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1. What are **three activities** that your family does together?

Which one do you enjoy the most?

2. Circle three words that best describe your family.

fun	strange	peaceful	friendly
busy	close	strict	helpful
happy	Christian	boring	angry
embarrassing	changing	stressful	caring
loving	critical	noisy	loyal

3. If you could change **one thing** about your family, what would it be?

4. What would you like to learn more about? (check one or more)

- How to get along better with my siblings
- How to get my parents off my back
- How to have more fun as a family
- How to get along better with my parents
- How to have a closer family
- How to have family devotions
- How to tell my parents how I really feel

5. God has a lot to say about families! Check out these verses and then write what each verse says about your family.

Proverbs 6:20-22

Romans 12:9-13

Ephesians 6:1-4



THIS WEEK

Most junior high and middle school kids are searching for their own identity, apart from the family. But their families are still an essential support for them. Sometimes this can be frustrating and can cause tension in a family. This TalkSheet will help your kids understand their family and teach them how to strengthen their family ties.

It's important for you to remember that there are different types of families within society—traditional families, divorced families, single-parent families, or foster families. Don't assume that all your kids live in a traditional two-parent home. Be extra sensitive to those kids who may be feeling the hurt and confusion of divorce and family separation.

OPENER

Everyone has a family of some kind—that's why families are often portrayed on television. Ask your kids to think of as many TV families as they can and keep a list of these on a whiteboard or poster board. What is each family like? Which one would they like to be a member of? Why or why not? How does TV portray family life compared to real life? Is it accurate of families today?

Or get out your Internet surfing skills and find some statistics or facts about families to read to the group. Some of your group may not know what percentage of families are mixed, step-parent families, split families, foster families, and more. For the most recent statistics and information, check out www.childstats.gov or www.fedstats.gov. Read the information or statistics to your group. Are they surprising? Why or why not? What do the statistics say about families today?

THE DISCUSSION, BY THE NUMBERS

1. Ask them to share experiences or stories of their memorable family times. You should hear about some positive experiences that your kids have had with their families.
2. What words did your kids choose to describe their families? To keep this discussion on a positive note, point out that no family is perfect—all families have ups and downs. But sometimes it is easier to remember the hard or bad times rather than the good times. Ask the group to list other descriptive words about their families.
3. Allow them to share the changes they would like to see. You'll most likely get a lot of different responses, so make a list of their suggestions on

the whiteboard or poster board. Then you may want to cross off all those that are unrealistic (such as "get rid of my two sisters" or "sell my baby brother") and with the rest, brainstorm ways they make these changes happen. It's good for kids to vent about their home life, but you also need to be supportive of family life. Try to keep a healthy balance. Listen to and talk about the complaints, but don't let this become a bash session against their parents or guardians.

4. What would your kids like to know more about? This can be used as a checklist to generate future topics as well as a discussion topic itself. Spend a few minutes brainstorming ways to learn more information about the topics checked. Is there one or two that your kids want to talk more about?

5. Ask those who share to focus on one verse in particular. If you choose Ephesians 6:1-4, talk about the two-way street in a parent-child relationship. Then discuss what your kids can do to improve the relationships they have at home.

THE CLOSE

No family is perfect because no family members are perfect. But family members can work together and make changes to make things better. Family relationships aren't only their parents' responsibility—it's theirs too. There are many things that kids can do to encourage their family relationships. Are they willing to try?

Communicate your willingness to help those who are having problems at home. You're there to listen to them. Pay close attention to your kids who may show signs of domestic violence or sexual abuse. For information on dealing with abuse, contact Child Help USA (www.childhelpusa.org) or Prevent Child Abuse (www.pcaain.org). If you suspect an abusive situation, you are required by law to report it to the authorities.

MORE

- Dare your kids to commit to changing one thing about how they treat their family. Do they need to be more patient? More encouraging? More obedient to their parents? Nicer to their siblings? Encourage them set a realistic goal and then consciously make an effort to change how they act.
- Watch a TV show or a movie involving a family. You can either do this together as a group or individually at home. Ask your group to observe what types of family are shown and note the positive and negative aspects of the family. How realistic is the family? What stereotypes of families are shown through this TV family?