

## Help your teenagers stay connected to God

A close relationship with God is both the core of our Christian life and our highest end as human beings. As we learn about God and develop intimacy with him, our faith morphs from a “practice” to a lifestyle. Worship and Bible study not only help us experience God, they strengthen us for life’s daily challenges.



When *Group Magazine* recently surveyed 20,000 Christian teenagers about their priorities, the top vote-getter was “praying and developing a relationship with God.” But many youth ministers were surprised by those survey results. “Kids’ actions communicate something different,” noted one youth minister. “They’re so busy...that it seems the first things to get dropped are the items listed as priorities.” Another wrote, “My teens struggle with prayer, and many tell me a relationship with God is hard, confusing, and at times not relevant.”

Taking time to “Be still, and know that I am God!” (Psalm 46:10) is challenging in our always-on-the-go culture. Kids are surrounded by noise—and have a lot of noise in their hearts. Distractions, worries, fears, and hurts often make a relationship with God more difficult, but they also make it more important.

Kids look to their parents as examples of how to stay connected to God. If you’ve kept this relationship private, let your teenagers in on ways you stay in touch with God. Also share ways it has sustained you through life’s ups and downs, and assure your kids that the same will be true for them, too.

### The United Methodist Perspective

Every four years, thousands of United Methodist youth and youth workers attend the National Youth Gathering. This four-day event includes concerts, worship, workshops, discussions, exhibits, and more. In 2007, one of the gathering’s most visited places was the Prayer Room. Thousands of kids discovered ways to connect with God, such as prayer stations, silence, art, journaling, and walking a labyrinth.

We’re all wired with a longing for connection with God. But often we let busyness and distractions interfere. Our family lives can become so over-scheduled that our focus shifts away from God. Youth ministry programs can become just as busy and distracting. At Youth 2007, we found that re-establishing a connection with God requires only a space, scheduled time, and a few prompts. How can your family set aside time and space to enter into prayer with God?

Youth 2011 ([www.youth2011.org](http://www.youth2011.org)), our next gathering, will be filled with amazing activities, too. But we’ll be sure to offer space for youth and adults to be quiet, settle down, and connect with God through prayer.

—Hank Hilliard, Young People’s Ministries, [hhilliard@GBOD.org](mailto:hhilliard@GBOD.org)



**Search Institute researchers surveyed more than 7,000 kids in eight countries (including America) to gauge how teenagers around the world view their relationship with God. Some responses:**

- 55% of teens surveyed say their “spirituality” has grown stronger over the last few years, and 43% of U.S. kids say they’re both spiritual and religious.
- What nourishes teenagers’ spiritual lives?
  - Nature—87%
  - Listening to or playing music—82%
  - The influence of parents—76%
  - Spending time helping others—76%
  - Being alone in a quiet place—74%
  - The influence of friends—71%
- What activities feed kids’ spiritual growth?
  - Reading books—47%
  - Praying—44%
  - Helping others—44%
  - Attending religious worship or prayer services—40%



## Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Use these discussion starters to connect with your teenagers about connecting with God:

1. How close do you usually feel to God, and why? How do you view him: as a friend? a Savior? a judge? other?
2. What does it mean to “be still” before God? What makes that challenging?
3. What happens in your life when you don’t keep in touch with God? What times and places are best for you to pray, and why?
4. How does reading the Bible make you feel about God? about yourself? What are your favorite verses?
5. How can we encourage others as we walk with God?



## Focus on Prayer

### PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers will keep their relationship with God as a top priority.
2. Your teenagers develop a strong prayer life and dig into God’s Word to grow closer to him.
3. The relationship your kids develop with God will help them persevere during difficulties and will encourage them to reach out to others.
4. Your own connection with God stays strong and that you set a positive example for your teenagers in this area.

### Verse of the Month

**“The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth. He grants the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them. The Lord protects all those who love him.” (Psalm 145:18-20)**

We aren’t the only participants in maintaining a relationship with God. Thankfully, he’s in charge of that, too. God gives us a desire to know him. He reaches out by answering our prayers, meeting our needs, and providing fellow Christians to build up our faith. Jesus, who has endured human struggles, intercedes to God on our behalf. And the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts, guiding us to truth and true life.

## Going Deeper

**On SimplyYouthMinistry.com, Andy Blanks, Student Life’s resource development director, writes about lessons he learned by setting aside time for teenagers to connect with God**



When I led my youth group in a “spiritual disciplines” retreat awhile back, I was overwhelmed at the number of teenagers who, when given an opportunity, chose to spend meaningful time cultivating their relationship with Christ.

Most teenagers took the time seriously, practicing a mix of some guided Scripture meditation and some in-depth study based on a study guide I had created for them. All in all, it was a great event, a time of spiritual recharging for kids and adults alike. Throughout the weekend, kids came up to me saying how much fun they had praying and listening.

The main thing I learned is that the Holy Spirit is capable of moving in the lives of all Christians, even the most noncommitted, spiritually distracted teenager. The key is that the Holy Spirit must be given room to move! That was the point of our weekend, to provide intentional room for an encounter. We made the time, and the Holy Spirit came through. I watched life-change happen before my eyes.

I also learned that even though I talk the good talk about guiding teenagers deeper into their relationship with God, I had some significant-if-secret hesitations about how a weekend centered on “disciplines” would go over. Well, the kids proved me wrong at every turn. And this is one time I was glad to be proven wrong.

