

July 2008

Fan the Flames of Kids' Faith This Summer



What is on your teenagers' to-do list during these "lazy" days of summer? Chances are it includes catching up on much-needed rest, hanging out with friends, and some type of work, lessons, or camp. But does faith development make the cut?

Summer can lend itself not only to physical getaways but to spiritual getaways as well. When sunshine beckons, it seems tougher to attend church and spend time with God.

Your teenager might be going on a mission trip or other youth group outing, which can change lives and build faith. But summer also is a great time for your family to talk about God and deepen your relationship with him.

Use travel time to spark in-depth conversations about kids' beliefs. Pray together while exploring God's creation, sing together at Christian concerts, and worship together at outdoor services. You might even visit different churches to spark teenagers' thoughts about what they believe and why. Summer offers plenty of volunteer opportunities, too. As a family, help with your church's vacation Bible school, assist with a local service project, or let kids pick a new charity you can support together.

Use the ideas and insights from this newsletter to give kids a summer to remember—and a faith that lasts.

In *Group Magazine*, longtime youth minister Steve Case writes about six spiritual disciplines that help kids—and adults—connect with God:

1. **Solitude**—On long drives, have some iPod-free times for reflection and prayer. Also set up a quiet place at home for Bible study.
2. **Simplicity**—Pare down your schedules and your "stuff." Keeping things simple leads to generosity, self-discovery, and purpose.
3. **Abandon**—Be willing to live without the approval of the rest of the world. Serve without expecting acknowledgment.
4. **Submission**—Trust God as almighty and good. Treat people as God's treasures.
5. **Worship**—Honor God through conversation, not recitation. Expand your worship to everyday experiences.
6. **Fellowship**—Establish faith traditions, pick a favorite song and Bible verse, and keep Jesus at the center of your family.

Pulse

Even spiritually active teenagers are at risk for disengaging from Christianity when they become young adults. Consider these findings—and take steps now to prevent the same thing from happening to your kids:

- 81% of teenagers say they've attended church for a period of at least two months.
- 61% of young adults had attended church during adolescence but are now "spiritually disengaged" (not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying).
- Only 20% of young adults have maintained a level of spiritual activity consistent with their high school experiences.



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

What's the state of your teenagers' faith? Is it growing, stagnant, or somewhere in between? Use these questions to find out if your kids are standing firm or faltering:

1. How strong would you rank your faith right now, with "10" being strong and "1" being weak?
2. What's the best part of your relationship with God? What needs work, and why?
3. What questions do you have about God and faith?
4. What are some ways you live out your faith? How easy or tough is it to put your faith into action?
5. What would it look like to have an "extreme" faith?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers will use their summer wisely and grow spiritually.
2. God will be real to your kids and will speak to them through worship, prayer, and Bible study.
3. God will nurture your teenagers' faith and keep it strong as they enter young adulthood.
4. Your teenagers will live out their beliefs and be comfortable expressing their Christian faith to others.

Verse of the month

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved." (Romans 10:9-10)

The most-important thing your teenagers can ever have is faith in Jesus as their Savior. It leads to the "end goal" of heaven, where we'll spend eternity in God's presence. Faith is the only route there. By believing in Jesus, who died and rose for us, we're assured of salvation, the greatest gift possible. Make sure your kids receive this priceless treasure!

What's Up With Kids

The new *Live Bible* (NLT) from Group Publishing not only builds teenagers' faith but encourages them to express themselves. It's filled with writings and artwork by kids throughout America. Sidebars challenge young people to write, draw, or try activities as they respond to God's Word. Here's an activity you can use this summer:

Read Mark 2:1-12. The scene is crazy. Jesus is rock-star popular, and everyone in town is coming to see and hear him. The house he's speaking at is jam packed, and people are lining up just to get a glimpse of him. That's when a group of friends do something crazy. They tear open a roof just so their paralyzed friend can get an audience with Jesus. And when their friend does, he is healed!

Find a mat, rug, or small piece of carpet (even a towel will do) and sit on it. In the space provided, list some of your friends who need Jesus. Next, list some of the creative ways you could get them to meet with Jesus. You could write a song or poem about what Jesus means to you and give it to them. You could draw a cartoon about your faith and see what they think. You could invite them to read through this Gospel—Mark—with you. Anything—just think outside the box! Then drop in at www.Group.com/RoughEdit and tell us what happens when your friends encounter Jesus.

