

FAMILY MATTERS

1. Describe one of your favorite times you spent with your family.

2. Do you agree with this statement?

No one will influence you more than your family.

Why do you think this?

3. What do you think? Read the statements and answer **Y (yes)** or **N (no)**.

- ___ Our society is more concerned about the individual than the family.
- ___ Family life is as good as it has ever been.
- ___ Teenagers should have no obligations to their families.
- ___ Families experience more problems today than in the past.
- ___ Families should ask for outside help when they are having problems.



4. Check the following statement that best describes how you feel.

- There's a good reason why my family is together as a family.
- There are times when I wonder why my family is together as a family.
- There's absolutely no reason for my family to be together as a family.

5. Think through the following questions and answer them below.

How are you getting as much from your family life as you can?

How are you giving as much to your family life as you can?

6. Decide from reading these verses which of the following families is closest to yours.

- 1 Samuel 2:12
- 1 Kings 15:1-3
- 2 Kings 15:1-4
- Luke 15:11-16
- 2 Timothy 1:5

THIS WEEK

The structure of the family has undergone enormous changes in recent years. Today there are different types of families within society—traditional families, divorced families, single-parent families, or foster families. This TalkSheet will let you talk with your kids about their families and the role of family in their lives.

Pay close attention to your group during this discussion. Don't assume that all your kids live in a traditional two-parent home! Be extra sensitive to those kids who may be feeling the hurt and confusion of divorce and family separation.

OPENER

The word *family* is used several times throughout the Bible to describe human families, the spiritual family, and as an analogy for the family in heaven. You may want to start by having small groups of your kids find verses that talk about a family or deal with a family. Nearly every biblical character in the Old Testament came from a family. Take some time to study a few of these Bible characters and families (and others that your group finds)—Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Ruth, Samson, and so on. What was unique about each of these family situations? What struggles or problems did the families have? How does this relate to family problems today? What does God teach about the family in the Bible? What other thoughts on families does your group have from reading these verses?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. When asking your young people to share their memories, be sensitive to families who are split or divorced, but keep in mind that these families still share good times, too.
2. Do your kids agree? Why or why not? Some kids won't like to admit that their families have influenced them at all. Others are worried about the negative influence their dysfunctional families have had on them. Ask the young people to identify how their families have influenced them, positively and negatively.
3. Have the students share their thoughts and debate the issues that come out of this discussion. What responsibilities will your kids have to their families as they grow older and establish their own particular identities?
4. This activity focuses your young people on the mission of their families. If they don't feel they are getting what they need out of their families, where will they turn? Explain that some kids turn

to gang involvement, others to a dysfunctional peer group or an unhealthy male or female relationship. In addition to their families, where else can young people get the love and support they need?

5. This continues where question 4 left off. Ask the young people to share how they are getting and giving what they need from their families.
6. Each of these passages describes various levels of family devotion to God. How can your kids involve God in their families? How about in their future families?

THE CLOSE

Close by positively affirming the need for family, but be sensitive to those kids in your group with broken families. Point out that every family is different, because each person is different. But no matter what your kids' situations are, you can play a vital role in supporting family life by what you say. You may want to form a circle and pray for each other's families. And encourage any of them who may want to talk about their families with you to do so. Some of your kids might need some individual encouragement and insight. Encourage them to find an adult who they are comfortable with to talk to.

MORE

- You may want to challenge your kids to ask questions of some of their family members. They may find out stuff about their family that they never know before! Below are some questions to use as a guide.
 - Who were you named after?
 - Did you have a nickname?
 - What games did you play growing up?
 - What did your father do for his career?
 - Did your mother work?
 - What was your dad like?
 - What did your grandmother look like?
- You may want to talk about family situations that aren't healthy. Some of your kids may be in—or have friends who are in—unhealthy, abusive family situations. If you sense this among your group members, consider talking about this with your group. For more information, check out the National Exchange Club Foundation (www.preventchildabuse.com), or the American Humane Association (www.americanhumane.org), the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (www.rainn.org), The Family Violence Prevention Fund (www.fvvpf.org), or Christians In Recovery (www.christians-in-recovery.com).