anger.

Item #3: You can use this "Tension Getter" to role-play a true-to-life situation with the group. Ask the students to think of their own frustrating situations to solve and discuss.

Item #4: Many young people have difficulty expressing anger. They either hold it inside or let it out in destructive ways. Some may feel anger is a sin. It is not. It is an emotional reaction. Christ told us to be happy but not to sin. Anger is not the problem. It is what we do with the anger that counts. Communicate, through a discussion of these items, that anger is a normal emotion all of us have. We each need to learn appropriate ways to handle that anger.

Item #5: Ask several students to share their paraphrased scriptures and to try to apply them to their own lives.

To Close the Session:

Normal Vincent Peale said, "The next time you feel the surge of anger, say to yourself, 'Is this really worth what it's going to do to me and another, emotionally? I will make a fool of myself. I may hurt someone I love, or I might lose a friend.'"

Challenge your group members to express their anger in positive, constructive ways. Encourage them to "delay" their temper until they've had a chance to cool off. If they are still having difficulty handling anger, have them role-play pertinent situations and responses. Assure them their angry feelings are not sinful. It is their reaction that is important and within their control.

Outside Activities:

1. Have the students cut out newspaper articles during the coming week, illustrating anger. Debrief the articles by talking about why there is so much anger in our society and how they can become Christian peacemakers.
2. Have several students create a bulletin board or poster related to anger. Let them share what they have learned.
3. Ask the members to bring a rock song that expresses anger or rebellion. Play the song, then talk about why the anger was there and what could be done about it.



AM I NORMAL?

The best age to be is: (circle one)

2 5 10 13 16 18 21 30 45 65

2

Complete the following sentence with the answer that best suits you:

I am growing up . . .

- a. faster than most my age
- b. about the same as others my age
- c. slower than others my age

3

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

4

When I look in the mirror, I feel: (check only two)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ☐ worried | ☐ angry | ☐ embarrassed | ☐ special |
| ☐ proud | ☐ flawed | ☐ lonely | ☐ handsome |
| ☐ happy | ☐ shy | ☐ pretty | ☐ depressed |

5

Check each of the following you believe are normal behaviors and concerns for a person your age.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ☐ dating | ☐ what God thinks of me | ☐ my body's appearance, as compared to others |
| ☐ worrying about others' opinions of me | ☐ getting a good job | ☐ how to lose weight |
| ☐ how my hair looks | ☐ how sexy I am | ☐ how to make new friends |
| ☐ grades | ☐ getting accepted at a college | ☐ how to be a better Christian |
| ☐ nuclear war | ☐ how late I can stay out at night | |
| ☐ getting along with my parents | | |

6

Draw connecting lines between the scripture verses and the appropriate statements.

Luke 2:51-52
2 Timothy 3:15
2 Chronicles 34:1-2
Luke 15:11-13
Luke 1:26-28

God was with her.
Left his family and wanted his money
Knew scriptures even as a child
Jesus growing up
Did the right thing in God's eyes

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

AM I NORMAL?

Topic: Growing up

Purpose of this Session:

Growing up produces all kinds of conflicting emotions. Many young people feel they are somehow different from others and not progressing normally. This session has been designed to encourage talking about how it feels to be growing up. It also gives you, the leader, a chance to affirm your students and also to teach them to encourage and support each other.

To Introduce the Session:

Some advanced preparation with this is well worth the effort. Record on tape statements from some respected members of your adult congregation talking about their own experiences when they were junior high students. Word association is a good way to begin. A few key words are: puberty, parents, school, friends, looks, music, feelings, problems, homework, the opposite sex. Play the tape for your youth group and begin your discussion with these same subjects.

The Discussion:

Item #1: This presents a fun way to begin. Have the students vote on their choice of the "perfect age". Ask them to give their reasons for choosing this age. Point out that every age is unique unto itself and offers new and exciting experiences. Old age is not called "The Golden Age" without good reason.

Item #2: Emphasize the fact that everyone grows at a different pace. During early adolescence, it is "normal" for some to mature as much as six years earlier than others. Girls, particularly, will mature physically much younger than boys. Point out that it all evens out in a few years.

Item #3: Ease the tension that may exist with this item by beginning the discussion with changes that happened to you when you were in junior high school. Once the students have shared their own changes, explain that their feelings are normal. Nearly everyone wishes to make changes in themselves.

Item #4: This item opens up the discussion on the students' self-image. The responses will be good indicators of their self-esteem. You may want to share what your own self-image was as a teen and what Christ had done for you. You may also wish to collect their TalkSheets (unsigned) to read how all chose to answer this item.

Item #5: Young people at the junior high age level are particularly sensitive about fitting in, being normal, and going along with whatever their peers think best. Use this item to talk about what is "normal". Today's young person has far too many adult worries and responsibilities. They have literally lost some of their childhood. Ask them to arrange these concerns into two categories: those that need attention now and those that can wait until a later date in their lives. Then give your views about what is normal and healthy for their age. Mention realistic expectations of themselves and others.

Item #6: Each of these scriptures deals with growing up. You may wish to focus attention on Luke 2:51-52 and talk about Christ's childhood.

To Close the Session:

A comprehensive conclusion is to summarize the feelings and thoughts the students shared, showing them they are normal. It is important to stress God's understanding and love. God does know how painful it is to grow up because Jesus was once their age and really cares for them.

Outside Activities:

1. Ask the students to bring a record, a cassette or video to the youth group meeting that best describes how they feel about growing up. After previewing the material, play those you wish to discuss with the group.
2. Ask the students to keep a journal of their feelings and thoughts for a week. Discuss what it was like to write these down.
3. Have the students make a collage that best describes how they feel as young people. Ask them to bring their collages to the youth group and share them. Keep several to share with parents and church members.

CORRUPTION ABDUCTION

1. If your friends wanted to get you to do something that you knew wasn't right, what kind of bait (food, money, stuff, people, and so on) could they use to snag you?

2. What percentage of students your age do you think would probably do what all the rest of their friends were doing (insert an X on that spot)?



3. Check out **Proverbs 1:10-19**. How might a foolish kid respond to those words? What about a wise kid? Write your answers below.

Foolish kid—

Wise kid—

4. This proverb says that the people who do wrong get trapped in their own net. How can people get trapped in the nets of their own creation?



5. What do you think? Do you **A** (agree) or **D** (disagree) with each of these statements?
- ___ Someone with friends who do wrong things should change friends.
 - ___ Someone with friends who do wrong things should try to change their behaviors.
 - ___ Someone with friends who do wrong things is likely to do those things too.

CORRUPTION ABDUCTION [unhealthy friendships—Proverbs 1]

THIS WEEK

Many young teens assume that they are their own person and are influenced little by their friends. Those who observe teens for any length of time have just the opposite opinion. This TalkSheet is designed to help students see that the enticement of bad friends can lead them down paths toward unhappiness and regret.

OPENER

Use your noodle. Start by putting a few dollar bills in the bait slots of several mousetraps. Then set the traps and divide your group into teams. Give each team a few uncooked spaghetti or pasta noodles. With the noodles, each team must retrieve the dollar—but without springing the traps. Use this activity as a way to introduce the first discussion question.

Or brainstorm with your group about the different types of traps and baits—mousetraps, fishing lures, salt licks, and the like. Those that hunt or fish in your group will know a few of these. Talk about how each of them works, what kind of creature it works with, what kind of bait is used, and how likely it is that the creature will escape from the trap. How do these lures and traps compare with those (figurative) traps that people use on each other?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. What would your kids most likely be tempted with? Make a list of their suggestions and ideas. Do your kids think others are aware of their weak spots? Why or why not? In what different cases would your kids be tempted by different things, such as food, money, cigarettes, or drugs?
2. What percentage did your group come up with as a whole? Some of them may have varying opinions and the reasons for the variance. Let them defend their opinions with the group.
3. Ask the group to list their answers and make a master list on a whiteboard or poster board. Then ask how many of your kids have heard the same responses coming from their friends. Point out the relevance of these verses to the lives of teens today.
4. What do your kids think? Do they know people who've tangled themselves up with their own poor choices? What would these people have been thinking as they made the choices that snared them?
5. Do your kids agree or disagree? Point out how people can use wisdom to evaluate the influence

of friends. Talk about how easy or difficult it is to break of from friends who aren't good influences. What opportunities or dangers are involved in trying to influence those friends for good?

