

## Help Teenagers Live Out Their Christian Faith



It's one thing to say you believe in Jesus yet quite another to reflect that faith in your everyday life. Teenagers may have been raised as Christians and readily claim that title. But, according to a recent survey by Group Magazine, a big chunk of Christian teenagers switch back and forth between several identities, depending on their particular environment.

When Group surveyed almost 30,000 Christian teenagers this summer, almost half (46%) said their definition of success doesn't match God's definition. And when asked about specific life choices, kids admitted that when others aren't looking, they engage in many behaviors that don't honor Christ. For example, 71% of respondents disagreed with this statement: "I mostly read magazines or go to Web sites that honor or support my relationship with Christ."

Being a Christian is more than an identity; it's a relationship that needs to be nurtured, applied, and lived. Knowing biblical facts and names is good, but it isn't enough. Teenagers need to hear that Christ wants to be at the center of their lives—and reflected in everything they think, say, and do. As kids (and adults) get to know Jesus better, they'll also discover more about themselves and their God-given purpose.

This newsletter explores some ways to show your teenagers that true faith is meant to be owned and experienced. As you read the material, consider your own faith and how you, too, can live it out loud. Then sit down with your kids to find out how they feel about this important topic.

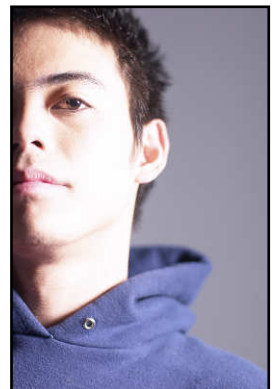
### Try these ideas that will start growing some "legs" on your teenagers' faith:

- 1. Remind kids of their key role.** Let them know that they have the privilege—and responsibility—of offering other people a taste of Jesus.
- 2. Help kids "own" their faith.** Talk about your faith often, using conversations, not lectures. Apply what you hear in church by building bridges between teachings and kids' real lives.
- 3. Use teenagers' culture to spark talks about how to live as a Christian.** Become familiar with who and what your kids like. Then get kids thinking critically about all these outside influences.
- 4. Share faith stories within your family.** Give people each an opportunity to talk for five minutes about their life with Christ and what it means to them.
- 5. Walk the walk.** Set an example by living out your faith each day. Model service—and give kids opportunities to serve, too.



### Here are some more results from Group Magazine's "Fuel for Discipleship" survey of 30,000 teenagers, 99% of whom described themselves as Christians:

- If people knew who I really am, they'd be surprised to learn I'm a Christian.  
**Agree—21% Disagree—79%**
- In a typical day I usually feel like I'm living my life according to God's will.  
**Agree—62% Disagree—38%**
- All things considered, I think I have a closer relationship with Jesus than my parents do.  
**Agree—40% Disagree—60%**
- I like Jesus a lot more than I like the church.  
**Agree—76% Disagree—24%**



## Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Ask teenagers some questions from the “Fuel for Discipleship” survey to jump-start conversations about faith-filled living.

1. In five years, do you see yourself being even more committed in your relationship with Jesus? Why or why not?
2. When you pray, do you feel like you’re having a conversation with God or just reciting a list of requests?
3. When you read the Bible, do you feel more energized than before you read?
4. Are the best people you know followers of Christ? What “fruit” do you see in people’s lives (and your own life) that shows their faith?



## Focus on Prayer

### PRAY THAT:

1. God will become real to your teenagers and nurture their faith, making it active, alive, and real.
2. Your teenagers will desire a strong relationship with Jesus and will take steps to get to know him—and, therefore, themselves—better.
3. Your teenagers won’t be ashamed of the Gospel message or of their identity as Christians.
4. Your teenagers will become lifelong disciples of Jesus, reflecting him in all they do.

### Verse of the month

**“What good is it...if you say you have faith but don’t show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? ... Faith by itself isn’t enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.” (James 2:14, 17)**

With faith, the “proof is in the pudding”—or rather, in the living. God wants our belief in him to be not just a statement or proclamation but something that’s visibly evident to everyone around us. Faith that’s buried and bottled up, whether out of fear or apathy, is lifeless. Instead, God calls us to make our faith and our actions interchangeable.

