



1. If you had three hours of free time, what would you do that is—
- fun?
 - different?
 - smart?
 - helpful?
 - boring?
 - risky?

2. What do your friends do during their free time?

3. What do you do on a typical school day?

After school to 5:00 p.m.—

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.—

7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.—

9:00 p.m. on—

4. What do you think? If you agree, write **Y** (yes) or **N** (no).

- a. The church should put on more activities for people my age.
- b. Everyone my age is bored.
- c. Life isn't as exciting for Christians.
- d. God doesn't care what I do in my spare time.
- e. It is easier for young people to get in trouble when there isn't anything to do.
- f. Parents should spend more time with their kids, even when they're as old as I am.
- g. My life would be better if I didn't have so much to do.
- h. I wish there were more things for people my age to do.
- i. I have too much free time.
- j. When there is nothing better to do, I spend time with God.

5. What does **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8** say about spending your free time?

HANGIN' [f r e e t i m e]

THIS WEEK

Young people today have more freedom than they've ever had. Sure, there's more extracurricular activities to participate in, but the number of kids who come home from school to empty houses continues to grow. With more unsupervised time, kids have more freedom to try new things and experiment with new behaviors and identities. This session will help you and your group discuss how Christians can handle free time.

OPENER

For a smooth transition you may want to pass out pencils or pens and paper and ask your kids (without letting others see their answers) to complete the following sentences—

- If I had nothing to do for a whole day I would—
- When I have an extra hour, I like to—
- The best way for me to relax is to—
- When someone says free time I think of—

Now ask your kids to guess how others in your group may have completed the sentences. It's interesting to see what different people like to do with their free time.

THE DISCUSSION, BY THE NUMBERS

1. As your kids to share their responses, encourage creative thinking and ask for as many ideas as possible. List them on a sheet of poster board or whiteboard.
2. List the items and then have the kids rate each one (10 can be good, 1 can be bad). Or choose the best five and the worst five. It's important that the kids understand they have lots of choices for using free time—some good and some bad.
3. This will give your kids a look at how they spend a typical school day. You can do the same using a weekend, too. Focus on the fact that everyone has the same length of time every day, but each spends it differently. If some say that they get bored or have nothing to do, brainstorm other ways to use their time. Ask the kids to offer ideas and help each other.
4. This item should stimulate a lot of discussion. You may want to go over each of the statements and ask for opinions. Keep the discussion moving toward constructive decisions and actions. If the group agrees with a statement (like "Life isn't as exciting for Christians"), ask why they think that and what can be done.

5. This passage shows that everyone needs to balance their free time. Ask the group to share their sentences. Go through the passage and ask them to give modern day examples of activities from the passage.

THE CLOSE

Time is a gift from God—he doesn't want us to waste it. But he does want us to relax and enjoy ourselves, too. Encourage your kids to challenge themselves—to try a new activity, such as playing a new sport, starting a new hobby, or volunteering. Challenge them to set a new goal for themselves and use part of their extra time to get to know God better.

You may want to talk about activities that are "builders" and those that aren't. For example, watching the same movie everyday after school won't let them try anything new or learn new things. But, what about surfing the Internet, trying a new sport, or helping their mom with their little brother? What is the difference between spending time that stimulates them and simply passes the time? How would God want them to spend our time and relax, too?

MORE

- If you're interested, plan a service project that you and your kids can do together after school or on a weekend. Examples may include visiting a rest home, collecting food for a food bank, performing yard work for the elderly, or raking leaves. Get everyone involved and then talk later with the group about the project. How did they feel while using their time for others? What difference did their time make to others?
- How do you and your kids spend your spare time? Ask your kids (and you, too) to journal their activities for a week or a weekend to see how they spend their time. Include everything—sleeping, eating, watching TV, helping out around home. Then, have them circle those things they did during their free time. What did they learn about how they spend their time. What would they like to change in the future? What did they spend the most time on and why?
- If your kids would like a part-time or after-school job, set up a job bank. You could match up kids with people in the church who need help with tasks such as housework, mowing lawns, washing cars, sweeping sidewalks, or taking inventory. Or you could auction off their services in a fundraiser for your group or an organization.