THE CLOSE

Although many of people think they are the exception, the truth is that bad company really does corrupt good morals. People must be very careful about who they choose to hang out with, because not all will have their best interests in mind. God may use people to influence their friends towards good. In fact one of the greatest things a young teen can do is to draw friends toward God, but people must be strong in the faith and realize their own limitations and areas of weakness. That's the balance of giving without giving too much. Spend some time talking about this with your kids. What do they think? How strong are they when dealing with friends, peers, and family members?

MORE

- People reach out to others in different ways. Some people are pastors, some teachers, and some singers. Being a witness of others for Christ is unique to each person. Challenge your kids to think of one way that they can reach out to those around them throughout the week and beyond. Dare them to go out of their comfort zones and to see what happens when God uses them in their everyday lives!
- Point out to your kids that getting snagged in the wrong crowd can be a gradual process—but it's one they'll face in high school, college, and beyond. You may have kids in your group who are in these situations already, hanging with the tough kids, smoking, or doing drugs. Be careful not to come off as judgmental. Instead encourage your kids to think about what they're doing and what others around them are doing. Are they fitting in or standing out? Take some time to talk about the struggles that your kids may be facing and the powerful influence of peer pressure.

GIMME, GIMME

1. If you had **three** wishes that could come true, would one of them be to have lots of money?

2. What is the largest amount of money (your own money!) you have ever spent at one time?

What did you spend it on?

Would you do it again?

Why or why not?

3. What do you think is the biggest danger in wanting to make lots of money? Rank the following dangers from the **greatest danger (1)** to the **least danger (10)**.

- ___ Lying, cheating, or stealing to get money
- ___ Ignoring other priorities to make money
- ___ Becoming excessively greedy
- ___ Wasting money on the lotto
- ___ Worshiping money more than God
- ___ Gambling a lot of money
- ___ Spending too much too fast.
- ___ Thinking you don't need to depend on God anymore
- ___ Getting lots of money but no happiness
- ___ Using people just to get money

4. Check out **Proverbs 23:4-5** and **Luke 12:15-21**. What do these two passages tell you about the desire to get rich?

5. On the scale below, put an X where you'd rank your desire for money?



THIS WEEK

Most junior highers and middle schoolers don't have thousands in the bank—but they know about the power of money. Society has taught them that happiness and money are directly related. The Bible gives people a different perspective on wealth. It warns kids and adults that the minute they fix their gaze on the dollar, it sprouts wings and flies away. This TalkSheet session is designed to help your students to understand that eternal treasures aren't made of money.

OPENER

Tell your students that they must choose a career. One job pays \$100,000 per year but is really stressful and difficult. The other job is really fun, but pays barely enough to get by. Ask your students to select the job they would choose for a career, and to go to the side of the room that reflects their choice—side one with great pay or side two with enjoyable work. After they've chosen their sides, discuss the reasons for their choices. Make a list of their ideas and priorities for choosing what they did. Have their parents had to deal with these situations? What do they think most people in the world do in this situation? How about missionaries, pastors, or private-school teachers? Use this discussion as an opportunity to introduce today's topic.

Or you may want to bring in a stack of ads from the Sunday paper, some magazines with advertisements, or some catalogs, etc. Break the your group into clusters of three to five and ask them to cut out stuff from the ads that they personally own and stuff that they want to have. Then have them make two stacks of the cut out ads—things they have and things they want to have. Ask the groups to compare which stack is bigger. Do they need the stuff they want? Why or why not?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Would your kids want to have money? Take a poll of the groups' responses and use this question to further the discussion of their desire for money. Why does money appear on so many of their wish lists? What would they rather have, their health or lots of money?
2. How did your kids spend their money? What did they buy? Check out if any of them had regrets about the money they've spent. Point out that sometimes people burn with desire for some object, but become bored with it once they've gotten it. Have your kids experienced this in their own lives?

3. How did your kids rank these items? Rank them as a group and decide which one is the most dangerous and why. What problems does money make in your kids' spiritual lives? Which difficulties seem most dangerous to your students?
4. What do these verses say about wealth? How do these verses apply to your kids' lives? You may want to have them rewrite these verses in their own words and to insert their own examples. Then have a few of them share what they wrote.
5. How important is making money to your kids? If you don't want to ask for specific responses, ask how many of them rank more toward the right or left. Where would teenagers in general put themselves on this scale? Where on this scale should a warning flag go? What can your kids do to keep a godly perspective on money?

THE CLOSE

Society is consumed with material things and living the good life. Some of your kids may have parents, family members, or friends who have a lot of money—and spend it. Point out the danger of getting caught up in the “gimme” mentality. It's hard not to get caught up in spending money in a society focused on advertisements and shopping malls. Encourage your students to make a priority of investing in things that can't be taken away—their faith in God, their relationships with others, and who they are as a person. Challenge them to bring their needs and desires to God and to trust him with their wants.

MORE

- How do advertisements affect materialism and consumerism? Ask your kids to make a list of everywhere they see advertisements—on clothing, on buses, on the Internet, and even on cereal boxes. Where do they see advertising? How does advertising influence people to buy things they don't need? How can your kids keep advertisements from getting to them? You may want to show a few videotaped commercials and talk about the message that is given.
- How do your kids spend their money—or the allowance that their parents give them? Ask your kids to keep track of everything that they spend money on in a given week and write it down. Then talk with them about what they bought and whether or not the item(s) was something they needed or wanted. They'll be surprised to see how they've spent their money!

LOOKING FOR LOVE



1

Love is _____. (Choose the word you think best from those listed below.)

patient
forever

courteous
honest

caring
accepting

trusting
exciting

helpful
obedient

jealous
giving

romantic
kind

2

It is impossible to love certain people.

_____ True

_____ False

3

Rank the following from the **easiest** to love (1) to the **most difficult** to love (5).

_____ mother

_____ sister/brother

_____ father

_____ God

_____ best friend

4

Check any of the following you consider examples of Christian love.

_____ Making a joke out of a mistake someone makes.

_____ Giving money to the church.

_____ Trying to help someone who is in trouble.

_____ Being nice to people who are nice to you.

_____ Eating lunch with someone who is a "loner".

_____ Doing your chores at home.

_____ Getting even with someone who has hurt you.

_____ Not squealing on someone who has done something wrong.

_____ Sharing your faith with your friends.

_____ Talking about someone behind their back.

_____ Letting someone copy your homework.

5

Read I John 4:7-12 and write a one-sentence summary of it below:

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

LOOKING FOR LOVE

Topic: Christian love

Purpose of this Session:

Love is something we talk about often but the subject still confuses many young people. They often think it is some kind of gushy, sentimental emotion you have toward someone else rather than an act of obedience to God. This TalkSheet will help you find out what your students think about love. It will also give them a chance to talk about practical ways they can put love into effect.

To Introduce the Topic:

Most of today's popular music deals with romantic love. Begin this session by listening to a song together or by watching a music video that deals with love.

Another lead-in is to have the students make an "I Love. . ." bumper sticker — with a red heart instead of the word "love" — and complete the sentence any way they wish. Have each person share their "love" with the rest of the group.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Have the students share their choices and explain why they chose them. Save your comments for later.

Item #2: Young people often believe love is finding something about another person that is lovable and only then can they love that person. Christian, or agape, love says we don't look for a lovable quality, but we love in spite of lovable characteristics. Talk about this concept of love with your group.

Item #3: Have the students share their reasons for their answers. Make this a fun activity.

Item #4: Go through this list and see how many selected each one as an example of Christian love. Discuss those in which there is not complete agreement. Brainstorm additional examples of love and talk about them in terms of practical ways to demonstrate Christian love.

Item #5: Have the students share what they learned from reading this passage. Focus on the idea that we love others because God loves us all.

To Close the Session:

Challenge your students to look at people the way Christ did. Every person is a child of God, created in the image of God, and is someone for whom Christ died. Our culture teaches using people and loving things, but the Christian way is just the opposite.

Help your students see that love is not a feeling or an emotion, but a decision we make. The Bible doesn't ask that we "like" our neighbor, but it does command us to love even those we don't like. That is the mark of the Christian — that we love others as we love ourselves.

Outside Activities:

1. Have each group member choose one person they think is difficult to love. During the week, they can try to express love in some fashion to this person.
2. Have your students visit elderly congregation members to clean their yards and homes as expressions of love.

We Are The World



1

Make a list of everything in your bedroom.

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

2

Complete the following sentence:

When I see someone who is really poor . . .

