

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? [basic Christianity]

THIS WEEK

This TalkSheet is designed to help explore some of the basic ideas about Christianity. Some of your kids will be on different levels—you may have to add ideas or questions based on your group. You may also want to emphasize specific beliefs or doctrines within the context of this TalkSheet.

Make sure that you do your homework for this discussion. Do the activities on the TalkSheet yourself and look up all the questions you aren't sure about in the Bible. Also, be prepared for those student who won't understand Christian concepts such as born again, be confirmed, or ask Jesus in your heart. Don't assume that your kids will understand all these! You'll probably have to explain a few or all of these.

OPEN

Are your kids listening? How much do they know? Check it out by asking an adult member of your church, a youth sponsor, or your senior pastor to prepare a five-minute message. It should contain some half-truths that aren't biblically correct. These half-truths should be kind of subtle so that they won't be obvious to your kids as they listen. You may want to prep your kids before hand—maybe have them write down any ideas they disagree with. Then see if they picked up any questionable ideas from the sermon.

Or play Bible Trivia—you may be surprised what they do or don't know! You can either pick out some questions before hand or check out www.Biblequizzes.com or www.bible-trivia.com. Split the group up into teams and take turns asking questions. The team with the most points wins the game.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Young people have many varied definitions of what a Christian is. Allow them to share these ideas. If they use words with religious connotations, have them explain what it means—for example, have them give a clear definition of the word saved. You may want to end with a final group definition.
2. These statements are formulated to stimulate discussion about the Christian life, basic doctrines, and particular doctrines related to your church. Don't be afraid to leave a point unresolved or to permit differences of opinion
3. Read this list aloud, asking which items are absolutely necessary in order to be a Christian. You may want to prepare Bible passages ahead of time to support your church's beliefs. Be careful not to end up with a lengthy list of necessary things that could turn Christianity into a legalistic religion.

4. Read the Bible passages with the group and ask them to privately choose their percentage level. For discussion, brainstorm ways that they can improve themselves in each of the areas listed, being as specific as possible.

THE CLOSE

Explain, encourage, and invite! You may have kids who need some one-on-one answers about being a Christian. This is an open door for presenting the gospel and salvation through Jesus. Assure them that no question is stupid—they don't have to understand everything about the Christian faith! The Christian life is a journey—even the great theologians struggle with doctrinal issues. What really matters in light of all the issues and questions? Karl Barth said, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Encourage your kids to grow in the Christian faith, to get reading their Bibles and in conversation with God through prayer. As a Christian, they have a gift to give—the message of God's love and salvation. If they want to understand Christianity better, they need to get to know God better. Encourage them and provide them with ways to learn more about the faith. Recommend a devotional or Bible reading program, organize a small group Bible study—you need to jumpstart them and encourage their walk with God.

MORE

- Do your kids know what a creed is? Do they have their own personal creed? Well, have them write a creed—a statement of their personal beliefs. Encourage them to put it in a visible place and read it when they start to doubt their beliefs or have people question what they believe and why.
- It's important for everyone to have spiritual goals. Have each of your youth 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.
- You may want to have your kids do some research on the Internet for information on Christian doctrines. Possible topics could be sanctification, conversion, grace, justification, or creation. Some of these can be pretty heavy subjects—be sure not to overload them! You may want to make this a group effort and work with each other.