

# PARENTS ARE PEOPLE, TOO

by Lawrence Bauer

## PURPOSE

To allow the youth to discover lines in family communication, to assist in clarifying attitudes on family lifestyles and to show methods of defusing conflict.

## PREPARATION

Gather Bibles, newsprint, crayons and chairs. (Songbooks are optional.)

Number sheets of paper from one to 10 and tape them to the wall.

Note: This meeting takes one to two hours to complete, depending on the amount of discussion time.

## OPENING

Open with songs and use music between sections of the meeting to assist in transitions.

Have the youth choose partners by finding people who have the same number of letters in their names.

## THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Announce, "Half of you will be A's and the other half B's—decide quickly. All A's raise their hands. You are the parents. B's are the teenagers. The situation is the teenagers refuse to clean their rooms and this has caused the

parents to be irritated. B's cover your ears. Parents, you are beside yourselves. Your child's room is a pigsty—old sandwiches, tons of garbage—and you're sure something is alive under the trash. You have talked until you are exasperated.

All A's cover your ears. You are good people, B's, with one exception. It's your room. You feel that your parents don't have to enter this area, so they shouldn't be concerned.

"Parents stand on chairs with the teenagers facing you. Parents have 45 seconds to express their displeasure. Teenagers must stand and take it. Reverse places and teenagers have 45 seconds and parents can say nothing.

"Finally, A's and B's sit facing each other. The parent has 45 seconds to express displeasure and the youth has 45 seconds to respond."

The group leader asks the entire gathering:

- Parents, how did you feel in each situation?
- Teenagers, how did you feel?
- Was it more difficult to argue sitting down?
- If so, what does that tell us?
- When you argue, do you ever say anything you regret?
- Relate the last time you were in a similar situation and if you could have reacted better.

## THE "MEAT" OF THE MEETING

Discuss briefly how emotion controls rational thought. Speak on the importance of controlling emotions to allow for clearer communication.

Break into groups of four to six and give each crayons and newsprint. Have the group members draw their kitchen table, and explain in the "old days" the table was where family discussions took place. As they draw, explain colors can mean different things such as red is anger, blue is happiness or serenity, green is hope and black represents heavy anger. Have them draw each family member at the table. Say, "Remember who talks with whom and draw lines to represent discussion such as thunderbolts if argumentative, broken lines if talk is sporadic, crooked lines or straight, etc.

Upon completion members share their drawings and explain the meaning of the colors and lines.

Gather as a large group and ask what the young people discovered doing this activity. Can they utilize what they've learned? How?

Tell the young people you are going to read a series of statements and after each one they should go to the number on the wall indicating their opinion. One means they totally agree with the statement, 10 means they totally disagree. If the youth have no opinion, they stand in the middle of the room. Then allow two people from the "agree" side to question peo-

ple on the disagree side of each issue.

They are allowed to change positions if their opinions change.

The leader reads these statements one at a time and coordinates the activity:

- Parents overdiscipline teenagers by making too many rules.
- Teenagers are irresponsible. They want the privileges of adulthood but not the responsibility.
- The family is no longer the main social unit.
- Family desires must be superior to individual desires.
- Christian families have fewer problems communicating than non-Christian families.

Gather and ask what surprised the youth the most about the response. How would their parents have responded to each statement? If time permits, replay the game with the youth representing their parents' attitudes.

## RESPONSE (OR CLOSING)

Read Ephesians 4:1-16 and give a short message on the body of Christ and family and how the units are interwoven. Say that we are to "speak the truth in love and grow in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."

Close with a prayer thanking God for families, asking him for guidance in communicating and working through family conflicts.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

**Sing With Young Life**, Young Life, P.O. Box 520, Colorado Springs, CO 80901.