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| _____ I feel pity for them. | _____ I get angry. | _____ I feel guilty. |
| _____ I look the other way. | _____ I feel frustrated. | _____ I do whatever I can to help them. |
| _____ I try to give them something. | _____ I don't care. | _____ Other: _____ |

3

If you had to be one of the following, which would it be?

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| _____ Homeless | _____ Hungry and unable to obtain food |
| _____ Physically handicapped | _____ Old and living in a rest home |
| _____ Mentally retarded | _____ Sick and unable to afford medical care |

4

What do you think?

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. One person cannot make a difference in the world. | THAT'S RIGHT | NO WAY |
| b. It is God's will for some people to be poor. | ☐ | ☐ |
| c. Christians should be concentrating on solving the problems of the world. | ☐ | ☐ |
| d. The care of the underprivileged in this country is the responsibility of the government. | ☐ | ☐ |
| e. If someone is poor, it's their own fault. | ☐ | ☐ |
| f. If I could help someone who is poor, sick, or hungry, I would. | ☐ | ☐ |

5

Choose one of the following scriptures to rewrite in your own words:

Proverbs 14:31

Proverbs 21:13

Isaiah 5:13-15

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

WE ARE THE WORLD

Topic: Christian social action

Purpose of this Session:

The present generation of young people has been overwhelmed by the problems of the world and yet, no fuse has been lit underneath them to fire them into action. Junior high students are very idealistic by nature and will respond positively when challenged to "do something important with their lives". Use this TalkSheet to discuss how Christians can make a difference in the world by helping others who are less fortunate.

To Introduce the Session:

Distribute newspapers and newsmagazines (such as TIME and NEWSWEEK) and ask the students to find as many stories as possible about needy people and world problems. Allow five minutes for the search. You can divide them into teams and let them compete to see which team can find the most. Have them share the stories.

Another introduction would be to take a field trip into an area peopled by those who are less fortunate. When you return, the experience should be discussed and the TalkSheet implemented.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Most of your students could fill an entire page with their answers. They can be shown through this activity they have a great deal more than the rest of the world, even though they may not think so. Most young people outside of the United States have little in comparison.

Item #2: Ask for volunteers to share how they completed this sentence. Ask them how they think Christ would have responded to someone who is very poor.

Item #3: Ask the students to reveal their choices. This item forces an empathetic response. Let them talk about their choices as if they were really in that condition. How does it feel? What choices do they have? What will they do? Who will they turn to for help?

Item #4: Ask for opinions on each of these statements, one at a time. These statements deal with how things can and should be changed. Remember, the young people of today need to know they can make a difference, in spite of the overwhelming nature of the world's problems. Spend extra time on the last statement. Ask them for ideas to help someone less fortunate than they.

Item #5: Have several volunteers share their versions of the scriptures. Ask them to state one thing they learned from the passages.

To Close the Session:

Focus on the fact that God wants to use each person in the room to make a difference in the world. You might want to remind them of the "Feeding of the Five Thousand" story in the Bible. Jesus was able to use one boy's small sack lunch and feed a multitude with it. In the same way, God can take whatever we have to offer him and bless it. Even though it doesn't look like anything, "little is much".

Outside Activities:

Planning a mission or service project is an obvious response to this session. An excellent resource for ideas on planning and projects is the book entitled *Ideas for Social Action* by Anthony Campolo (Youth Specialties/Zondervan, 1984). Involve the students in the planning stage so they have some ownership of the project.

My church worship service is . . . (Place an "X" on the line below)

Always boring

Complete the sentence. "My church's worship service would be better if _____"

What do you think is the most important part of a worship service?

____ scripture reading

announcements

_____ special music

other: _____

Your opinion, please!

YES NO

a. The best place to worship God is in church.

11

b. I feel close to God when I worship on Sunday morning.

☐ ☐

c. I never get anything out of sermons.

114

d. The songs we sing during the church service help me worship God.

☐ ☐

e. The church service helps me live the Christian life during the week.

100

f. I can invite friends to church without feeling embarrassment.

□ □

g. A good worship service should be entertaining.

111

Draw a line connecting the scriptures with the correct statements.

John 4:20-24

worshiping man

2 Kings 21:19-22

worshiping Christ and doubting

Revelations 4:11

worship of idols

Acts 10-25-26

worship in spirit and truth

Matthew 28:17

Christ is worthy

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

LOOKING UP

Topic: Worship

Purpose of this Session:

Junior high students rarely understand the meaning of worship. They often consider it a boring meeting their parents force them to attend. This TalkSheet provides the opportunity to discuss your church worship service and to encourage your youth group to take their worship service more seriously.

To Introduce the Topic:

Before beginning a discussion using the TalkSheet, conduct a short worship service with your group. Have each division of the service take place in a different room, so you can more easily show the distinctions between the different elements of worship. Include a time of fellowship, singing, prayer, scripture reading, teaching, and offering.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Draw a duplicate of the TalkSheet line on the board and have each student place an X on the line. An alternative would be to draw a chalk line on the floor, from wall to wall. Against one wall is "Always boring", against the other is "Never boring". Have the students stand where they placed their X.

Item #2: Ask the students to share their sentences. (Note: You might wish to show these sentences to your church's worship planning committee. If the students know this in advance, they might come up with more thoughtful responses.) Let them talk about the parts of the service they do not like. Point out some things will be boring but this does not make them bad.

Item #3: Ask the students to share their views on this item and to explain their choices. Ask "What part of our worship service do you enjoy the most? Which part do you think we could do without?"

Item #4: These statements focus on different aspects of worship and the worship service. Let the students debate those in which there is not total agreement. Save your comments for the conclusion.

Item #5: Ask the students to read the way they matched up the verses with the statements. Ask them to share any new insights they might have gained from reading the scriptures on worship.

To Close the Session:

Take this opportunity to present your views on worship and to help your students understand why worship is important. Some ideas: (1) Discuss the concept that worship is a verb, not a noun. It is not something we attend in order to be entertained. Instead, it is something we do. We worship God. The worship service helps us do that. (2) The worship service brings everyone in the church together, both young and old, which is important. The church is people, the community of God and it is important for the church to have that common experience together. "Corporate worship" (worship with others) is one way we acknowledge the church is the body of Christ and how much we need each other. (3) Worship is for God, not for us. The question to ask after a worship service is not "Did I like it?" but "Did God like it?" and "Did I do my best for him?"

Close by sharing praise and prayer requests to God.

Outside Activities:

1. Your youth group can plan a worship service. They should be given the freedom to be creative and different. Have them meet with the pastor and congregation members to discuss their ideas.
2. Have volunteers participate in different parts of the morning service, such as scripture reading, ushering, offering, greeting, etc.
3. Ask the pastor or the chairman of the worship committee to come to the youth group meeting and answer questions from the group about your church's worship style.

GOZ IN A BOY

1

Circle the words below that you think best describes Jesus. Cross out those that don't fit Jesus at all.

Meek	Strong	Strange	Sad	Fun	Tough	Cool	Humble
Mysterious	Boring	Friendly	Happy	Angry	Smart		
Honest	Awesome	Wimpy	Loving	God			

2

Pretend Jesus Christ is presently living in your town, attending your school and is the same age as you.

Would he be popular or unpopular? _____

Where would He go to church? _____

What kind of music would He listen to? _____

What would He do after school? _____

What TV shows would He watch, if any? _____

If He attended your youth group, would He like it? _____

3

If someone asked you why you believed in Jesus, what would you tell them? _____

4

Christ asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13). Find out what each of the following Bible verses says about Christ, then complete each of the sentences.

John 10:30 Jesus is _____

Colossians 1:13-23 Jesus is _____

John 3:16-17 Jesus is _____

Matthew 16:16 Jesus is _____

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

GOD IN A BOD

Topic: Jesus Christ

Purpose of this Session:

One of the best studies you can instigate with junior high students is on the life of Christ. As their thinking ability matures, they have a great need to re-discover the Christ they have encountered previously only in Bible stories and in Sunday School lessons. Who is He? This TalkSheet was designed to focus attention on Christ, His attributes, and how the students can learn to know Him personally.

To Introduce the Topic:

Assemble several familiar pictures of Jesus. Some depict Him as "meek and mild", others show Him suffering, and still others show Him laughing. Ask the group to decide which is the most accurate portrayal of their idea of the real Jesus Christ.