## What’s Up With Kids

The book *Guy Talk, Girl Talk* from Simply Youth Ministry discusses the importance of giving top priority to our relationship with God. The chapter titled “Hanging With God at the Mall” offers these three key elements of a healthy relationship:

- 1. Establish and maintain an open line of communication.** When God sent the prophet Nathan to call David out on his sins, David cried out to God. After working hard to cover things up, David recognized that it was most important for him to be honest with God.
- 2. Learn new things about one another.** As much as you think you know about God, you’ve only scratched the surface. When we open the Bible we learn three things: who God is, who we are, and how God wants us to act. We also learn simply by experiencing life as a follower of God, by trusting him and seeing his promises come true in our own lives.
- 3. Spend time together.** You can’t expect to have a good relationship with God if you never talk to him. God needs to be our #1 relationship, period. That means we need to make sure we spend time with him as much as we would a good friend.



If young people learn to spend time with God and get to know his character and goodness, that will rub off on their other relationships. That’s because the same characteristics of a healthy relationship with God apply to all relationships in life.

# MUSICSPOTLIGHT



## Mainstream Artist

**Background:** The Game, born Jayceon Taylor, had a rough childhood in Compton, California, and got involved with drugs and gangs. He began rapping in 2001, and his debut album earned two Grammy nominations. Much controversy surrounds The Game, who's been arrested several times and been involved in many feuds with other rappers.

**Albums:** *LAX* (2008), *Doctor's Advocate* (2006), *The Documentary* (2005)

**What Parents Should Know:** The Game's music is gangsta rap, a style of hip-hop made popular in Compton. He's been credited with the resurgence of West Coast rap. The Game's albums contain parental advisories because of very foul language, plus references to drugs, alcohol, and violence.

**What The Game Says:** "I learned that hip-hop is a business and it should be treated and respected as so and none of these 'people' is your friend so that's why I don't have any."

**Discussion Questions:** What role does trust play in a friendship or relationship? Why can it be so difficult to trust people? How do you decide whether to trust someone? Do you consider yourself to be trustworthy? Why or why not?

## Christian Artist

**Background:** The Ambassador, also known as William "Duce" Branch, is a co-founder of the Christian rap group The Cross Movement. He is the pastor of an inner-city church plant in Philadelphia and is president of Cross Movement Ministries. For nearly 15 years, The Ambassador has proclaimed Jesus and the Gospel in urban contexts.

**Albums:** *The Chop Chop: From Milk to Meat* (2008), *The Thesis* (2005)

**What Parents Should Know:** The Ambassador has a master's degree in theology. His thesis, "Theological Implications of Hip-Hop Culture," inspired his debut album and laid a foundation for his hip-hop ministry. This album is for listeners who've been Christians awhile and are ready to go deeper, into the "meat."

**What The Ambassador Says:** He has a "passionate commitment to the kingdom of Christ, as well as a firm belief that faith must integrate with culture."

**Discussion Questions:** What are you passionate about? Do you feel committed to Jesus? How can people tailor the Gospel message to different groups? Is it possible to combine faith and culture, without watering down your message?

## FILMWATCH

**Movie:** *The Express* (releases Oct. 10)

**Genre:** Drama

**Rating:** PG (for thematic content, violence, language involving racism, & brief sensuality)

**Synopsis:** This true story follows the life of Ernie Davis (Rob Brown), the first African-American football player to win the Heisman Trophy. As a young boy in Pennsylvania, Davis dreamed of becoming a football star. At Syracuse, he was a running back under Coach Ben Schwartzwalder (Dennis Quaid). It seemed that nothing could stop Davis. But soon after he was drafted into the NFL, he was diagnosed with leukemia.

**Discussion Questions:** If you could achieve any dream, what would it be, and why? What types of obstacles have you faced in life? Who or what has encouraged you to try to overcome them?



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