# MUSICSPOTLIGHT



## Mainstream Artist

**Background:** The 23-year-old dance-pop singer has made a huge splash on the music scene in a very short time. In 2009, she sang on Flo Rida's hit "Right Round." Her lone album came out in January 2010 and debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard charts. She's already played on *Saturday Night Live*.

**Album:** *Animal* (2010)

**What Parents Should Know:** Keshha has said she's all about having fun—that if it feels good, you should do it. Lyrics from her hit "Tik Tok" refer to drinking and partying. She sees herself as working to empower women, but that's probably not the type of power parents want for their girls.

**What Keshha Says:** "I wrote every song on this album so it's a really accurate description of my life over the last four years. I'll write about a guy, I'll write about a girl, I'll write about a bar, I'll write about an old guy hitting on me..."

**Discussion Questions:** Does Keshha's life appeal to you? Why or why not? What are the dangers in living for only fun things? How would living that way make you happier, or not? Explain. Read aloud Matthew 5:1-10. How does Jesus' idea of happiness compare with the world's idea? Is happiness a choice? What can you do to be happier?

## Christian Artist

**Background:** This pop-punk band got its start playing in youth group and went on to play youth camps, where they got their name. "Me and Jesus" was a No. 1 song on Christian charts and won a Dove Award. The band tours frequently, opening for bands such as Kutless and Newsboys.

**Albums:** *Everything Is Different Now* (2010), *Expect the Impossible* (2008), *All Gas. No Brake.* (2005)

**What Parents Should Know:** Stellar Kart is one of many pop-punk bands in Christian music. Their positive message is a wonderful antidote to the disillusionment of many secular bands in that genre.

**What Stellar Kart Says:** "The album certainly has a positive outlook on life and [is] full of hope. It's a realization that we can't make it though this life on our own...but we can do it with God's help by allowing him to step in and take control."

**Discussion Questions:** Do you feel you have control of your life? Why or why not? How do you deal with feeling out of control? Read aloud Deuteronomy 4:39. What does trying to control our lives say about our faith? How much responsibility do we have for our own lives? How much control of your life are you willing to hand over to God, and why?

# FILMWATCH

**Movie:** *The A-Team* (releases June 11)

**Genre:** Action-Adventure

**Rating:** Not yet rated

**Synopsis:** In this remake of the 1980s hit TV show, a group of former soldiers are arrested for a crime they didn't commit. They escape from prison and become soldiers of fortune, fighting on the side of justice.

**Discussion Questions:** Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? How did you react to that? Have you ever wrongly accused someone else? How did it make you feel when you discovered the truth? Read aloud Genesis 39:6-23. How did Joseph react to being falsely imprisoned? What were the consequences of his actions? When and how should we fight against false accusations?



# June 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
					*Youth Week	*Youth Week
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
*Youth Week	*Youth Week	*Youth Week	*Youth Week	*Youth Week		6pm load sr. high mission
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
8:15 Commissioning of sr. high, 9:30 depart. 6-8 UMYF	Sr. High mission trip	Sr. High mission trip 7-10 TTT	Sr. High mission trip	Sr. High mission trip 12-1 Out to lunch bunch	Sr. High mission trip	Sr. High mission trip
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Sr. High mission trip return at noon 6-8 UMYF	9-noon VBS	9-noon VBS 7-10 TTT	9-noon VBS	9-noon VBS 12-1 Out to lunch bunch	9-noon VBS	
27	28	29	30			
6-8 UMYF		7-10 TTT				

\*More Info can be found on theSBUMC.org web site and go to the youth page!

**Parents scheduled for snack supper this month-**June 13 Hosey and Miller, June 20 Odom and Gribble, June 27 Horstman and Lewis. Please don't leave us stranded! Hungry teenagers are dangerous!

**\*Youth Week,** Friday- girls and guys night out 6pm, money for dinner. Saturday- 1-3 Car Wash and tie-dye shirts, 5:30 Whirleyball, \$10. Sunday, 4pm Picnic and commissioning. Monday- 6-8 SBH2O money for funnel cakes and snack supper. Tuesday- 10-1 Random Acts of Kindness and lunch at Chic-fil-a, \$1 and lunch money. 6pm ordination service for Sheila Fiorella or 8:30-11 Movie night, money for concessions. Wednesday- 6:30 Lazer Tag \$15. Thursday- 9-4 Burgers lake \$13. **You must register for all events in advance!**

**\*TTT-Totally Tubular Tuesdays** happen each Tuesday of the summer from 7-10pm. We swim at different homes, drop off and pick up at each home. Snacks are provided. Watch the schedule, in case of rain the event is cancelled!

**\*Out to Lunch Bunch-** the youth meet each Thursday to have fellowship during lunch. Watch the schedule to see where we will meet next!

**SALT- The Youth Servant And Leadership Team-** Each youth wishing to be a part of SALT for the 2010/2011 school year will need to fill out a SALT application and return it by Sunday, July 25. Applications are available starting Sunday, May 31 and we will try to put them on the web site as well. No applications will be accepted late and each applicant must attend the SALT retreat scheduled for August 20/21 (no exceptions). Each SALT member is required to attend SALT meetings once a month on a Sunday, a sub-committee meeting once a month with the

date determined by the committee. Each SALT member is expected to be a leader of our youth program including being present in Sunday school, worship and at UMYF. Bible study is encouraged but not mandatory. There is small fee to help cover the SALT retreat/t-shirt of \$20.