

# re:form

Discipleship Unit  
Can I be a Christian  
without going  
to church?

Prepare

## What's behind all this?

It's interesting to note that every book of the Bible was written to communities of people. The Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) were written to the people of Israel, and the Christian Scriptures (New Testament) to the early church. And all of the books were meant to be read in public when these communities gathered. Thus, it is counter to the entire history of Judaism and Christianity to attempt to read and interpret these scriptures alone.

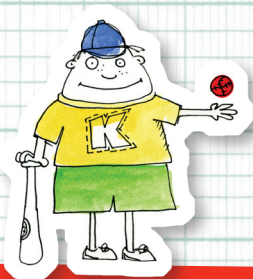
In other words, while it may be possible to have a relationship with Christ without being part of a Christian community, it's not a good idea. The Holy Spirit is active in community, and works through the church. The Holy Spirit gathers the body of Christ to pray for one another and for the world. The Holy Spirit gathers us together so that we might be given courage in faith and strengthened to go out and serve our neighbor in need. We don't come to church because we feel like it. We come to be the body of Christ to worship with our neighbor who needs us to be there. The Holy Spirit gathers us together as church because we need to be there for one another in sadness and in joy!

## Where are kids at?

- Kids this age are struggling with their own senses of identity. Low self-esteem with high expectations is not uncommon. Affirm the gifts each kid brings, while highlighting the benefits of community.
- Kids today are very technologically literate. Their understanding of community is shaped not only by face-to-face groups, but also by digital and virtual communities, such as Facebook™ and MySpace™.



Acts 2:43-47



### Where's this going?

Kids consider the nature of communities and what that means for Christianity.

### Consider this . . .

"Living together in one place is safer than living alone. The sacred words of Jesus our God bear witness to the necessity of living together; for He says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am in the midst of them.'" (Matthew 18:20)

Nikitas Stithatos (11th century),  
Philokalia, Vol. 4

# encounter

15 minutes

## Video

### 1. Set up

Why do you go to church? Thinking carefully about your response will help as you engage in conversation with kids about the church as community. Ask kids to get in a “team” huddle, then scatter to a space where they can’t touch anyone else and play tag by themselves for a minute. Shout FREEZE and ask how it’s going. Try tag as a group. FREEZE again. Talk with kids about how it’s hard to play tag by yourself. Ask: Can you be a Christian by yourself?

### 2. Watch

“Can I be a Christian without going to church?” DVD 1, Chapter 19

### 3. Unpack

- What don’t you believe?
- What does it mean to say the church is the body of Christ?
- So, what do you think the video is saying?

## What about the Bible?

What feelings or emotions do you associate with the word *church*, the people, or the building? How is your experience different from, or similar to, the description of the church described in Acts? Read Acts 2:43-47. Have groups of three prepare dramatizations of the text—one person reads in a dramatic voice as the others act. When all are ready, groups present their interpretations individually or simultaneously.

### Questions for conversation while you work:

- How was the church community in Acts similar to or different from your church community?
- What can you tell about their church attendance?
- Does it make any difference if you’re in church on Sunday? Why? Why not? Does it matter to other people if you’re there? Why or why not?
- What’s your first memory of church?

Make sure you’ve got the obvious stuff for this session—re:form video (DVD or download), Anti-Workbooks, Bibles, pens or pencils, paper, tape, etc.



**per-se-cute**  
[per-suh-kyoot]

subject someone to hostile treatment because of his or her identity (race, religion, political beliefs, etc.)

**Church**

[cherch]

the people of God as a whole

**church**

[cherch]

individual communities that gather together; a building



# engage

25-30 minutes

Choose 1+ Anti-Workbook (AW) activities to explore the session question. The first 2 are for individual use, while the last 2 involve the whole group.



## 1. Deserted Island AW p. 90

Have you ever felt like you were stranded on a desert island—thinking there was no one to turn to? Take a moment to consider the people in your church community. What do they bring to the island (skills, personalities, gifts, relationships, etc.)? Who can you, and the kids in your group, turn to?

### Questions for conversation while you work:

- Who is the first person you want on this island with you? Why?
- Is it different if you're stuck for a specific period of time?
- How do we benefit from community? What do we contribute to it?
- In the video, you heard that people formed communities to increase their chances of survival. Do you think the church helps you survive or live better? How? If not, why not? Do you help the church survive?
- Does participating in church or in Christian community affect or change who you are as a Christian? Why or why not?

