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30 Games for Thanksgiving and Christmas

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Game: Chain of Events

Bible: Matthew 2:7-12

Topic: Trusting God's plan even when you can't see it

Use this holiday game to teach students that it's not necessary to know what God's whole plan is in order to follow Him.

As students get instructions for the game bit by bit, they will learn that God will not always reveal the next five or ten steps of His plan at a time; sometimes He'll just reveal one step at a time, and that's enough.

Supplies:

- Strips of yellow and green construction paper
- A stapler
- Markers

Before the game begins, write down instructions on the strips of construction paper. There should be a lot of these—at least 10 per every five students. These instructions should be things like:

- Take five steps forward
- Do three jumping jacks
- Trade places with the person behind you
- Take two steps backwards
- Lose a turn
- Spin around five times, etc.

Then staple the pieces of paper into a chain (like this one:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Chain>) with the instructions facing the inside of the circle, so you can't see them from the outside.

Have the students line up and tell them that the purpose of the game is to make it to the other side of the room, but they have to do so by following the instructions on the paper chain.

Lay the chain out on the ground. When it's a player's turn, they have to tear open a link of the chain and follow the instructions on it.

The first person to make it to the other side of the room wins!

Ask:

- Do you think the game would have been easier if you could have opened all the instructions at once?
- Was it frustrating to not know what steps you were going to have to take next?

TEACH**Say:**

It's kind of annoying to have to follow instructions that you can't even read until right before you have to follow them, isn't it?

With that game, you didn't get an entire plan. You didn't even get two or three steps at a time! The only thing you got to know was the very next step you were supposed to take.

Ask:

- Does that remind you of anything in your life?
- In your life, do you like to have a plan, or are you okay with only knowing the very next step you're supposed to take?

Say:

We all agree that God has a plan for our lives, right? We've said many times that God has a plan to prosper us and not harm us, to give us a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). But more often than not, we have no idea what that plan is.

And at times, that can be frustrating. But here's the deal—God will never, ever lead you astray. He may not give you a detailed, step-by-step plan for what He wants you to do with your life, but He'll always give you the next step when it's time for you to take it.

Ask:

- Do you wish that God would give you an entire plan, instead of only giving you the next step?
- Why do you think God asks us to trust Him without knowing His full plan?

Say:

Sometimes trusting God is something we have to do without having any idea of what the next step is. We have to pray, follow what the Bible says, and trust Him to tell us what we're supposed to do.

That can be a really scary thing. But if we're doing that, we're actually in very good company.

Read: Matthew 2:7-12

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Say:

The Magi, which we commonly call the wise men, wanted to go worship Jesus. So they went and asked the king where Jesus was. The king was afraid Jesus was going to take his spot as king, so he planned to kill Him once the wise men told him where He was.

But do the wise men know where He is? Not yet. All they knew was they were supposed to follow a star.

Yep. A star. They had no idea where this star was leading them; they just knew that the next step was to follow the star. And that one next step led them to Jesus! Isn't that amazing?

And after that, Jesus told them the next step—don't go back to the king.

Sure, God could have told them the entire plan from the beginning. He could have told them not to trust the king, He could have told them exactly where Jesus was, and He could have told them to take a different path home.

And eventually, He did tell them all of that. Just not all at once.

Ask:

- Why do you think God didn't tell the magi His whole plan?
- Does it seem like the magi trust Him in this story?
- Do you think you trust God enough to follow Him step by step, without knowing what's going to happen next?

Wrap Up

Obviously, the magi made the right choice in trusting God. But just like in the game tonight, where you only got to open one chain link at a time, they only got to know one step at a time.

But where did those steps lead them? ***To Jesus.***

It's important to remember that God's got a plan, but more than that, He's got our back. He wants us to end up somewhere great! Every day, He wants us to get the most out of it that we can. To serve Him with all we have. To *trust* Him. He wants to bless us!

And sometimes, that's best done one step at a time.

Game: Getting in the Way

Bible: Hebrews 12:1

Topic: We need to get rid of any sin that is getting in our way.

Use this holiday game to teach students that in order to run the race God has for us, we need to get rid of sin that hinders us.

As students try to unwrap bubble gum while wearing mittens, they will learn that sin can keep us from being successful in life because it causes us to become tangled up and not do what we need to do.

Supplies:

- Individually wrapped bubble gum (like double bubble, the kind that you have to untwist)
- Two pairs of mittens—the oven mitt type, not the kind with individual fingers.

Split the group into two sections and have them line up in a single file line. The first person in each line must put on the oven mitts and unwrap a piece of double bubble, which will be very difficult to do without the use of their fingers.

Once they have managed to unwrap the gum, they must chew it and blow a bubble before passing the mittens onto the next player who will then start unwrapping their gum.

The team that goes down the line and has had each player unwrap the gum and blow a bubble first wins.

Ask:

- Did the mittens make that game harder for you?
- Would you have been able to complete the game a lot faster if you hadn't been hindered by the mittens?

TEACH

Say:

That should have been a pretty easy game. After all, you just had to chew a piece of gum! What made it so hard?

It was so hard because your hands were all bunched up inside a pair of mittens instead of being able to function like they were supposed to.

A race that you probably could have completed really successfully took way more time all because of one silly pair of mittens.

Ask:

- If I had told you that you could remove the mittens during the game, would you have?

Say:

Of course you would have! No one wants to stay slowed down and stuck if it's something that they can prevent, right?

But sometimes, we act like in the game tonight, where you had no choice but to wear the mittens.

You see, we're all running a race here. That's what life is! God has marked out a race for us, and we're running it.

Along this race, our sin could hinder us and slow us down. It could cause us to get tangled up and have to take a break, or at least run really slow.

Knowing that, you would think that we'd be quick to get rid of it, wouldn't you?

But sometimes, we don't.

Read: Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Ask:

- What do you think it means to "throw off" sin?