Another lead-in is to give the students a list of events during the life of Christ, such as His baptism, the Sermon on the Mount, different miracles, parables, etc. Divide the group into competing teams which will try to arrange the events chronologically. The right answers are available in a Bible dictionary, a parallel version of the New Testament, or some other resource dealing with the life of Christ.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask the students to reveal the words they circled and the words they crossed out. Ask them to give reasons for their answers. Have them think of other words to describe Jesus.

Item #2: This can be fun and can help the students think of Christ as more than just an historical figure. Ask what kind of person they think Jesus would be if He were living today, in their town. Try to get away from the "Jesus in the carpenter shop" mind-set and think of Him as a modern-day teenager. This may be difficult for them to do, but reassure them there is no right or wrong answer. Simply try to picture Jesus in today's world and have them give reasons for their descriptions. If possible, ask them to recall scripture to substantiate their ideas.

Item #3: Ask for several different responses. It would be wise for you to prepare an answer yourself and to share it with the students after they have responded. "Does believing in Jesus make any difference in your life?" is a good follow-up question.

Item #4: Have several junior highers share their completed sentences.

To Close the Session:

Share with your students what Christ means to you. If you can, stress what knowing Christ has done for your life. An appropriate scripture is John 9:25: "All I know is this — once I was blind and now I see!" It isn't as important to define Christ as it is to let Christ change our lives. The only way we can understand Christ is to encounter Him, to experience His power in our lives.

Help your students think of Christ as a friend, someone who will stay close to them and to whom they can always take their problems. Invite them to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus.

Outside Activities:

Undertake a detailed study of the life of Christ with your students.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

1

Circle any of the words listed below you think best describes the Holy Spirit:

friend
helper

healer
ghost

creator
teacher

stranger
counselor

miracles
deceiver

temptation
electric

2

TRUE or FALSE?

In the Christian faith, the Holy Spirit is not as important as Jesus or God.

____ TRUE

____ FALSE

3

Put a check next to the things listed below you think the Holy Spirit will do for you:

____ Give you power to live a successful
Christian life.

____ Help you get good grades.

____ Teach you and help you mature as a
Christian.

____ Give you "spiritual gifts".

____ Make you better than others.

____ Help you perform miracles.

____ Give you peace and comfort.

____ Help you make the right decisions.

____ Take away your problems.

____ Keep bad things from happening to you.

____ Be your "conscience".

____ Help you resist temptation.

____ Give you love for people you don't like.

____ Give you hope.

____ Make you feel good inside.

____ Other: _____

4

Read Galatians 5:22-26 and list the "fruits of the spirit" below:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____
- g. _____
- h. _____
- i. _____

Now, put a check mark by the one you need the most.

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

Topic: The Holy Spirit

Purpose of this Session:

For most junior high students, the concept of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. They can relate to God the Father and God the Son, but they aren't clear about God the Holy Spirit. This TalkSheet gives you the chance to discuss the role the Holy Spirit plays in the life of a Christian.

To Introduce the Topic:

The young people in your group may not understand the Holy Spirit living within them is a storehouse of power that can enable them to live the Christian life. To illustrate, empty a small can of shaving cream on a table top. This will show how much a small can really contains. The same is true for us living as Christians. We are overflowing with God inside us.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask the students to share their choices and explain why they were chosen. Don't put anyone down for choosing the "wrong" words. Ask for other suggestions they might use to describe the Holy Spirit.

Item #2: Ask for a show of hands on this True-False question. It will probably get some "true" responses, but again, don't ridicule anyone for not choosing the correct answer, which is "false". This is a good place to explain the doctrine of the Trinity. All three persons of the Trinity are equal because they are the same. They are all God. You may want to consult your church's statement of faith, or look up the following scriptures: John 14:15-31, Romans 8:1-7, I Corinthians 2:6-16.

Item #3: Have the students share their choices. Focus on those things specifically mentioned in the Bible. Here is a partial list: comforts, John 14:16-17; prays for us, Romans 8:26; teaches and guides, John 16:13-15; leads, Galatians 5:18; gives spiritual gifts, I Corinthians 12:7; convicts of sin, John 16:8-11.

Item #4: Ask volunteers to state why they chose one "Fruit of the Spirit" over all the others.

To Close the Session:

Reinforce the important role the Holy Spirit plays in empowering a person to live the Christian life. One way to illustrate this with an object lesson is to use a glove. It cannot do anything without your hand in it. But when you put your hand in the glove, it can do anything your brain wants your hand to do. It can pick up things, wave, scratch your head, and much more. In the same way, when the Holy Spirit is allowed to dwell within us and to work in our lives, we can do anything God wants us to do. Encourage your students to ask God to control their lives more completely.

Outside Activities:

Have your group decide upon three questions they have about the Holy Spirit. They should then try to find the answers to their questions by visiting your church library, browsing a Christian bookstore, talking with the pastor, interviewing the pastor of another church, asking for their parents' viewpoint, etc.

YOUTH GROUP

1

Complete this sentence: The best thing about this youth group is _____

2

Circle one of the words listed below that best describes this youth group:

struggling

loving

dead

fun

alive

great

boring

growing

average

3

If you could change one thing about this youth group to make it better, what would you change? _____

4

Your opinion, please! !=THAT'S RIGHT! ?=SOMETIMES X=NO WAY!

a. Our youth group has good leaders. _____

b. I feel like I'm an integral part of this youth group. _____

c. I attend youth group meetings mostly because my parents make me. _____

d. This youth group is important to me. _____

e. I feel close to God because of this youth group. _____

f. I have a lot of good friends in this youth group. _____

g. What we do in the youth group helps me. _____

h. I feel like I can invite my friends to this youth group. _____

5

Read **Ephesians 4:1-6**, then write a postcard to your youth group explaining what you have learned and how it can improve the youth group.

Dear Youth Group:

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

MY YOUTH GROUP

Topic: Evaluation of your youth group

Purpose of this Session:

Young people often take their youth group for granted. When it's going great, they enjoy it. When tough times come, they complain. This session gives you and your group the opportunity to assess the status of the group in a positive way. You can also use this TalkSheet with the leaders of the group as a planning tool.

To Introduce the Topic:

There are several approaches appropriate for talking about the health and condition of your youth group. Whichever you choose, keep the theme upbeat and affirmative. Don't let this turn into a "gripe session". Let the students talk about other groups they have visited or of which they have been members. This will illustrate that no group is perfect.

Another lead-in would be to allow the students to imitate adults leading a youth group function. This can be hilarious and you may learn a thing or two about yourself. Another way would be to have the adult leaders share what the group means to them.

The Discussion:

Item #1: This incomplete sentence begins things on a positive note. State that you hope to keep the discussion positive and upbeat. Interrupt the discussion if it becomes too negative or full of put-downs.

Item #2: Ask the students to share the words they circled. Ask if they can think of any additional words to describe the youth group.

Item #3: Allow the students to share their criticisms but in a constructive way. Remind them the purpose of this is to improve the group, not destroy it.

Item #4: Again, keep this exercise as positive as possible. It is imperative this session doesn't disintegrate into a gripe session. Ask volunteers to share their responses of the questions, one at a time, or to make comments.

Item #5: Have the students share ways they feel the group could improve. You may want to collect and peruse the TalkSheets to better find out how they really feel about the group. Tell them in advance not to put their names on the TalkSheets.

To Close the Session:

Close with a positive affirmation of each person in the group. Let them know they are important to the group and that their comments and concerns will be taken seriously. This would be a good time to invite them to take a more active part in the group activities and to get involved. Close with an appropriate prayer for the youth group and its leaders.

Outside Activities:

Have a planning session in which the students help brainstorm ideas for activities and programs for the coming year. A good resource to use for this is *The Youth Group Planning Calendar* by David Lynn (Youth Specialties, 1224 Greenfield Dr., El Cajon, CA 92021.)

What Do I Do On Sundays?



1

List three things you could do on Sunday instead of going to church.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2

What do you think is the main reason a person should go to church? _____

3

Do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the statements below?

- a. A person should attend church every week.
- b. You can be a Christian without attending church.
- c. The church's main concern seems to be taking in money.
- d. The church is old-fashioned and out-of-date.
- e. It doesn't matter which church you attend.
- f. Our church services are boring.
- g. I am an important part of our church.

