



TWEENS

STOPPING THE SPIRITUAL FALLOFF BETWEEN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

{ 1954 - first use of the word tween. }

... at that time Frodo was still in his Tweens, as the Hobbits called the irresponsible twenties between childhood and coming of age at thirty-three (Toiken, Lord of the Rings)

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DEFINITION



A tween is a label given to kids in the years between childhood and the teen years. The specific age range can be anywhere between 10 and 15, but most researchers define it as those children between ages 10-12.

An estimated 20 million tweens live in today's world – that's a lot of kids!

Tweens are in the middle. They are still attached to their families, but they are spending more time with friends because they want to be part of the group, but at the same time, they want to be individually unique.

What do you think is the biggest challenge when working with Tweens?

A FEW TWEEN STATS



... with the understanding that not all tweens are part of all these stats. In fact, many of the tweens we work with are not part, but at the same time, we need to be aware that other kids we work with are part of these stats. We can't live in our isolated world, pretending these issues don't infiltrate our churches.

Tweens are tech pros. (Most tweens probably DO fit this category.)

Tweens are exposed to more "life" than they were just a few years ago.

Tween' values reflect their ego-centric mindset.

Tweens often are confused, stressed out and anxious.

The world has changed so much around us that what our parents did is no longer enough. There have always been kids on the edge. Increasingly, there are forces conspiring to push them over. Lisa Belkin in Parent Blaming Parents.

GOOD NEWS

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Most tweens say that their parents are the most influential people in their lives. Friends are second and other adults come in third.

With all the kids I know who made it, there's one thing in common: individual contact with an adult who cared and kept hanging in there. David Foster in The Disease is Adolescence

SO WHAT CAN WE DO? RELATE

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In Titus 2, Paul gave Titus the scope and sequence for teaching the young men and women. But we can't teach if we don't relate.

- 1 Keep up with technology. (As much as you can.) Be willing to ask a Tween to show you something you don't understand, to demonstrate the latest game he's playing, to watch the video he took.
- 2 Be interested in their lives.
- 3 Listen without lecturing. You want them to feel free to come to you. Instead talk through what God says in His Word.
- 4 Understand their need for heroes and introduce them to the right kind of heroes.

You need to be their friend, but more importantly, you need to be their leader. You need to be a role model – living a life of exemplary faith. You need to be the one who doesn't laugh at their questions, but instead answers the questions or works with them to find the answers. You need to be a constant in their lives.

CHALLENGE THEM

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God's Word says we're to move past the milk of a newborn Christian and on to the solid meat of Scripture. (1 Peter 2:2) Many tweens are ready to start chewing the meat. We need to move beyond the spoon-feeding and CHALLENGE them.

- 1 Challenge them biblically.
- 2 Involve them in service projects in which they can truly see they're making a difference. This will also help them gain confidence.
- 3 Assign them responsibilities at church.
- 4 Set goals as a group – challenges that the kids can meet during the year.

Tweens like to be challenged. Tweens like responsibility and to feel as if they're being taken seriously and respected. Talk to them, let them tell you what they want to learn, let them help you do a skit or read Scripture (maybe even in Sunday morning church?). Let them know how much you care.

ENCOURAGE

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The Apostle Paul wrote that we are to encourage one another. Backtracking to the Titus 2 scope and sequence – Paul sums it up by telling us we’re to be encouragers. Sometimes we’re very good at encouraging other adults, but neglect to encourage our kids. Unfortunately our remarks are often discouraging rather than encouraging.

- 1 Encourage with our words.
- 2 Encourage tweens to use their talents.
Two thirds of all talent-related activity for this age group happens at school. Let's change that to church
- 3 Encourage them to encourage others.
- 4 Encourage tweens to write down any questions they may have. This can be anything about how to deal with a mean kid at school or how long Adam and Eve were in the garden before they sinned.

AND ABOVE ALL

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GIVE YOUR TWEENS A SENSE OF PURPOSE ... GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THEIR LIVES.

*So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.
Philippians 2:15*

{ Let's teach them, that as a result of God's grace, they can have true purpose and significance now and for the future. }