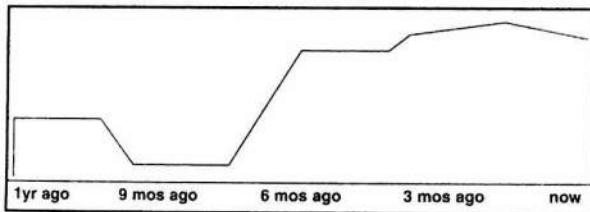


THIS WEEK

Christian growth is the process of becoming like Jesus. What a big topic for discussion! Teenagers don't usually discuss this on a day-to-day basis. This TalkSheet discussion can powerfully motivate and encourage Christian growth. Everyone in your group can be a resource to help everyone else grow in Christ.

OPENER

Ask your teens to chart their individual spiritual growth over the past year. The horizontal line should be labeled with the following—one year ago, nine months ago, six months ago, three months ago, and now. Beginning with one year ago, have the kids draw lines representing their spiritual progress. Significant points, high or low, should be indicated by a cross and a comment. For example, a week at camp may be marked with a cross and a comment about its significance. Hanging around with a negative friend may drop the line below the baseline. When they are done, have the kids share their spiritual progress with the group. For example, a student's chart may look like this:



THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Let the kids hypothesize what their lives might be like without Christ. Some kids will think it would be improved, others will see no difference. Allow all the kids to share without being put down. This activity will let you know where your kids are really at. You can then facilitate the discussion more productively.
2. Let your kids share and debate what's been helpful in their Christian life and what hasn't. Have some of these been more effective than others? Why or why not? Why does the church have different activities for different people?
3. Ask kids to resist telling the group what they think the group wants to hear. Encourage honesty and role-model support as the students examine their own lives. Which ones do your kids pick as them? Which ones don't they?

4. A Christian growth role model can be helpful to young and old alike. If people see that others are growing more like Christ, they realize that they can too. Ask volunteers to share why their chosen people are most like Christ. Create a master list of all the ways in which the group can become more like Christ.
5. Ask which passage they would like to discuss first. Focus your attention on that choice. How does it relate to spiritual growth?

THE CLOSE

When people talk about Christian growth, they typically focus on the individual's responsibility to become more like Jesus. But people grow in Christ through community as well as individual focus. That's one reason for the establishment of the church. The context of our growth is the living body of Christ, with him as the head. Take time to close the session by examining with the young people how the church can better promote their Christian growth.

MORE

- It's important for everyone to have spiritual goals. If you feel it's appropriate, ask each of your youth (or those who want to) to write a letter stating their spiritual goals and how they want to grow as Christians. Give them envelopes, which they will address to themselves and seal. Mail the letters to them anywhere from six months to a year.
- Do your kids want to get involved and learn more? You may want to start a small group Bible study and discussion with those who are interested. Check out Youth Specialties (www.YouthSpecialties.com) for some study tools, including the Creative Bible Lessons series and *Downloading the Bible*. You'll also find links to student Web sites (such as www.christianteens.net or www.teens4god.com) where your kids can download devotions, find information, and learn more about how to grow in their faith.