AGREE DISAGREE

☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐

4

Circle the best answer:

According to Hebrews 10:24-25, attending church is:

- a. Optional
- b. Unnecessary
- c. The way to get to heaven.
- d. Habit-forming and encouraging.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, compares the church to:

- a. A body
- b. A loaf of bread
- c. A fish
- d. Heaven

Ephesians 4:16 says church members should:

- a. Mind their own business
- b. Grow in love
- c. Take communion once a week
- d. Be critical of each other

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

WHAT DO I DO ON SUNDAYS?

Topic: The church.

Purpose of this Session:

This TalkSheet was designed to create discussion about the church and to encourage young people to be involved in their church.

To Introduce the Topic:

Ask the students how many Sundays they have gone to church so far. Let them try to figure it out and award a prize to the person who comes up with the highest number. Have them estimate how many Sundays they will attend church in their entire lifetime.

Share your own earliest recollections of going to church, or read a few selections from the book *101 Things to Do During a Dull Sermon* by Dan Pegoda and Tim Sims (Youth Specialties), or give the students a brief "tour" of the sanctuary (if you are meeting in the church). Use your own creativity as you try to get them to think about the church.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Encourage the students to share the activities they chose to replace church. Talk about the importance or unimportance of each in relation to church attendance. In all probability, many of your junior high students attend church because they are forced to. Ask them, "If you were not forced to go to church, do you think you would still go?"

Item #2: Have the students read all the reasons people should go to church and list them on the blackboard. Have them choose the one they think is the most important. Point out there are many good reasons to attend church.

Item #3: Ask the students to vote on each of these statements according to their answer on the TalkSheet. If everyone is in accord on a particular one, go to the next. If there is a lot of disagreement, let them defend their points of view. Allow them the freedom to express their opinions without your being judgmental. Share your point of view in the conclusion. You might wish to focus on the last statement, because many junior high students feel unnecessary and unimportant to the church. Suggest ways for them to become more involved.

Item #4: Have the students share their answers. Look up the verses and find out if they are correct.

To Close the Session:

As you close this session, you might wish to emphasize the following, as well as other points of your choice:

1. The church is not a building or a service we attend. It is the people of God. When we become a Christian, we become part of the church, the body of Christ.
2. The purpose of the church is not to entertain us nor to provide fun activities. We come to church to learn about God, to grow in faith, and to worship Him. This requires some effort and the desire to do these things.
3. Young people are not the "church of tomorrow". They are an important part of the church of today. Encourage them to get involved in the life of the church. Brainstorm ways they can become more involved.

Outside Activities:

1. Give your group a quiz about the church requiring them to get the answers from other members of the congregation. Sample questions:
 - a. Name a missionary sponsored by our church, and the country where he or she serves.
 - b. What is our pastor's middle name?
 - c. What is the name of our church's newsletter?
 - d. What year was our church founded?

BE A LIFESAVER

1. Who would you most likely risk your life to save?

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| baby | sibling |
| old person | pet |
| criminal | friend |
| parent | stranger |



2. Do you think this statement is **true** or **false**? Why or why not?

People who need spiritual help should be given urgent attention, like people who need physical help.

3. Check out **Proverbs 24:11-12** and answer the following questions.

Who is this passage directed to?

Who is it talking about?

What is their problem?

What should people do about it?

How might people try to avoid their responsibility?

How could their actions be judged?

4. How might a person be led to **spiritual death**?

5. Suppose you wanted rescue some friends from dying spiritually. List—in order of effectiveness—which ways would be the best to conduct the rescue, with 1 being the **most effective**.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ E-mail them some info about Christ | ☐ Preach a sermon to them |
| ☐ Bring them to a church service | ☐ Tell them what Christ means to you |
| ☐ Give them a Bible | ☐ Pray for them |
| ☐ Send the pastor over to talk to them | ☐ Loan them a Christian CD |
| ☐ Act all spiritual around them | ☐ Bring them to youth group |
| ☐ Give them a gospel booklet or tract | ☐ Wear a Christian tee shirt |

6. What are some **excuses** that teenagers come up with for not trying to rescue their friends from a spiritual death?

BE A LIFESAVER

[sharing Christ—Proverbs 24]

THIS WEEK

The Great Commission is clearly stated—to tell others the good news of Jesus Christ, regardless of age. Young teens rub shoulders daily with those who are being led away to spiritual death by false ideas from a secular world. Christians are called to the rescue—but the responsibility to share Christ with friends is scary to teenagers. This TalkSheet session is designed to let students know that there is an effective and easy way to share what Jesus Christ means to them personally, in their own words and their own ways.

OPENER

Present this scenario (or one like it) to your kids—your family has decided to host a foreign exchange student from India for the coming school year. This person is an excellent student, which has qualified him or her to study in the United States. Upon his or her arrival, you discover that he or she is a devout Hindu. After months of hanging out with you, your friends, and your family, he or she asks you to explain your religion and why you love this God person so much. What would your kids say to this person? How would they share their Christian faith with these beings who have never heard one word about Jesus Christ before? What would be the hardest or easiest part about sharing their faith? How does this compare with sharing your faith with friends at school or others that you meet? Which situation would be easier? Why or why not?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Who would your kids be the most likely risk their lives for? Take a poll of the group and ask for some volunteers to share the reasons for their answers. Point out that most people would risk a lot to save one of their friends. Why?
2. How did your kids answer this question? How are spiritual needs as important as physical needs? Help your group define what spiritual needs are—that students' very souls are in jeopardy without God.
3. Be prepared for some strong reactions to this passage. It will be hard for some to face their responsibilities. Some may have a hard time facing up to the reality of hell. Spend some time talking about this. But don't use hell as a threat—a relationship with God is more than that, it's a personal friendship with someone who loves them.
4. Help your group understand how the everyday, unhealthy activities that any of people can fall into—obsession with money, sexual temptation,

and so on—can actually lead to a slow spiritual death. How do these sins pull people further away from God?

5. Discuss which method of telling others about Christ is the most effective. Let your young people brainstorm on this and ask your students what would have the most effect on them. Point out that everyone is different—some people feel more comfortable sharing than others. Help them to find a way that works for them.
6. What are some excuses teenagers give? You may want to make a list of the excuses on a poster board or whiteboard. What's the most common excuse? Point out that they don't have to be theological experts—they just have to share what God has done for them, in their own words.

THE CLOSE

Close by reading Ephesians 2:1-5 and point out that spiritual death is the result of not knowing Christ personally. Some of your kids may be on a journey toward spiritual death. You may want to present the message of salvation to your kids and the group some time to pray either with the group or on their own. Be careful not to pressure or scare your kids into making a commitment that they might not be ready for. Some of them may have a lot more answers about salvation and Christ. Communicate that you're available to talk and answer questions. Finally, challenge them to ask God for the strength and words to share with others. God speaks through his spirit. He'll give them the words if they let God use them for sharing his love to others.

MORE

- You may want to do some kind of reach-out with your kids during the next week or so. Challenge your group members to think of at least one person that they will attempt to share Christ with in some way—and to follow up on that. Brainstorm with your group how they can be a witness to others and then do it. Keep track of what has happened since this discussion and talk about any challenges that they may have faced.
- Give your group the tools that they need to share the gospel—the essential verses they can use as ammo when presenting the love of God to others. Spend some time reading these verses with your group and ask them to put the verses in their own words. Check out the Romans Road to Salvation—Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8-9, and Romans 10:9-13—or print it out for your group at <http://hmiministries.org/romans.htm> or <http://www.pfbaptistpress.org/29.htm>.

HUNGER HURTS

1

What is your favorite food? _____

2

Complete the sentences below by checking the ending that is appropriate for you:

I eat...

- _____ one meal a day
- _____ two meals a day
- _____ three meals a day
- _____ more than three meals a day
- _____ three meals a day, plus snacks
- _____ whenever I feel hungry

I eat...

- _____ less than the average person my age
- _____ more than the average person my age
- _____ about the same as the average person my age

I eat...

- _____ only what I know is good for me
- _____ anything that tastes good
- _____ mostly junk food
- _____ whatever my family eats

When I am hungry...

- _____ I wait until the next meal
- _____ I have a snack
- _____ I go crazy!

3

Do you AGREE or DISAGREE?

- a. There are no hungry people in America.
- b. It is their own fault if some people are hungry.
- c. It is God's will for some people of the world to be hungry.
- d. One should not eat just for pleasure.
- e. It is a sin to overeat.
- f. There is nothing I can do to help the hungry people of the world.