Say:

I really love that visual! If you were running and something got stuck on you and started to tangle you all up in a way that kept you from running your best, what would you do? You'd throw it off! You'd want it as far away from you as possible!

That's what we're supposed to do with our sin. We're supposed to throw it off—to get rid of it so we can keep running this race that God has for us to run!

Ask:

- What sin do you need to throw off of you?
- Is there something in your life that, once you get rid of it, you think you will be able to run a lot faster?
- Do you think that sin does entangle you if you don't throw it off?

Say:

We're all running this race together. I just love to think about that, don't you? God has created this crazy amazing journey, and we're all on it together. We're running the race, doing what we're supposed to do.

But we live in a world full of sin. And until we get to heaven, sin is going to be something we're going to have to deal with. No matter how hard we try or how much we truly love Jesus, sin is going to be a part of our lives.

But there's good news! We know Jesus died for our sins, and that we don't have to live with them any longer.

Ask:

- How can you deal with sin in a world that's full of it?
- When you think of how Jesus died for your sins, does that make you want to get rid of your sin?

Wrap up

Just like those mittens got in the way of you being able to do your best in that race, sin keeps you from being able to do your best in the race God has for you.

And guys, it's a really amazing race. He's got such big, crazy awesome plans for you. I promise, you're not going to want to miss out on them! You're going to want to do absolutely everything that you can do in order to experience every part of this race. You're going to want to give it your all.

And that starts with throwing off any sin that's getting in the way of what God may have for you.

Game: Remember That?

Bible: Psalm 119:11

Topic: Hiding God's word in your heart.

Use this holiday game to teach students the importance of truly reading and studying the Bible.

As students try to remember what the rest of the group wants for Christmas, they will learn how simply hearing a scripture one time isn't enough. They need to study it for themselves and learn as much as they can from it, hiding it in their heart.

Supplies:

- Pens
- Pieces of paper
- A Bowl

When students arrive, ask everyone to write down what they want for Christmas. Have everyone write their answer down on an individual piece of paper, and then fold it up and put it into the bowl.

Have all the students line up next to each other, and then go down the line saying what it was that they wanted for Christmas.

Once everyone has gone, tell the students that you hope they were paying attention because now it's time to see how good their memory is.

One at a time, students will try to match the answers in the bowl with the correct person by handing everyone a piece of paper with the present written on it. Once they think they have it right, have everyone close their eyes. Ask anyone who got matched with an answer that was incorrect to raise their hand.

Continue going down the line until someone gets them all right!

Ask:

- Why do you think it was so hard to remember what everyone said they wanted?
- Even though you heard everyone tell you what they wanted for Christmas, you still have trouble remembering. Does that mean that hearing something just once isn't enough to remember it?

TEACH

Say:

Does this mean that you guys just stopped paying attention to each other tonight? I don't think so. I just think that hearing something one time isn't enough to remember it for any length of time.

Ask:

- If you know you have a test at school, do you only listen to the material as it's taught in the classroom, or do you study it more than once on your own?

Say:

Hearing something one time cannot be considered studying. It just doesn't make sense! If you knew you were going to need to know something, you'd need to put some work in on your own—write it down, read it a few extra times, make notes, etc.

But there's one thing in our life that's so incredibly important, yet we sometimes treat it like you guys just treated that game.

I'm talking about the Bible.

Just hearing about the Bible isn't enough. Even hearing me or someone else here read the Bible is not enough. You have to read it for yourself!

Ask:

- Do you treat the Bible as something you need to study?
- Do you make it a priority to read the Bible on your own?
- Do you think it's important to know the Bible? Why or why not?

Say:

There are a lot of things in life that we could debate, but this isn't one of them.

The Bible is so important. It's important because it's the word of God! So if you want to follow Him with your life, you're going to need to read it! And not only read it, but really, really dive into it and see what it teaches you.

If you hear about the Bible here pretty often, I'm so glad. That's awesome. But it's not enough. Nights like these are great—we play games, we hang out with each other, we learn about Jesus, we ask important questions... It's great!

But you need to spend time doing that on your own, just you and Jesus.

Ask:

- Why do you think it's important to read the Bible on your own?

Say:

You know God loves you; there's no question about that. You know He knows you better than anyone else. And you know He knows what is best for you and He wants the best for you. So knowing all of that, why wouldn't you just be jumping at the chance to read anything He had to say?

Read: Psalm 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Say:

How do you hide something in your heart? If that means not sinning against God, then I definitely want to do it. But how exactly do you go about doing that?

Hearing something one time isn't enough to hide it in your heart. I don't even think that reading something yourself one time is enough to hide it in your heart. So how do you do it?

First, you have to *want* to hide it in your heart. I know you guys have studied harder than ever before for a math test or an English final. But would you say that math and English are hidden in your heart? No, probably not. Because they're not important to your heart.

So the Bible has to be important to you. If it is, open it up! Spend some time, just you and Jesus, reading it. Ask Him to open your eyes to what He wants to tell you. Read it again and again. Write it down. Talk about it. Pray about it. Ask God to help you hide it in your heart.

Ask:

- How do you think that having God's Word hidden in your heart keeps you from sinning against Him?
- Would you say you have His word hidden in your heart now? Could you be doing a better job at it?
- Do you think God cares about how much you read the Bible? Do you think He wants you to read it more?

Wrap up

If you had a close friend who you loved a lot, wouldn't you want to hear what they had to say? What if, every time they came around, all you did was talk—and anytime they started to talk about anything, you just walked away. What kind of friend would you be then?

That's how we treat God sometimes. We want to be able to pray when things are going wrong, but yet He left us all of these awesome things that He's said—and we just don't want to take the time to read them.

I can't stress enough how important it is for you to read your Bible. When things in your life happen that cause you to need to know what God says about certain things, you don't want to be scrambling like you were in this game. You want to be confident of what God says, because you have hidden His words in your heart.

Game: Salty Snowmen

Bible: Matthew 5:13-16

Topic: Being Salt and Light

Use this holiday game to teach students that they are supposed to be the salt and light of the world.

