

Keep outreach front and center. Equip kids to see faith-sharing as a natural overflow of their relationship with God. Challenge them to discuss spiritual topics with friends and invite non-Christians to youth group.

Recruit teenagers to meet and greet. Get kids involved in weekly welcoming responsibilities. Teach them to introduce and keep an eye on visitors, sit by them (if appropriate), and talk to them afterward. Coach kids to first ask icebreaker questions such as "Where do you go to school?" and "How did you hear about us?" Later, they can move to more directed questions such as "Did what you heard here make sense?" and "Do you have any questions about it?" and "Would you like to join us for...?"

Involve teenagers in prayer. Set aside time for kids to pray for one another. Model how to play an active role in bringing up topics as well as doing the praying. Show kids how to move beyond day-to-day requests to pray for things of lasting spiritual impact, such as the hearts of friends who need Jesus. Each week, change up prayer logistically to keep it fresh.

Encourage kids to share stories. Reserve a few minutes each week to let teenagers tell about their efforts to live and share their faith. These stories should include the good, the bad, and the ugly. Whether or not kids see immediate results, the fact that they're trying to reach out can encourage and inspire others to do the same.

Fostering teenagers' involvement in your ministry isn't a clean, simple process. But God isn't very selective about the players he puts into the game. (After all, he let us in!) So don't leave your team on the bench. Get 'em in the game! ■