AGREE DISAGREE

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |

4

Match the scriptures with the correct statements:

Luke 16:19-26

poor always around

Acts 11:28-30

rich man and Lazarus

John 12:8

Christians help others

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

reward for helping poor

Matthew 25:34-36

God's command to help

HUNGER HURTS

Topic: World Hunger

Purpose of this Session:

For most young people, world hunger seems remote and unreal. They sometimes hear about it, or see pictures of starving people, but they don't really identify with the victims of world hunger, who could be people like themselves who enjoy hamburgers and pizza. This TalkSheet was designed to help our young people think about their own eating habits in light of world hunger and to see how their faith affects their lifestyle decisions.

To Introduce the Topic:

An effective way to get the group's attention for this discussion is to bring a delicious selection of food to the meeting and eat it in front of them. While you are eating, make some announcements, or talk about something, but keep eating and say, "I didn't have time to eat before the meeting, and I hope you don't mind my eating in front of you. . ." If the food you are eating is really appealing (such as a nice, hot pizza), they will probably go nuts watching you eat. You might be able to have a pizza delivered just as the meeting begins.

Debrief the experience by asking how they felt while watching you eat, smelling the food, etc. Introduce the topic "Hunger Hurts" and distribute the TalkSheets.

There are also many excellent films, posters and slide presentations available free or at a very low cost from organizations such as World Vision or Compassion International which you could order.

The Discussion:

Item #1: This forces the students to think about the kinds of foods they enjoy eating the most. Without being judgmental or trying to make them feel guilty, point out the simple truth that in many countries, young people have no choice about what they eat. Most have never tasted the wonderful variety of foods available to us.

Item #2: Junior high students are a hungry bunch. Their bodies are in a state of constant growth and need plenty of nourishment for healthy development. Let them share their responses with the group. Point out how important food is to them as well as to young people around the world.

Item #3: Go over each statement. Item "b" is one to study carefully because many adults as well as young people believe the hungry and the poor are to blame for their condition. Be sensitive to the ones in your group who are overweight when looking at "d" and "e". Their self-esteem is already suffering. Some may bring up dieting at this point. Talk about dieting because many young people of today have problems in that area. Far too much emphasis has been put upon dieting and being thin. Anorexia nervosa is a growing problem among teens. Try to generate specific responses to "f". Help them see they can be involved in helping feed the hungry. End this discussion by agreeing upon one specific thing the group can do to help fight world hunger.

Item #4: Ask the students to read the passages and match them up correctly. Discuss the scriptures one at a time and ask them to try to apply their messages to their own lives.

To Close the Session:

Help the students understand the food they have to eat — and take for granted — is a gift from God. We should always thank God for our food and pray others around the world also have enough to eat.

Let them know they can actually make a difference. Just because they cannot go to Ethiopia doesn't mean they cannot help provide food for the starving there. Tell the story of the "Feeding of the 5000" in which a small boy gave his lunch to Jesus and Jesus used his gift to feed a multitude. In the same way, we can give a small amount to Jesus, through organizations Jesus is using to feed the hungry, and our gift will be multiplied.

Instigate a group fund raising activity, such as a Saturday afternoon car wash at a shopping center, for a Christian relief agency. End the session with a prayer for the hungry people of the world.

Outside Activities:

Follow through on the hunger project your group decides to undertake. For more good ideas, consult the book *Ideas for Social Action* by Anthony Campolo (Youth Specialties/Zondervan, 1983).

ONE IS A LONELY NUMBER



1

Circle any of the following words that best describe LONELINESS to you.

depression rejection hurt boredom time with God
happy peaceful sadness quiet frightened fun

2

TRUE or FALSE?

- _____ a. Being alone is the same as being lonely.
_____ b. Being bored is the same as being lonely.

3

Do you **AGREE** or **DISAGREE** with the statements below?

- | | AGREE | DISAGREE |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| a. Everyone is lonely at times. | _____ | _____ |
| b. If you are with other people, you won't be lonely. | _____ | _____ |
| c. If you feel lonely, it's your own fault. | _____ | _____ |
| d. Jesus felt lonely. | _____ | _____ |

4

Who are the loneliest people in the world? (Rank the following from "1" — loneliest — to "6" — least lonely.)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| _____ widows and widowers | _____ young people |
| _____ famous people | _____ old people |
| _____ divorced people | _____ Christians |

5

Read I Kings 19:9-18, then see if you can write a comforting postcard to Elijah.

Dear Elijah,





Date Used: _____

Group: _____

ONE'S A LONELY NUMBER

Topic: Loneliness

Purpose of this Session:

Adults tell young people the teen years are the best years of their lives. Adults forget these years can be very lonely in the midst of the carefree fun. This TalkSheet offers your group the chance to talk about their lonely feelings, the causes and cures of loneliness and how God can help.

To Introduce the Session:

Tell the students they are going to make up a progressive story about loneliness. Begin the story by saying, "Skip was getting ready to go to school, when. . ." then let a student proceed with the plot, continuing around the group. The only rules are the story should be kept clean and be about loneliness. You will end up with a lonely story and a good lead-in to the discussion.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Ask the students to share and explain their choices. Ask if any other words came to mind and make a master list of all the words thought of.

Item #2: Young people often assume if they are bored or alone, then they are lonely. They need to understand they don't always have to be entertained or be with a crowd. In fact, they can be entertained or with their friends and still feel lonely.

Item #3: Focus on "b" and talk about being alone and being lonely. A person can be alone and not be lonely. Also focus on the fact that Christ felt lonely. (See Matthew 13:53-57, Luke 4:24-30, Mark 14:22, 27, 31, 50, Mark 15:1-34.) In today's world, young people believe they must be entertained constantly. They suffer from stimulus overload and don't know how to deal with periods of being quiet or being alone. Help them understand they need times of "aleness" and that these "lonely" times are not bad. They can be very healthy. Learning to be content when alone is one of the first signs of real maturity.

Item #4: Have the students share their choices and explain why they ranked them in the order they chose. Ask how loneliness could be remedied for each type of person.

Item #5: Help the students understand Elijah's situation. After they have had some time to write their postcards, have them read them aloud. Ask if they have ever felt like Elijah. Brainstorm practical and concrete solutions to loneliness. Some possible solutions are prayer, not comparing oneself to others, enjoying solitude, reading a psalm, talking with parents, and reaching out to help others.

To Close the Session:

Help the students understand when they are lonely, Christ is with them. They may feel lonely, but they are never alone. Encourage them to remember to take advantage of their lonely times by taking time for prayer.

Emphasize that the main reason we experience a feeling such as loneliness is our gregariousness. God created us to have good and close relationships with other people. We were created to live in families and in community with others. That's why it's important to protect our relationships and to do whatever we can to improve them. Close by using a community-building activity. Hundreds of them can be found in the *IDEAS* series published by Youth Specialties.

Outside Activities:

Have the students schedule an hour of their time in a "lonely place", away from everyone, without radio, television or any other distraction. Have them concentrate on being alone with themselves, just sitting and thinking or praying. Have them share their thoughts about the experience afterward.

OUT ON THE STREET



1. What do you think makes a person poor?
2. If you wanted to find a really poor person, where would you look?
3. If a person approached you on the street asking for money to buy food, what would you do?
 - ☐ Run
 - ☐ Ignore the person
 - ☐ Give the person money
 - ☐ Tell the person to get a job
 - ☐ Say you're broke and hungry, too
 - ☐ Buy some food for the person, but don't give any money
 - ☐ Give money if the person looked skinny and malnourished
 - ☐ Point the person to an shelter that feeds people
4. Check out **Proverbs 19:17** and **Matthew 25:34-40**. According to these passages, what are you doing when you help the poor?
5. How do you think people would change if they knew that helping poor people was really helping God himself?

How would your actions change?

OUT ON THE STREET [helping the poor—Proverbs 19]

THIS WEEK

Most people, including teenagers, live in an insulated world. They rarely starve and most have shelter. They seldom give a thought to those who—through no fault of their own—must scrape together even the basic necessities of life, like warmth and a simple meal.

This TalkSheet session is designed to heighten your students' awareness of the responsibility that Christians have to help those who suffer in poverty. The Bible gives a powerful message about God's identification with those in need. Kids will learn that to bless the poor is to bless God.

OPENER

Start out by asking each of your students to count the money in their pocket, purse, or wallet. Divide your group into the paupers (those who have no money at all), the poor (those with a dollar or less), the middle class (those with five dollars or less), and the rich (those with more than five dollars). Then, ask the paupers to sit on the floor in the back of the class or group. Next give the poor kids one chair to fight over and give the middle class one chair each. Finally, give all the extra chairs to the rich. You can do the same thing with any other items you might have, such as a box of cookies or sodas.