As students try to build snowmen out of salt, they will learn about the verse that says salt isn't good for anything else if it loses its saltiness. In the same way, we are supposed to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and we should not lose our salt and light.

Supplies:

- 2 shoe boxes
- 2 large containers of salt (enough to fill half of each shoebox)
- Toothpicks
- Tape
- Glue
- Gum

Split the students into two teams. Give them all of the supplies.

Tell them they have five minutes to build a snowman out of salt using the supplies you gave them.

At the end of the five minutes, whichever team has made the most progress on crafting a snowman out of the salt wins!

Ask:

- Why do you think it was so difficult to make a snowman out of salt?
- Would have it been easier if you were using something else, like sand, or clay? What about snow?

TEACH

Say:

This game is a great example of how certain things are only good for what they were made for. Salt is really only good for being salt, not for being made into a snowman.

Ask:

- Did you know that Jesus calls us the salt of the earth?

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Say:

This verse confirms what we just learned on our own through the game: salt isn't good for anything other than being used as salt.

But what does that mean, since He's calling us the salt of the earth?

Well, it means we have a job. A job like salt.

So—what job does salt have?

Well, we know that it *doesn't* have the job of making snowmen. We learned that.

But what job *does* it have?

Ask:

- What are some things that salt does?

Say:

I know one thing that salt does is make people thirsty.

How many of you like to get popcorn when you go to the movies? How many of you put salt on your popcorn?

Okay, have you ever made the mistake of finishing your drink before finishing your popcorn? Or even worse, the mistake of not even getting a drink?

It's terrible! The saltiness of the popcorn—which is one of the reasons we love it so much—completely overtakes everything else. You can't eat any more popcorn. You can't focus on the movie. You can't do *anything* until you get a drink because the salt makes you so incredibly thirsty.

As Christians, that's what we're supposed to do for other people. We're supposed to make them thirsty.

We are supposed to live in such a way that when they look at us, they just know something is different about us. We should be so full of Jesus that simply being around us makes them want to find out more about Him.

Our life should be lived in such a way that, eventually, the people around us just can't stand it anymore and they absolutely **have** to talk to us about Jesus and ask why we live that way.

And you know where we get to lead those who come to us because they're thirsty?

We get to lead them to the only one who can quench their thirst. We get to lead them right to the living water.

Ask:

- Do you think that the way you live now makes those around you thirsty for Jesus? If not, is that something you want to change?
- What are some things you could do that would cause other people to want to know more about Jesus?
- How does it make you feel to know that God chose you to be the salt of the earth? Do you think that's a big responsibility?

Wrap up

It is our purpose to be the salt and light of the earth. And what a privilege that is! It's also a huge responsibility.

Thankfully, we have God's word, and that tells us exactly how we should live. And we live in a world today that is so sad and so full of sin, that simply living according to the way Jesus says we should live will be totally different than the way the rest of the world is living.

When you're doing something totally different than everyone else is, it's going to cause people to pay attention. It's going to cause them to notice you and to notice that there's something different about you. It may even drive them to ask you what's so different about your life.

And when they do, you will have the opportunity to point them directly towards Jesus.

All because you were living the way He called you to live.

Game: Listening Closely

Bible: Proverbs 2:1-5

Topic: Listening to God's instructions and following them the best that you can.

Use this holiday game to teach students that instead of comparing themselves to others in their walk with God, they should just focus on listening to God's instructions and following them to the best of their ability.

As students follow instructions to make snowflakes, they will learn that not everyone's relationship with God will look the same. This is why it is so important to know Him and follow Him for yourself.

Supplies:

- A white piece of paper for every student
- A pair of scissors for every student.

Hand out the pieces of paper and the scissors to all of the students.

Explain to them that you are going to tell them exactly how to make a perfect snowflake, so they need to listen carefully and follow your instructions.

Have everyone sit in their seats with their supplies, and instruct them to not look at each other.

Give the following instructions:

- Fold your paper in half.
- Now fold it in half again.
- Cut three triangles out of the right side of the paper.
- Cut a zigzag pattern on the bottom of the paper.
- Cut three lines on the top of the paper.
- Cut two circles out of the middle of the paper.
- Round off the left corners.

Now have everyone unfold their snowflakes and show them to each other.

Ask:

- Are all of these snowflakes the same?
- How is it possible that your snowflakes aren't identical? You all followed the exact same instructions, so wouldn't you expect them to look exactly the same?

TEACH

Say:

Look how awesome all of these are! I love how even though they are similar, they all look a little different, like us.

Now, you wouldn't have expected these to all turn out different, would you? We all sat in the same room and listened to the same instructions and followed the same steps. So how is it possible that we ended up with anything other than a bunch of identical snowflakes?

It's possible because we're all different. Our hands are different sizes, we all hold the scissors a different way, and we all have different ideas of how big a triangle should be.

That doesn't mean that any of you guys did something wrong when making these snowflakes. If you followed the instructions, then you did exactly what you were supposed to.

You can't compare yourself to someone else to see if what you are doing is right because we're all different.

Ask:

- Do you ever compare yourself to other people to judge how well you're doing at something?
- What about with following Jesus? Do you ever compare your relationship with Jesus to someone else's relationship with Jesus?

Say:

Having a relationship with Jesus and living the way the word of God says we should live is an ongoing learning process. We are going to make mistakes, we are going to think we should do things that are totally wrong, and there are going to be days where we just flat out mess up.

But guess what? He loves us anyway. And the important thing is that we keep trying to follow Him and we keep doing our best to follow His instructions.

Read: Proverbs 2:1-5

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Say:

This doesn't say "If you compare yourself to other people who are following me, then you will understand how you should do it." It doesn't say, "Ask your friend or neighbor what you should do to follow me."

No! It says to accept His words and try to understand them with our hearts. It says to call out to Him when we need understanding, not to compare ourselves to others! *That's* how we find out what God wants us to do and how we should do it.