(Parents: Your kids can share their original artwork, photography, and drawings on Rough Edit, where creativity and Christ collide.)



Seeking Answers — ©2008 Michelle Joswiak, 18

MUSICSPOTLIGHT



Background: Welsh-born performer Aimee Anne Duffy, aka Duffy, began singing and writing lyrics at age 6. She left college to pursue music and built a following by playing in local jazz and blues clubs. Duffy, 24, signed with A&M Records last year, and her soulful vocals have drawn comparisons to Amy Winehouse. *Rockferry* is currently the U.K.'s top-selling album. In America, Duffy is becoming a VH1 staple, and her songs have been featured on TV shows such as "Grey's Anatomy."

Albums: *Rockferry* (2008)

What Parents Should Know: Two songs on this album are autobiographical. "Mercy" is about sexual liberty and "not doing something somebody else wants you to do." In "Stepping Stone," Duffy sings about suppressing feelings for a person she fell in love with.

What Duffy Says: "People keep talking about how all the other girls in the industry are wild and cool. But I've seen the really dark side of addiction, so it doesn't float my boat, you know?"

Discussion Questions: Why do many teenagers consider the "wild" lifestyle to be so appealing, despite its consequences? How might Christians be able to help change this mentality? What types of peer pressure do you think you're most vulnerable to, and why? What are some ways you work to stand up against these pressures?



Background: Sarah Kelly, from Rockford, Illinois, began writing music when she was 5 and says she was born to worship. But during adolescence and early adulthood, she fell victim to self-hatred, leading to three abusive relationships. Finally Kelly broke the cycle and her self-imposed isolation. Her first two albums brought her Grammy nominations, many fans, and increasing mainstream interest. Kelly's raw vocal style has been compared to Janis Joplin and Melissa Etheridge.

Albums: *Born to Worship* (2008), *Where the Past Meets Today* (2006), *Take Me Away* (2004),

What Parents Should Know: Kelly's most recent album is more upbeat than her previous two, but every track feels simple and stripped-down. *Born to Worship* is almost like a worshipper's journal, and listeners can hear the truth about the Savior.

What Kelly Says: "My addiction was self-hate. I didn't ask to deal with it. It just found me, and I gave in to it. I fell into a pattern of sin, thinking poorly about myself to an unhealthy degree. I wasn't seeing myself how God sees me."

Discussion Questions: How do you view yourself? How does God view you? When people suffer from low self-esteem, how do you suppose that makes God feel? How might being a Christian change your perception of yourself? your attitudes? your relationships?

FILMWATCH

Movie: *Hancock* (releases July 2)

Genre: Action, Comedy, Drama

Rating: PG-13 (for some intense sequences of sci-fi action and violence, plus language)

Synopsis: Hancock (Will Smith) is an edgy, unconventional superhero who's been irresponsible with his power. Although his heroics save lives, his careless attitude and actions cause incredible damage. The public is just about ready to get rid of Hancock, when he saves a PR executive (Jason Bateman) and discovers his vulnerable side.

Discussion Questions: Is there a right or wrong way to use your God-given talents? Explain. What can happen if you're careless or apathetic with your talents? Are you ever intimidated by the power God entrusts you with as one of his children? What are some ways to harness that power and use it for good, not evil?



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		1	2	3	4	5
			Pathways	Pathways		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Workcamp Week 1 Blessing 11am	Workcamp Week 1 Middle School Bowling	Workcamp Week 1	Workcamp Week 1 Pathways	Workcam p Week 1 Pathways	Workcamp Week 1	Workcamp Week 1
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
					Diocesan Youth Convention	Diocesan Youth Convention
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
High School SOS-Scavenger Hunt Workcamp Week 2 Blessing 9am Diocesan Youth Convention	Workcamp Week 2 Middle School Bowling	Workcamp Week 2	Workcamp Week 2	Workcam p Week 2	Workcamp Week 2	Workcamp Week 2
27	28	29	30	31		
Middle School SOS-Live Clue						