### Where's this going?

Kids consider the benefits of community and the challenges of doing some things alone.

### Back it up . . .

"Now it's important to say that community doesn't mean that people all look the same or even believe the exact same things. In fact, it's vital for a community to embrace diversity and different perspectives to learn and grow together."

re:form DVD



## 2. On My Own AW p. 91

As a leader, what activities do you regularly engage in that require two or more people? What would it be like if you had to do these things on your own? Talk about an experience when community allowed you to do something you might not have been able to do otherwise.

### Questions for conversation while you work:

- What feeling words describe trying to do community activities on your own?
- What do you do every day that would be really hard to do without other people?
- What do you help people do that they might not be able to do on their own?
- If the Church is the body of Christ, which body part do you think you are? How come? What would the church be lacking if you weren't part of it?
- What did the video mean when it stated that Christianity is all about relationships with one another and with God?

### Get this stuff . . .

Camera or video camera.

### Where's this going?

Kids have fun while experiencing the benefits of community.

### Back it up . . .

"Christians believe that Christianity is all about relationships, with each other and with God. That God intended for us to be in community. That we can learn about God and follow Jesus far better together than by ourselves."

re:form DVD



### 3. Master-Pieces AW p. 92

As a leader, how have you benefited from the church community? What have you learned about God or what it means to be Christian from the people in your church? How has your understanding of what is holy grown because of the people you are in community with? Share one of these experiences with kids.

#### Questions for conversation while you work:

- What were the joys of working with others and with more shapes?
- What was challenging? What did you do about that?
- How did the people you worked with help you understand or see things differently?
- If we can create bigger and bigger creations by combining paper shapes, what else could we create if we worked together?
- How is the church like a bunch of people bringing together all their unique shapes?

#### Get this stuff . . .

Scissors. Construction paper. Camera.

#### Where's this going?

Kids build on the work of others to create something bigger and more diverse.

#### Back it up . . .

"People have always needed other people in their lives to help them understand how life works and how God works."

re:form DVD



### 4. Church Spies AW p. 93

Where do you see evidence of God at work in the church? How have you benefitted from the community? How have you contributed? What does the work of the church convey about its understanding of God? Invite kids to search for the joys and concerns of your church community.

#### Questions for conversation while you work:

- What do you like about your church? What do you not always like but think is a good thing? What do we think isn't so good?
- What would God like about our church? Why? What might God not like about our church? Why?
- Can we create Christian community in places other than church (friends, family)? What would it look like?
- What does it feel like when people in church don't "act like Christians"? How can we respond?

#### Where's this going?

Kids seek out concrete, real-world evidence of the benefits of faith communities, while being honest about the Church's periodic failures.

# respond

15-20 minutes

Gather to share the different points of view kids have discovered and developed during the session.

## Regroup

Play tag again. What benefits of community have they discovered? Sometimes it's more fun doing things (like tag) together. Talk about things your group could work on together that might benefit others (in the church, in your town, in the world, etc.).

## Share

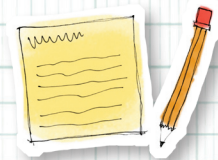
Invite kids to share their work and describe how and why they did it. Affirm those things you appreciate or find interesting and ask others to offer helpful observations.

### Questions for conversation:

- What was new for you today?
- What might you want to think more about?
- How do you think beliefs impact or influence actions?
- Where have you experienced God acting through our community? What did it feel like?
- What consequences do you see in trying to be a Christian by yourself?

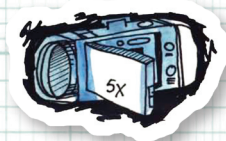
## Send

Gather kids in a circle to reflect on your time together and bless kids on their way. Hold on to the loose end of a ball of yarn and toss the ball to someone else in the circle as you say his or her name. The kid who catches it holds the new "end," and tosses the ball to someone else, naming that person. Continue until everyone has received the ball of yarn. Say a brief prayer thanking God for the ways in which communities connect and support us. Send kids out with a charge to be a blessing to the communities in which they find themselves.



### Get this stuff . . .

Ball of yarn.



### Capture it . . .

Use a digital camera, camcorder, scanner, web cam, or audio recorder to capture group conversations and individual pieces of work. Upload them to your online galleries, or ask kids to do so.



### Back it up . . .

"Everyone needs love and support sometimes, even Christians."

re:form DVD