Ask:

- Do you sometimes feel that you are not doing a good enough job at following Jesus?
- When you feel this way, are you more likely to ask God what you should do, or ask other people what you should do?

Wrap up

I have some kind of depressing news for you. Are you ready? Here it goes.

We are only human. This means we're not perfect. It also means we're going to make a ton of mistakes.

Whew, I'm glad I got that one out in the open. I hate to have to be the one to break the news to you that you're not perfect. But hey, someone has to do it.

Okay, now that we're all on the same page about how we're not perfect, we can move on.

We're going to make mistakes with our walks with Jesus. It's just going to happen. But what should we do when we make those mistakes?

We should just get back up and keep trying. We should just keep asking God to show us what we should do and try our best to follow that.

When I was giving you guys the instructions for the snowflakes, you all were listening and following them the best that you could. Yet we ended up with a bunch of different looking snowflakes because we're all different.

Every single one of you could follow God's word as best as you possibly can, and all of your relationships with Him are going to look different. That's because we all need different things, we all struggle with different things, and we're all learning different things.

God may ask you to give up something that He's not going to ask your friend to give up. You may feel like you can watch certain shows on TV that someone else feels like God doesn't want them to watch.

It doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong, or that you're doing anything right. It means that we are all going to grow in God in different ways. Don't think that you shouldn't do something because someone else isn't doing it, and don't assume that you should do something just because someone else is doing it.

So when you're trying to follow God, don't compare yourself to other people because God didn't call you to be other people. He called you to be yourself and to follow Him in the best way that *you* can. And if you're confused about how to do that, He wants you to ask *Him*.

Game: Snowman Down!

Bible: 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Topic: Building Each Other Up

Use this holiday game to teach students that instead of tearing each other down, they should take every opportunity to encourage each other, building each other up.

As students use unconventional items to create “snowmen” and try to knock the other team’s snowman down, they will be challenged to think about their actions and see if they sometimes act that way in real life.

Supplies:

- Different sizes of balls (beach balls, basketballs, etc.)
- Duct tape

Divide the group into two teams. Explain that the point of the game is to build three snowmen before the other team can knock them down.

They will get forty-five seconds at a time to start making their “snowmen” out of the supplies you give them by taping three different sized balls together. Every forty-five seconds, call a timeout.

On timeout, each team gets one chance to try to knock over the other team’s snowmen using a beach ball. If the snowman gets knocked over, he’s out, and they have to take that one apart and rebuild it.

The first team to build three snowmen without the other team knocking them over wins!

Ask:

- Do you consider yourself a competitive person?
- In this game, you could hurt the other team in order to help yourself. Can you think of any real life situations like that?

TEACH

Say:

Wow, you guys don’t hold anything back when you’re trying to win! There was some aggression behind some of those throws!

Now, that was all in good fun. It’s a game; of course you’re going to try to win by any means possible. And in that game, it was by hurting the other team.

What's sad, though, is that sometimes, we don't reserve that kind of behavior for games. Sometimes, that's how we act in real life.

Think about it. Why is bullying such a huge problem?

Because it's easy to tear each other down. Sometimes, it feels good to tear someone else down. I know that's something that we'd never like to admit, but it's true. If you can make someone else feel self-conscious, then it makes you feel better about being self-conscious. If you can make fun of someone else for having a weird laugh, it makes you feel better about your own laugh. It's stupid and selfish, but it's true.

Ask:

- Have you ever been mean to someone else so that you would feel better about yourself?

Say:

We're not supposed to tear each other down. Quite the opposite, actually. We're supposed to build each other up and encourage one another.

That should be way easier than tearing someone down. It should be our first instinct to be kind!

I think that sometimes we majorly underestimate the power that our words and actions have.

Ask:

- Have you ever had an experience where someone said something mean to you, and it ruined your whole day?
- Have you ever had an experience where someone said something kind to you, and it made your day so much better?

Say:

See? You can totally change someone's day with your words! And it's not even that hard! All it takes is a little bit of courage to speak up and say something kind to someone else. And while you may go about your day and forget that you even said anything, the person who you were kind to may be having such a better day because of you.

The same goes for negative words—you may forget you said them, but they could completely ruin someone's day.

Think about how happy it makes you when someone compliments you. So why not do that for other people and make them just as happy?

Ask:

- If Jesus were around, how do you think He would treat others? Do you think He would tear someone else down to make Himself feel better?
- Do you think you should make choices on how you act based on how you think Jesus would act?

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Say:

There are a lot of things in life that are always going to be confusing, and we're always going to have to question ourselves about them. There are plenty of circumstances that, when they happen, will cause us to have to really think about a lot about things before we decide what we're going to do.

This is not one of those things.

This verse doesn't say encourage the people you like or build up the people who are nice to you. Nope. It just tells us to encourage one another.

So when it comes to how we should treat each other, we shouldn't even have to think about it. The answer should always be kindness and encouragement, and it should never be bullying and tearing each other down.

Ask:

- What are some easy ways you can encourage other people this week?
- Is encouraging other people something you do a lot right now? If not, does reading this verse make you want to change that?

Wrap up

Let me tell you something about your words. You can always say more if you want to, but you can never take back the words that you say. The same goes with your actions; you can always do more, but you can never take back the things that you do.

So when it comes to other people and how you treat them, let encouragement be your first instinct. There are enough bullies out there. The world is full of people who are going to be mean and tell others they're not good enough. When you look at someone, try to see them the way Jesus sees them. Knowing how much He loves them, being kind and encouraging should really be an easy choice! Treat others in a way that would make Jesus proud—by encouraging one another and building each other up.

Game: A House For Elves!

Bible: Matthew 7:24-27

Topic: When we listen to God's words and put them into practice, we are choosing to build our lives on a solid foundation.

Use this holiday game to teach students that God's word is the greatest foundation they could ever build their lives on.

As students build miniature houses for elves that have to withstand a storm, they will learn that the only thing that's going to keep their lives steady in a storm is having a solid foundation.

