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March 2003 issue

STORY BY  
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## got questions?

*Young people: the church has answers*

Answer a teenager's question and she'll ask 10 more, right? Our young people are inquisitive, challenging, sometimes doubtful, but always searching. We think they're running away from the church, but really the church is running from them--afraid to deal with their questions.

Sometimes this flee from reality takes on different disguises: tradition, a yearning for the good ol' days or a constant diet of fun and games. We--both individuals and congregations--easily slip into these disguises when a young person comes around with that looming question mark over her head.

In general, teenagers have three questions at the core of their being:

- Who am I, really?
- Do I matter?
- What is my purpose?

When young people are unsure about who they are, they frequently turn to TV shows, musicians, sports teams, name-brand clothing, cults and gangs to discover or establish some sort of identity.

When they begin to wonder if they matter, they become extremely self-serving and completely consumed with nothing else but themselves. This can lead to any number of negative behaviors--substance use, eating disorders, self-mutilation, sex and even suicide.

When teenagers are unsure of their purpose in life, they are likely to wander aimlessly, listening to lies from the media that trick them into believing their true vocation is "consumer." This leads to greed, hoarding and emptiness.

But here's the good news. We don't have to hide from their questions because we have the answers for which they search.

### Who am I?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

You are a child of God. You are a beautiful creation made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139). You have been surnamed (Isaiah 45:4) by God--claimed as God's own child.

At your core, that is who you are. Before you consider yourself a jock, a musician, a Cubs fan, a student or a loser, your primary identity is child of God.

You're part of an intricately balanced creation that depends on you as you depend on it. Each day you and the rest of God's creation are renewed and re-created, continuously being shaped and formed by God's loving hands.

When young people know and are reminded of their true identity, they are better equipped to navigate the waters of the teenage world.

### Do I matter?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

Yes, you matter. You matter enough to die for. You matter so much to God that God chose to become like you--to enter this crazy race called humanity just to be with you (John 3:16).

Not only that, but while on earth God, in Jesus, presented himself to you and the whole world as a servant. Jesus always had time for the people who seemed to not matter to society because they did matter to him. Jesus' life, death and resurrection are one big statement about how much we matter to God.

When a teenager has the opportunity to hear and understand how much he matters, his whole perspective of life becomes more hopeful.

### What is my purpose?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Your purpose is to live in response to all that God has done for you and in partnership with God. God has given you the Spirit and needs you to use your gifts to serve God and humanity as the reign of God is ushered in.

"To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). God has given you the Spirit, gifts and a purpose. You are to use what you've been given for the common good--for the whole world so all might know God's love. God uses the church to spread the word of forgiveness, resurrection and life everlasting.

You have an important role in this because the Spirit is manifest in you. This only begins to make sense when you live out your faith for the good of the community and the gospel.

When teenagers understand that they have been gifted and empowered by the Spirit, they begin to understand they are needed and to develop a sense of purpose that encourages them to use their gifts--bringing deep meaning to life.

### Always relevant

**You see, we do have the answers to the deepest questions of adolescence. Young people want to be with God. They want to be in church. And they have a hunch that the church might be a safe setting in which to work out their questions. We know what all people want to know. We know who we are, why we matter and what our purpose is. The answers are right under our noses in the confessions of our church.**

Our church is founded upon the answers to the deepest questions of life, yet we're paranoid about becoming irrelevant. These questions will always exist and these answers will always be relevant.

Young people are waiting. Speak the truth to them in all things. It's what they need to know.

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