How does this activity make your group feel about the poor? What could the rich in the class have done with their abundance? What would happen if this were a real-life situation? How would your kids be living then?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. What do your kids think it means to be poor? Does it depend on what country they live in? What part of town? Make a list of their ideas on a poster board or whiteboard. Do any of your kids actually know a poor person? If so, how?
2. Your kids might not know anyone who is poor. Where might your kids find those who are poor? What causes some people to be poor? And are these people considered lazy sometimes? Why or why not?
3. What would your kids do in this situation? What is the easiest thing to do? How about the hardest? What is difficult about trying to decide if the need is real or a scam? Allow for some disagreement on this point.
4. These passages point out a surprising idea in the Bible—kindness to the poor is seen as kindness to God himself. Do your kids think Jesus was poor? Why or why not? You may want to point out

that he had no home, traveled and stayed with others, was fed by others, and hung out with those who were poor, too.

5. Ask the group to discuss how people might change if they seriously thought that it was God who they were taking care of or serving. What actions would your group like to take to help those in need?

THE CLOSE

How has your groups' perception and understanding of the poor changed? Point out that God has given people with a lot to share with those in need. How can your kids start to share what they have?

Challenge your students to commit to participate in a program that would help those who are suffering from the effects of poverty. For more information check out World Vision (www.wvi.org) for information on their programs and resources for reaching out to those in need.

MORE

- Challenge your kids to participate in a 24-hour world hunger fast. You can do this as a group in a number of ways. Some groups gather pledges from people and use the fast as a fundraiser. Other groups simply start the fast with a prayer time, fast for 24 hours, and then debrief with a healthy meal at the end. Make sure you do this at a good time of the year when it's healthy for your kids to participate (you don't want parents calling to complain that their child can't play soccer because he hasn't eaten anything!) So, be sure to have parental support and involvement, too.
- Consider hosting a fundraiser or clothes drive for an agency in your area or for your church missionaries. Encourage your kids to collect clothes at their schools or host a theme or creative dinner at your church to raise money and collect clothes.

SERVING THE SLUMS



1. Why do you think some people are homeless?
Check two reasons from the list below.

- ☐ They're victims of society.
- ☐ They're lazy.
- ☐ They're paying the price for not working hard in school.
- ☐ They're addicts or alcoholics.
- ☐ They're mentally unstable.
- ☐ They're unlucky.
- ☐ They're being punished for doing something wrong.
- ☐ They made a series of bad choices.
- ☐ They're victims of unfortunate circumstances.
- ☐ They're born that way.

2. If you were approached by a stranger who wanted a handout (like money or food), what would you do?

If you found yourself on the street without food or money, would you beg from people? Why or why not?

3. Check out **Psalm 82**—below are some phrases from verses 2-4. For each phrase, write down one thing that you could do to live out these verses.

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless

Maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed

Rescue the weak and needy

Deliver weak and needy from the hand of the wicked

4. When you see a person who is weak, needy, defenseless, or hurting in some way, what do you most often do?

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ Watch | ☐ Say nothing | ☐ Walk away | ☐ Comfort them |
| ☐ Feel bad | ☐ Defend | ☐ Pray | ☐ Laugh |
| ☐ Say something | ☐ Join in | ☐ Tell someone | ☐ Feel nothing |

SERVING THE SLUMS [helping others—Psalm 82]

THIS WEEK

There are so many needy people—poor or homeless people in every suburb, city, and country around the world. Here are people who feel rejected. Here are people crying out for a mom or dad to love them—the oddballs, misfits, and others who don't fit with their peers. This TalkSheet will help your group recognize that they have an obligation to help those whom others would cast away.

OPENER

You may want to have someone unknown to the group impersonate a homeless person. This person should play and dress the part—and be able to address the issues of homelessness and answer difficult questions your kids might have. Some of these may include why they can't get a job or what made them homeless.

For a different twist, you could also ask the manager or someone from a homeless shelter to come in and talk about the problem with the group. Because they have first hand experience, they may be able to share stories about and discuss the problems of a homeless family—food, shelter, medical care, spiritual problems, life-threatening problems, and so on.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Why do your kids think people become homeless? Ask the group to explain the reasons they chose. Give your kids a chance to argue their opinions with each other. What do your kids think is the most common reason that people become homeless?
2. What would your kids do in these situations? What do they think people most often do when someone approaches them for money or food? Why? Ask your group how they would get food and shelter if they found themselves in need.
3. Psalm 82 clearly states the duty of people to help the poor, helpless, and needy. Ask the group to explain their modern examples. How can your kids live out these verses today? You may want to make a list of their ideas on a whiteboard or poster board. Point out that people who are well fed and housed can also be weak, oppressed, or needy (for example, a kid without friends is socially needy). Is this the same as being homeless or hungry? Why or why not? How do your kids think Jesus would respond to both situations?
4. What is the most common reaction that your kids have? Why? Be sure not to make your kids feel guilty for the reactions—most teenagers aren't sure how to react or how to help these people.

THE CLOSE

Teenagers can't save the world, but they can start to think differently about those in need. Point out that homelessness and hurt aren't just problems on the street or in the slums—many kids at their school are crying out for friendship, encouragement, and acceptance. Challenge your group to think about how they can show the love of Christ to others around them. Communicate to your group that it's easy for people to stay comfortable and safe in their own group of friends. What would happen if they stepped out and helped someone outside of their comfort zone?

MORE

- Teenagers sometimes feel threatened when they step out of their comfort zones. Take a look with your group and the life of Jesus. He was the ultimate servant—never in a comfort zone, and always on a mission to help those in need. Check out some stories with your kids about the life of Jesus. You may want to split your group up into smaller groups and have them look for examples of how Jesus reached out to others. There are several stories in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Point out that Jesus didn't worry about fitting in the crowd or having the right friends—he hung out with sinners, lepers, and even a prostitute! He was a true rebel, in the sense that he dared to make a difference in the lives of others—and he was killed for it. How can your kids live like Jesus in their everyday lives? Are they willing to step out and help others in the name of Jesus?
- Try role-playing a homeless situation with your kids—give each of them a specific problem, such as losing their job, getting divorced, being a single parent, suffering from AIDS, being abused at home, hooked on cocaine, being forced into prostitution, and so on. How would they answer those who asked “what is wrong with you”? How would these situations affect their lives? You may want to have other kids question them and see what it's like for the homeless person to explain where they are and why.

EVEN MY ENEMY?

1. Who is someone that you would consider an enemy? Put that person's initials here—
2. Put an arrow by the top **three** ways that you think people typically handle their enemies.

Put them down whenever possible. Help them out if they are in need. Physically hurt the person. Think about ways to hurt them. Cuss the person out. Talk to them on the phone. Try to get them into trouble. Threaten their friends. Sabotage their locker.	Send them anonymous, harsh e-mails. Pull a gun on them. Spread rumors about the person. Dislike their friends and family, too. Look for ways to bless them. Talk to them kindly. Ignore the person. Pray for them. Hope they die a slow and painful death.
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3. Check out **Proverbs 25:21-22**; **Matthew 5:43-48**; and **Romans 12:14**. What specific instructions do these passages give for how to treat an enemy?
4. Write down **three** things that your enemies might do or say if you treated them like Christ commanded.
5. If treating their enemies the way Jesus commanded is the goal for Christians, how successful are you in reaching that goal? Mark your position on the line below.



◆ ◆

Failing miserably Always like Jesus

EVEN MY ENEMY? [loving your enemies— Proverbs 25]

THIS WEEK

Through movies, TV shows, and violence in society, junior highers and middle schoolers have learned to deal with enemies in a manner far different than that required by Jesus. Christ's teaching is radically different from what your kids may think—in fact, they may pull back in surprise at this session. Your kids may struggle with the plan God lays out for dealing with enemies and maybe can't imagine how it would help them. This TalkSheet session provides a great opportunity to challenge students to see if they really trust God enough to follow his commands.

OPENER

Draw up a list of 20 feuding or competing pairs that your kids would know, both real and fictional such as—

- The Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote
- Microsoft and Apple
- Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker
- Coke and Pepsi
- McDonalds and Burger King
- NBC and ABC

(Use your brains to come up with some more your kids will know!) Then use this list to hold a fun contest with your kids.