Supplies:

- Toothpicks
- Mini marshmallows
- Jumbo marshmallows
- A bucket for water
- Styrofoam "snowballs"
- A small fan or a hair dryer

Separate the groups into two or more teams, depending on the size of your group.

Say:

There's a blizzard headed for the North Pole, and it's your team's job to build a tiny house for elves!

Pass out the marshmallows and toothpicks to both teams. Explain that they have to build a structure that can stand on its own.

Turn on some Christmas music and let the teams get to work.

Once everyone has built a house, give the other teams 30 seconds to test out how strong it is by causing a "storm"...hurling snowballs at it, causing it to be windy with the fan, and finally, making it rain with the bucket of water.

The team whose house stays standing (if they all fall, then the team who's house stays standing the longest) wins!

Ask:

- Why do you think your house was so easy to knock down?
- What would have made it stronger?

TEACH

Say:

It's a good thing there aren't really elves who need you to make them a shelter because those were all pretty flimsy!

I think that one reason your houses didn't stand a chance against the storm is because they didn't have a good foundation.

Ask:

- Do you think that your house would have stood up better if you had something sturdy to build a foundation with?

Say:

You could have built the strongest, most solid structure ever, and it still wouldn't last against a storm if it didn't have a good foundation. Think about it—the foundation is the start of everything. Everything comes back to the foundation.

It's like that in our lives, too. If we don't have a solid foundation for our life, it doesn't matter how good everything seems to be—we won't be able to weather a storm.

Think about it—if you had more time, you could have made your house just now look amazing. You could have made it super tall, or wide. You could have made it out of really cool shapes. You could have made it *look* really strong and sturdy.

But it still would have fallen down when the other team made it storm.

Sometimes, we can make our lives look really good. We can have good grades, good friends, good hobbies. From the outside, it can look like we have it all together and that we have built a fantastic life.

But it doesn't matter how well-built it *looks*...if we don't have a strong foundation in our life, there's nothing to stop it from crumbling in the difficult times.

Ask:

- Have you ever thought about the foundation of your life?
- What is your life built on right now?
- Do you think that's a good foundation for your life?

Read: Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall because it had its

foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Ask:

- Have you ever thought of the Bible as a foundation for your life?
- Do you think your life right now is more like the wise man's or the foolish man's?

Say:

I love it when Jesus uses examples like this one. There are a lot of parables in the Bible that you have to really think about to be able to understand, but this one is pretty clear. He uses two things we're familiar with—rock and sand.

There's a huge difference between rock and sand. One is strong, stable, and can support a lot. The other one is shifty, soft, and can't hold up anything.

So if you were going to build something you wanted to last, you'd definitely want to build it on rock.

Now, notice that Jesus doesn't say that you need to read His words or go to church and learn about them. That's not enough because even the foolish man heard His words.

Instead, you need to hear them *and* put them into practice.

Ask:

- Do you sometimes feel like you're doing enough by just reading or listening to the Bible?

Wrap up

We know that storms are going to come along in life. We know that we're going to face hard times at home, stressful days at school, confusing points in our life. It's just how life is—full of good times but also full of hard times.

If you want to be able to stand strong in the good times *and* the hard times, then you need to be sure you have a firm and strong foundation. And here, Jesus tells us exactly how to get that. We need to listen to His words *and* put them into practice.

Jesus describes two people here—one is wise and one is foolish. He also describes exactly how to be like the wise one and how to be like the foolish one.

Which one do you want to be like?

Game: Christmas Cookie Crumble

Bible: Psalm 46:1-2

Topic: Even if everything around us crumbles, God will still be there as our refuge, strength, and help.

Use this holiday game to teach students that no matter what happens, God will always be there for them.

As students try to stack different shaped Christmas cookies on top of each other using only their mouths, they will learn that God's help and strength doesn't go away when everything crumbles around them; it stays the same no matter what.

Supplies:

- A measuring tape
- Christmas cookies of varying shape (enough to make two stacks that are three feet tall)
- Four plates
- A table

Split the students into two teams and have them line up at least eight feet away from a table that is set up with two plates.

One by one, students have to race to pick a cookie up off a plate and carry it to the table using only their mouth. They will have to stack the cookies on top of each other to try to build a tower that is three feet tall.

(Have a leader or volunteer standing at each line putting one cookie on a plate at a time so that no one's mouth touches a cookie that someone else will touch.)

If they drop their cookie, they have to start over with a new cookie. If they knock the tower over, they have to eat three cookies before restacking the tower with their hands.

The first team to build a three-foot Christmas cookie tower wins!

Ask:

- Was it hard to keep the tower balanced when all the cookies were different shapes?
- Was it frustrating to have to start completely over whenever the tower fell down?

TEACH

Say:

That was a delicious-looking game! I love Christmas for a lot of reasons, but Christmas cookies are one of my favorites!

Now, you guys were kind of at a disadvantage from the start. You couldn't use your hands at all, so if the tower started tumbling down, there was nothing at all you could do to stop it.

Isn't that the way it goes in life? We can't control what happens, so if things start to fall apart, or tumble down, there's really nothing we can do to stop it.

Ask:

- Have you ever been through something where you felt like life was falling apart around you and there was nothing you could do to stop it?
- How did you deal with that?

Say:

Times of trouble are going to come along in life; there's nothing you can do about that. And usually, there's nothing you can do to stop or change what's happening, all because you're not in control.

But here's the good news—there is someone who's in control. Let's see what the Bible says about what He does when things in life start to tumble down.

Read: Psalm 46:1-2

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

Say:

I don't know about you, but if mountains started falling into the ocean, I'd be more than a little freaked out. That would probably mean that things were literally falling apart around us.

But what does this verse say? It says that *even when* that happens, God is our refuge, strength, and ever-present help.

So don't you think that means He'll be there when things start falling to pieces in your life?

