



## **Teens: Cycle One / Shift One**

### **Teens Praying for Teens**

#### **Primary Objective:**

Engage the teens in your group to pray for their unchurched peers.

#### **Secondary Objective(s):**

Identify the leader of ministry to teens and enlist a team of adult volunteers.

#### **How This Can Help You Reach Teens:**

Who reaches who in the life of the church? Think about it. No one is better at reaching a fifth grade student than another fifth grader. Middle School students are better equipped than anyone to reach other Middle Schoolers. High Schoolers reach High School students, and adults reach adults. That is not to suggest that an adult cannot reach a teen. But, the fact of the matter is that a typical teen encounters a dozen, if not hundreds, of peers each week. As an adult, you may have contact with several, but not likely dozens.

In addition, it is awkward for an adult and teen, to interact, if they do not have a pre-existing relationship. If your church wants to reach teens, the adults will be important to the process. However, the key is to get teens reaching out to their peers. Therefore, you are challenged to begin with an emphasis that is simple in its application and potentially profound in its result. The first objective is to get teens praying for teens. The effort is important for at least three reasons:

First, do you have to be convinced of the importance and the power of prayer? You can certainly share testimonies and examples of how people's lives have been touched and influenced through prayer. This initiative is not only a way to get teens engaged in prayer but to see lives touched by prayer.

Second, the initiative will give your students a greater awareness of the unchurched around them and the opportunity to influence them for the Gospel's sake. You will find it difficult to lead others to share their faith, if they do not have a clear awareness of who it is around them who needs to hear and respond to the good news.

Third, the initiative will enhance the number of students being invited to events and opportunities where they will be exposed to the Gospel. As teens identify and pray for their peers, they will be challenged to invite them to places where the Gospel is being shared. The call of the church is to "make disciples." This initiative is a simple way to engage your teens in the genesis of that process in a very personal way.

One other thing: the secondary objective is to identify a leader for the ministry to teens in your church. That leader should, in turn, enlist a team to work alongside them. If your church already has leadership, you may ignore this objective. If your church does not have leadership, this should actually be the priority. You may think you need no leader, because you have no teens. The opposite is true. If you have no teens attending your church, it is because you are lacking leadership. Ministry to students does not begin with teens but rather with adult volunteers, who will make ministry to teens a priority.

### **Suggested Strategy:**

When is the largest gathering of teens in your church? Is it during the worship hour, the Sunday school or small group gathering time on Sunday morning, or at another time during the week? Is it at a Sunday evening activity that your church has each week? Or is it at a Wednesday mid-week Bible study? The number that gather is not the critical idea here. Whether you have a very small number of teens or well over a hundred, when is the largest gathering?

Once you answer that initial question, you will want to take advantage of that time frame. Gather the teens you have and ask them to write down the names of peers who do not attend church. At this point, no judgment is made about whether the peers are followers of Jesus or not. If they do not attend church, go ahead and assume that they need ministry and encouragement from your church. In the “idea” section, you will discover more specific ways to guide this process. But, the key here is to take the largest gathering of your teens; and lead them to identify and write down the names of as many peers, as possible, of those who do not regularly attend church.

Secondly, you want to lead the teens to begin praying for all of those they have identified. Begin leading them to do this each week for the next couple of months (and hopefully beyond). Go the extra mile by challenging them to begin praying daily for those they identified, as well as when you gather each week.

Thirdly, consider how you might bring other teens into this process who were absent at the outset, those who do not attend the largest gathering that you identified, and those who attend sporadically.

Finally, ask the students to begin looking for opportunities to invite those on their lists to worship gatherings, Bible studies, and student events hosted by your church. Teach them the law of large numbers based on 2 Corinthians 9:6. It says,

*“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*

If you invite one or two friends over the course of the next month, one of them might attend. What if you invite over 20 friends to attend some gathering with you over the next month or two? You will have guests present with you, they will hear the gospel, and someone will likely come to faith in Jesus Christ. Add action to your prayer by inviting and trusting that God will begin to work in their heart. Not all will respond, but the response is greater if you pray, invite, and multiply your invitations.

## Ideas:

- Apply the “law of large numbers” the week leading up to the initiative. Contact every student connected to your church and invite them to join you in a concerted effort to do something that will have a profound impact on their peers.
- Provide a bookmark or piece of paper for them to write the names of their peers on. Have them keep the lists in their Bibles to encourage regular or daily prayer for their peers. You could also have the students post their lists on a cross, a bulletin board; or lay the lists on the altar, steps, or front area of the gathering place. Do both by duplicating the lists, allowing students to keep a copy and the church to retain copies that others may use to join in the prayer initiative.
- Consider providing a large bulletin board that you (paint) divide into three quadrants. The first third of the board to the left is where students pin the names of friends they are praying for. Once they invite the friend to attend an event, the student moves the name to the center third of the board. You can let the right hand third of the board be where you move the names over one more section, identifying those who attend an event. You could also find a way to identify those who come to faith in Jesus Christ as a response to this initiative. Observing the names moved across the board from left to right over the weeks is a way to encourage and celebrate participation along the way.
- If you keep copies at the front of the gathering area or on the steps or altar of a worship gathering area, you can invite others, adults included, to take time to take a card and pray for those names as part of the worship or Bible study experience for a week or two.
- Help students identify peers by asking the following questions (as examples):
  - Write the name of a teen in your neighborhood who does not attend church.
  - Write the names of teens from each of your classes (each period of the school day) who do not attend church regularly that you know of.
  - Write the name of a teen who participates in a club or extra-curricular activity that you are a part of who does not attend church regularly.
  - Write the name of the most influential teen in your school who does not attend church regularly.
  - Write the name of a close friend that you really care about who does not attend church regularly.
  - Write the name of a teen who does not attend church regularly and who plays on a sports team that you play on or cheer for.
  - *That should give you at least 10 names per teen. Assume that some are redundant. Further, suppose that the teens on average identify six unique peers each and begin to pray. What if they are all invited in the next 60 days. What would it look like if 1/3 showed up for something in your church?*
- Finally, if you have few or no teens in your church, consider taking your adults through this process.

## Looking Ahead:

**Preview:** (3) *Community Missions* projects coming up in April and May.

**Plan:** (2) (2) *Learning to Share My Faith* emphasis.