Pass out pieces of paper to each of your kids with one-half of the adversary pairs listed. Their task is to find the second half of the correct adversary. Or if your group isn't big enough for that, have your kids write down who they think the other adversary is. You may want to give small prizes to those who get the most correct pairs.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. As you discuss your kids' enemies, be sure not to ask for names. Instead, ask them how the person became their enemy. What did the person say or do to them? How have your kids responded to their enemies—in good or bad ways?
2. How do people typically handle their enemies? How do people usually treat those who they think of as enemies? You may want to ask which of the ways listed seem crazy and why. How does society in general treat their enemies?
3. What does the Bible say about dealing with an enemy? You may want to make a list of their ideas on a poster board or whiteboard. Discuss how this conflicts with the way people usually treat those they dislike. Do your kids think it'd be easy to follow these commands? Why or why not?
4. How would your kids' enemies respond if they were treated as Christ instructed? Have a few

willing students share their answers. Then ask them this—how would you react if your enemy treated you as Christ commanded?

5. Where do your kids rank on this scale? If you don't want to ask for specific rankings, ask how many of them rank more toward the right (or left). Why is loving your enemies hard for most people to do? Challenge your kids to start treating their enemies as Christ commanded. Where would your kids like to rank themselves in a few months? A year? Five years?

THE CLOSE

Explain to your group that it's difficult—but not impossible—to treat enemies with love and kindness. Point out that this process is done one step at a time, starting with something simple such as refusing to get back at a person or spread gossip. Encourage your group members to ask God for help in dealing with their enemies and to ask him for the strength to love the enemy back. Challenge them to pray for one enemy during the week and to see what happens—does the relationship improve? Why or why not? What is God teaching them about love, patience, and perseverance?

MORE

- Ask your students to rewrite Matthew 5:43-48 by substituting the name of a person who they would consider their enemy for the word enemy. What does this verse say to them? Is this verse an encouragement to them or not? How do these verses relate with being a Christian?
- How did some biblical characters handle their enemies? You may want to take a look at some of these stories and examples. Check out the relationship between Jesus and Satan (Matthew 4:1-10), Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27:41), Esther and Mordecai (Esther 9), David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-54), or Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37). How did God work in these relationships and what happened? Note how God used the bad for the good—the same thing he can do with enemies today.

Jesus GIVEaway



1

TRUE or FALSE: Most of my friends are not interested in hearing about Jesus Christ.

_____ **TRUE** _____ **FALSE**

2

If you shared Christ with your friends at school, what do you think they would do?

_____ laugh _____ become Christians
_____ get mad _____ other: _____
_____ nothing _____

3

Everybody at school knew Jennifer believed in Jesus and went to church regularly. Some kids made fun of her and called her a "Jesus Freak". If your friends made fun of Jennifer while you were with them, what would you do?

_____ keep quiet _____ tell your friends you are a Christian, too
_____ join in _____ get new friends
_____ tell them to stop _____ other: _____

4

Choose two good ways from the following list to share Christ with your friends:

_____ quoting Bible verses	_____ praying for your friends
_____ handing out gospel tracts	_____ telling your friends they need Jesus
_____ carrying a Bible to school	_____ bringing a friend to a youth group activity
_____ asking a friend to come to church	_____ wearing a Christian T-shirt
_____ being honest and trustworthy	_____ standing up in class and preaching the Gospel

5

Try to put the following sayings of Jesus in their correct order:

Making disciples	of the world (Matthew 5:14-16)
You are the light	of men (Mark 1:17)
I will make you fishers	of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20)
You will be my witnesses	to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

JESUS GIVEAWAY

Topic: Witnessing

Purpose of this Session:

Most adults have a tough time sharing their faith in Christ so it is no surprise that young people have the same difficulty. This TalkSheet was designed to give you and your group the opportunity to talk about and to practice sharing Christian faith.

To Introduce the Topic:

Pretend aliens from outer space have landed on Earth. They speak English. Divide the group into teams and have each prepare a short speech which one of the team will read to the aliens. The speech should share Christ with the aliens, who have never heard anything about Jesus before. This could also be a role-play, with the alien acting very dumb.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Have the students share and explain their answers. List all the reasons "why not" and all the reasons "why" on a chalkboard or newsprint.

Item #2: After sharing the answers, ask if the students have ever actually tried to share their faith with their friends. If so, what happened? If not, why not?

Item #3: This should make a good role-play subject. Have a few of the students put themselves into this situation and act out their idea of the scenario.

Item #4: Debate the pros and cons of each of the methods listed.

Item #5: Read the verses to find out if the group matched them up correctly. These scriptures emphasize that Christ wants us to tell others about Him.

To Close the Session:

Try to avoid lading guilt with this session. With their self-esteem on the line, the teenagers will be extremely reluctant to do or say anything that might bring them embarrassment or rejection. Don't make witnessing sound like penance for being a Christian. Help them think of creative ways they can be witnesses for Christ in non-threatening ways. Assure them they do not have to know a lot about the Bible in order to share Christ with others. Nor do they have to be good conversationalists. We can share Christ in a lot of non-verbal ways — by living for Christ in front of our friends.

Point out sharing Christ with others is a great privilege as well as a great responsibility. It's giving someone you really care about some really good news.

Outside Activities:

Have the students choose one friend with whom they will share Christ during the next week. They could also choose one other youth group member to pray for as that person shares Christ with a friend.

KIDS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN



1

List five things you consider fun to do:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Now, put an "X" by those you have done recently.

2

Your opinion, please!

- a. It is fun being a Christian.
- b. My life is boring.
- c. Christians have a different kind of fun than non-Christians do.
- d. God doesn't want us to have too much fun.
- e. When I'm having fun, I sometimes do things I'm sorry for, later.
- f. I would rather have fun with a few friends than in a large crowd.

YES NO

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |
| ☐ | ☐ |

3

I could have more fun if I changed places with _____

4

Read the following scripture and write what you think each has to say about having fun:

Deuteronomy 12:7 _____

Ecclesiastes 11:9 _____

Mark 8:36 _____

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

KIDS JUST WANT TO HAVE FUN

Topic: Fun

Purpose of this Session:

Many young people don't know how to have fun. They are growing up so fast they have forgotten how to play. If someone acts zany, crazy or uninhibited in a healthy way, they think he or she is stoned or drunk. They need to learn how to have fun creatively and safely. This TalkSheet will help you talk about having fun.

To Introduce the Topic:

Have some fun! Involve the parents in this by having them bring a variety of fun food. Let the students bring their favorite Christian albums and videos. Have several lead the group in their favorite games.

The Discussion:

Item #1: Make a master list of the things your group considers "fun". The list can include both positive and negative items. Keep the list visible on a chalkboard or newsprint to refer to, later.

Ask the students to share which ones they placed an "X" beside, indicating they have done those recently. In what ways were those activities fun? Which activities have they never done? Why not?

Item #2: Take these statements one at a time and ask for a show of hands on each one. Ask the reasons for each one. Find out why, or why not, Christians have fun or why they think their life is boring, or why they think God is against fun. Focus on the need for many young people to have constant excitement in their lives. Young people who are always living on the edge are headed for trouble. Partying has become a major sport for many. Wholesome fun is healthy. Misguided fun can be dangerous.

Item #3: Ask why they chose the person named on this item. What is it about the person that makes them think they would have more fun if they were that person? Could they ever become like that person?

Item #4: You might wish to divide the students into smaller groups to decide what each of these scriptures has to say about fun.

To Close the Session:

The following are key points to emphasize:

(1) God does want us to have fun. God is not a "cosmic killjoy" — a corrective parent — sitting up in heaven with a frown on his face. He wants us to enjoy life at its fullest. He is the creator of life and therefore, He knows what is best for us and how we can get the most out of life. Read Phillipians 4:4. Paul encourages us to "rejoice".

(2) Help the students realize it is possible to "party" without getting into trouble. They will probably encounter many situations, especially as they grow older, when they will be confronted with making decisions about drugs and alcohol. Too many young people believe "fun" is synonymous with "getting wasted". Losing control of one's faculties is not fun. Risking irreversible brain damage is not "fun". Encourage your students to pursue wholesome fun activities without doing anything they will regret, later.

Outside Activities:

Plan a fun activity with your junior high students that is really wild and different. Brainstorm ideas with them and your youth leaders, or check out some of the great ideas in the *Ideas* books, published by Youth Specialties, or *Creative Socials and Special Events* by Wayne Rice and Mike Yaconelli (Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 1986)