Think about what an amazing promise that is. Ever-present means always there. God is our help who is always there. On the good days and the bad days, on the days where you fail a pop quiz and on the days you see straight A's on your report card. He's there when you're at your happiest and when things are going so badly that you have no idea what to do.

He's always, always there.

Ask:

- Have you ever experienced a time when, even though things weren't going good, you felt like God was your ever-present help?
- Do you consider God to be your refuge?
- How is God your strength?

Say:

It's so cool to think that the God who is still going to be there when mountains start falling into the sea actually cares about your life. And He really, really does. He wants to be your strength and refuge and your help when things aren't going so well.

You may not have control over all of the things that happen in your life, but He does. He knows exactly what's going to happen, and He promises that when it does happen, He will always be there.

Ask:

- Is God the first person you turn to when you have trouble?
- Do you think that God really cares when the little things in your life go wrong?
- Do you feel like God is a safe place for you to turn to?

Wrap up

A refuge is a shelter where you feel safe. God wants to be shelter against the storms of life. He wants to be the first person you want to turn to when you face times of trouble.

He truly is a safe place to find shelter. And His word promises that no matter how bad or troubling or scary things may get—even if the mountains fall into the ocean—He will be there to be your safe place. He will be there for you to find refuge in Him, always.

Game: Completely Covered

Bible: 1 Peter 4:8

Topic: Love covers a multitude of sins

Use this holiday game to teach students that above all, they should love each other with the love of Christ.

As students tie themselves to their partner by wrapping Christmas decorations around themselves, they will learn that love covers many things and can make things so much better.

Supplies:

- Garland, tinsel, or any other Christmas decoration that comes in strands
- Stuffed animals (enough for one per team)

Separate the group into pairs. Make them stand on the opposite side of the room from the stuffed animals.

Have the pairs stand back-to-back and hand one person the garland. Without moving from where they are, they have to hand the garland to their partner, who will have to wrap it around him or herself and hand it back to them.

This continues until the garland is gone and the partners are all wrapped together.

They then have to get to the other side of the room, rescue the stuffed animal, and bring it back to you.

The first team to complete this task wins!

Ask:

- When you were trying to get to the stuffed animal, were you thinking more about how good of a player you are or about the garland?
- How easy would the game have been without the garland?

TEACH

Say:

You guys did a great job. It was pretty funny watching you waddle back and forth all wrapped together like that.

What should have been a pretty boring game—walk across the room to grab a stuffed animal and bring it back—was made much more entertaining because you were wrapped in garland.

It didn't matter how good of a player you were or how fast you or your partner could move because you were wrapped in garland.

You had to completely change how you would have played the game, and you had to figure out how to move along with your partner because you were wrapped in garland.

Do you see where I'm going with this? The garland covered everything else! It changed the whole game and everything about it.

And that's what love does.

Ask:

- Do you think that things change when love is involved?

Say:

Let me give you an example of how love changes everything.

Let's say your little brother borrows your backpack. He doesn't ask you because he knew you would have said no. So he takes it without asking because he wants to use it for a field trip.

While he's on his field trip, he completely ruins it—he gets it muddy, tears it, and breaks one of the straps in half. When he brings it home, it's completely unusable.

How are you going to react to that?

Probably not in a very good way, right? You're going to be angry at him for taking something that was yours without asking, and you're going to be furious that he ruined it. You'd probably yell at him, or say something mean.

But what if, right when you found out about him ruining your backpack, instead of thinking how mad you were at him, you just started thinking about how much you loved him? And about how cute it was that he wanted to be like you and borrow your backpack? And how you'll always love him, no matter what?

Sure, you'd still be mad. But you probably wouldn't be as mad. And you probably wouldn't react in a mean way, right?

See? Love changes things.

Read: 1 Peter 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Ask:

- Have you ever thought of love covering your sins before?
- Why do you think loving each other is the most important thing?

Say:

Just like in that example, love can change things in every area of your life. If you bring love into any situation, it's going to be different. You're going to act different. Hey, **you** will even be different.

When you choose to love instead of hate or fight or point fingers or act selfishly—everything gets better. If you choose to think about God's love and how blessed you are to have that and how you should show it to other people, things that seemed terrible before won't seem quite as bad.

Ask:

- Can you think of an example where you chose to act in love instead of in something else? How did that go?
- Has anyone ever shown you love when you didn't deserve it? How did that make you feel?
- Do you think that you love the people in your life as deeply as you should? Do you act like it as much as you should?

Wrap up

Let me tell you about another example.

There was a God who created a people who He loved more than anything. He gave them rules to live by because He loved them and knew what was best for them.

But instead of following the rules, these people decided they didn't want to listen to Him anymore. So they started living in a way that was against everything He had ever told them. They completely ruined the perfect thing He had created, and they became so immersed in their sin that He couldn't even be around them anymore.

He could have responded out of anger. He could have banished them from His presence to suffer in their own sin. He could have taken away any hope they ever had of being with Him.

But He didn't.

Because He loved them.

He loved them so much, that instead of acting out of anger, He sent His only Son to be the sacrifice they needed.

Do you see how love can change things?

This is the kind of love God gives to us. This is the kind of love God wants us to give to others. And when we do, it covers everything. It makes everything different.

Choose to love others deeply, and see how things start to change in your life.

Game: Fill it up!

Bible: Romans 15:13

Topic: God fills us with joy and peace as we trust in Him.

Use this holiday game to teach students that God wants to fill them with joy and peace.

As students rush to find everything on their list to fill their Christmas stockings, they will learn that they can trust God to fill them with good things.

Supplies:

- 3 Christmas stockings (or more, if you have a large group)
- 3 (or more) each of:
 - Candy canes
 - Christmas ornaments
 - A picture of the nativity
 - Christmas movies
 - Christmas cookies
 - Santa hats
 - Candy bars
 - Any other item that fits in a stocking
- 3 lists with all of the above listed

Before the game, hide the items all over the room. Put some things in plain sight and some things in very hard to find places.

Split the group into three teams. If your group is larger, you can split them into more than three teams. Give each team a stocking and a list.

