

Getting to Know Your Teens

Three Basic Needs of Teens

- That they are loved. **There isn't a teenager, no matter how resistant they are, they need to know they are loved. That they are accepted and not judged.**
- **That they are valuable.** They need to feel they can make a contribution. Youth ministry is not about entertaining our youth. It is about them realizing their talents and abilities and putting them to use. They are valuable and can contribute to the world. This can be done with the many service projects with the youth group for the church and community.
- **Teens need to know that they are not alone.** They have a great fear of being alone and they also need to know they are not the only ones to think that. That they are not alone physically and that they are not alone spiritually.

Understanding Teens

Physically

Concerned about their looks, are they attractive, are they accepted

Emotionally

They are going through emotional highs and lows. Sensitive to relationship issues.

Socially

Peer group influence. Sense of self and security on interaction with others, relationships or lack of.

Spiritually

A time of searching and developing a faith of their own

Independence

Trying their wings. Defining themselves different from their parents.

Outside Influence

Influence from media, music, parents, school, peers, the future and the changing world.

Future

In a few short years teens will be living in a different place, different jobs, new friends. Many changes on their horizon and this is something they will naturally feel anxious about.

Five Categories of Teens

Uninterested

These teens are not interested in spiritual things. They usually don't attend youth activities and may be cynical about such things. These young people have questions about life and faith but tend to think that church and Bible have no connection to their worlds.

Attending Resister

These teens attend some or all of your activities but are there under duress. They are usually pressured to come by their parents and they have little interest in what is happening in the youth ministry. They may be passive in their resistance and just not be involved and show no interest or they may be active and be negative and express that negativity and interrupt or even sarcastic.

Status Quo

These teens attend youth activities and may in fact be very consistent. They react with a variety of levels of enthusiasm to the activities but the key issue for these teens is that they do not want church, God or the Bible to affect their lives in significant ways. Their primary goal in life is to stay the same as the rest of their friends. They want to go to events and have fun, their interest is in social. All teens demonstrate this quality at various times. But these teens are focused in not wanting to change. They state belief in God but have no interest in anything that may challenge them.

Seeker

These teens are starting to ask questions and seek out spiritual things. They are more attentive in class and may talk to you individually. They are open to listening, they are really interested in how does God work in my life.