Tell them that on the count of three, they have to start looking around the room to fill their stocking. In order to complete the game, they have to find one of each thing on the list to put in their stocking.

The first team to bring you a stocking full of all the correct items wins!

Ask:

- Have you ever had a stocking on Christmas morning?
- Was it full of good things?
- Have you ever given anyone else a Christmas stocking?

TEACH

Say: I wouldn't mind having one of those stockings for myself! They're pretty stocked with good stuff!

If you've ever given anyone a Christmas stocking, you know how much fun it is to fill it with good things. You get to pick out things you think that person will like or things that you think they will need.

Giving gifts to other people is fun! And to get to fill one gift with a bunch of other gifts is even more fun!

Ask:

- Did you know that God fills us with gifts?

Read: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Say:

Our God is the God of hope. Isn't that so cool? Of course, we already knew that. Without Him, we wouldn't have any hope at all—hope of life after death, hope of a purpose, none of it! So we know that He is our hope, but it's just cool to see it written here... ***The God of hope.***

Ask:

- Do you agree that God is a God of hope?
- What are some ways that God is your hope?

Say:

This verse says "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace." Now, you guys filled those stockings with some pretty cool Christmas things. There were some pretty great gifts in there.

But no gifts you could ever fit in a stocking even come close to the gifts of joy and peace. And those are gifts that God does not only want to give you, but He wants to fill you with.

Ask:

- Could you use more joy and peace in your life?
- How has God brought you joy?
- How has God brought you peace?
- Do you think joy and peace are truly gifts?
- Do you want to be filled with joy and peace?

Say:

I don't know about you, but being filled with joy and peace sounds pretty amazing!

And this verse doesn't give us step-by-step instructions that we have to follow in order to be filled with joy and peace. There isn't a list of requirements that we need to meet in order to be eligible for this. No, it says, "as you trust in Him."

Trusting God is the right decision, no matter what. It is so right that being filled with joy & peace is a side effect of trusting Him! That sure sounds like a good side effect to me!

Ask:

- Is it hard for you to trust in God? Why or why not?
- Do you think God would like you to trust in Him more?
- What are some things you have trouble trusting God with?

Wrap up

The way this verse ends is my favorite. It says, "*So that you may **overflow with hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.*"

Overflow with hope. Wow. Of course we want to *have* hope, but wouldn't you rather *overflow* with hope? That sounds amazing!

And it all starts with trusting God. We can trust in ourselves, but where is that going to get us? We know we can't take care of everything ourselves—we don't even know what tomorrow holds!

Trusting in ourselves is only going to lead us to feeling stressed, worried, and overwhelmed.

Trusting in God will lead us to being filled with joy and peace, and overflowing with hope. Which one of those things sounds better to you?

Trusting in anyone or anything can be a hard choice to make. But I promise, trusting in God is a choice that you will not regret. He loves you and wants only the best for you. That's why He says in His word that trusting Him leads to joy and peace and hope. Overflowing hope.

Doesn't that sound like a good place to be?

Game: Fishing for What?

Bible: Mark 1:17

Topic: Jesus calls us to fish for people.

Use this holiday game to teach students how Jesus called His disciples to stop what they were doing and follow Him instead.

As students use candy canes to create a chain and “fish” for as more candy canes so they can catch the one on the ground, they will learn how Jesus told His disciples to become fishers of people and how He wants the same thing from us

Supplies:

- Candy canes
- A table
- A chair

Separate students into two teams and have the two teams line up behind a table where the candy canes are scattered. Place two candy canes on the floor in front of the table.

The purpose of the game is for each student to “fish” for one more candy cane by hooking the one they have through each other. They then hand what they have to the person behind them.

For example, the first person will start with one candy cane and make it into a chain of two, the second person will catch another one, making a chain of three, etc.

The goal is to make a chain long enough to be able to retrieve the candy cane that is on the ground. They may have to stand on the chair in order to make the chain long enough.

If the chain comes apart at any point, the student that was holding it must eat a candy cane before starting over.

The first team to retrieve the candy cane from the ground to the table wins!

Ask:

- Have you ever been fishing before? Was it harder or easier with candy canes?
- Did you have to work harder than you thought you would to get the candy cane off the ground?

TEACH

Say:

Now you can say you've been fishing with candy canes! That was pretty fun to watch.

If I told you guys when you got here that we were going to be going fishing for our game, you probably wouldn't have imagined I meant with candy canes, am I right?

In fact, I probably could have asked you to make several guesses about what type of fishing you were going to be doing, and fishing for a candy cane with other candy canes most likely wouldn't have been one of your guesses.

Ask:

- When you think of fishing, you think of actual fish, right? Do you ever think of anything else?

Say:

Well, you wouldn't be the only ones to be confused about fishing.

Read: Mark 1:17

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Jesus said this when He was calling some of His disciples to follow Him. Now, these were actual fisherman, so they knew a lot about how to fish.

Ask:

- Do you think they were confused by what He meant?
- What do you think Jesus meant by "fish for people?"

Say:

Jesus wasn't talking about the kind of fishing that has to do with boats and water and actual fish. He was talking about telling other people the truth—the truth about God and how much He loves them, the truth about how they can have hope because Jesus had come to earth to save them.

Ask:

- How do you fish for actual fish?

Say:

When you go fishing, you lure the fish in. You get some sort of worm or bait that the fish wants, and you wait for the fish to get curious and bite it.

Now, fishing for people is a *little* bit different. You're not going to be dangling any bait in front of your friends and then capturing them when they get close enough. Fair warning, if that's what you do, then when you show up here next week, you probably won't have any friends left.

No, that's not what fishing for people is. Instead of tricking people with "bait" that looks enticing, only to snatch it away, you get to offer them something real—and something worth a lot more than a silly worm.

You get to tell them about Jesus. Not so you can "catch" them yourself, but so Jesus can catch them.

Now, a fish may feel one way—not a very good way—about getting caught and picked up by a fisherman, but getting picked up by Jesus is the best thing that could ever happen to a person.

Ask:

- Have you ever told anyone about Jesus?
- If not, what has stopped you in the past?
- If you didn't know about Jesus, would you want someone to tell you?
- Do you think that by telling someone about Jesus, you're being a better friend to them than you would be if you didn't?

Say:

In the game tonight, the main goal was to get the candy cane from the floor to the table. When you say it like that, it doesn't seem hard at all! In fact, it seems like it would be something that was extremely easy to do and could be done really fast.

But it wasn't. It took a lot of time, a lot of brainstorming, and a lot of working together. You had to be careful and think about what your next move was so you didn't lose all the work your teammates had done. It took a lot of concentration!

Fishing for people is kind of the same. It takes some work and thought on your part.

Ask:

- If you didn't know anything about Jesus, and someone just came up to you and said, "You're a sinner and Jesus died for you, wanna pray right now and accept Him into your heart?" What would be your reaction?

Say:

It probably wouldn't be to pray and accept Jesus, would it?

Here's the deal—I'm not saying that you shouldn't go around talking about Jesus and what He did. You definitely should! I'm saying that it's going to take a little more work than that.

If you were going fishing, and all you did was throw a bunch of hooks into the water and wait, you couldn't be upset when none of the fish bit the hooks. Why would a fish bite a hook? It looks scary and intimidating.

In the same way, if someone's never heard about Jesus—or if they have, but they haven't trusted Him with their heart yet—it can be a little scary and intimidating to hear that someone died for them or that they are a sinner and can't go to heaven without Him.

That fact is the most important one they will ever hear in their life. But make sure you tell them *why*. Why did Jesus die for them? Because He loves them. Because He thinks they are wonderful and He wants to spend forever with them. Tell them about your own experience with Jesus—about how your life is different because of Him.

Ask:

- Do you think that fishing for people is something you can do?
- How are you going to start fishing for people?
- Do you have any particular person in mind that you know you want to tell about Jesus?

Wrap up

The phrase “fishing for people” sounds a little bit weird. But once you think about what it means, and what Jesus meant when He said it, it's one of the coolest things you could ever do.

Imagine that there was the greatest gift in the whole entire world right behind you. This gift could change your whole life! Your friend knew about this gift, but they decided not to say anything and to just let you keep walking without ever opening that gift. What kind of friend would they be? Not a great one.

Don't be that kind of friend. Because you know Jesus, you know the greatest gift ever. You know how much He can change someone's life. So don't let your friends keep going on with their lives without saying something—open your mouth and get to fishing.

Game: Gift Relay

Bible: 1 Peter 4:10

Topic: We should use our gifts to serve others.

Use this holiday game to teach students that God wants us to use the gifts and talents He has given us to serve others.

As students race to wrap, unwrap, and give gifts in this relay race, they will learn that they should be giving gifts to each other—not the kind that can come in a box but the kind that God has given to them.

Supplies:

- Three small gifts
- Three gift boxes
- Wrapping paper
- Scissors
- Tape

Spit the group into three teams. Put them all on one side of the room with the gifts and wrapping supplies on the other side of the room. Explain the rules of the relay race.

The first person in line will run and place the gift in the box, bringing the box to the next person in line.

That person will then run and wrap the gift box before running it back to the next person in line.

That player will run to the other side of the room, unwrap the gift, and bring the unwrapped gift to the next person in line, who then starts the cycle over.

The team to get through all of their players first wins!

Ask:

- Was working together on this race more fun than it would have been if you had been doing it alone?
- Wouldn't it be fun if you and your friends exchanged gifts that fast all the time?

TEACH:

Say: Oh, Christmastime. It's full of gifts! Gifts are wonderful, aren't they? Aside from the actual getting gifts part (which is definitely awesome), they remind you of how much

people care for you. They also give you the opportunity to do the same by reminding others of how much you care for them.

For example, if your friend gives you a Christmas gift and you open it to find your favorite movie, you feel loved. Why? Because you know that your friend took the time to find a gift that they knew would mean a lot to you.

Ask:

- What's the best gift anyone has ever given to you?
- Do you like to give gifts?
- What's the best gift you've ever given someone else?

Say:

It would be so cool to have an endless supply of gifts—to always be able to wrap a present and take it to school, making someone's day. It would be great to make Christmas last all year long like that.

But we'd run out of money the first week of the year. So there's just no way we could give gifts all year long, right?

Actually, there is a way.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Say:

This verse doesn't say we should give whatever gift we can buy or make or come up with. It says whatever gift you have *received*. Meaning you already have it! God has given us all different gifts and talents, and here we learn that He wants us to use those to serve others.

Ask:

- What kinds of gifts do you think God has given you?
- How can you use them to serve others?

Say:

If you don't feel like you have any gifts worth serving others with, ask yourself: What are you good at? If you're good at studying, you could offer to help your friends study. If you're good at making new friends, you could help introduce people who are too shy to make new friends. If you are good at making conversation, you could sit with someone who looks lonely at lunch.

You may not consider those things talents and gifts, but God certainly does. He gave them to you for a reason, and He wants you to use them to share with others.

Ask:

- Has someone ever given you a gift that wasn't a physical gift but a way that they helped you?
- Do you think they were using their talents?
- How can you use the talents God has given you to serve others this week?

Wrap up

Serving others is one of the best gifts you could give—it's way better than anything that could come in a box with a bow on it. It means a lot more because it's from your heart.

Not only is it something that means a lot, though. It's also something that God tells us we should do.

Isn't that cool? He picked what gifts to bless you with, and He wants you to use those to bless others.

You may feel like you don't have enough gifts to bless others. You may feel like your gifts aren't good enough to serve others with. But I can guarantee you that they absolutely are.

Do you want to know how I know that?

I know that because I know God made you. I know that when He created you, He decided exactly what kind of gifts you would have. He handpicked your talents.

And then, knowing all of those things, He asks that you use those gifts to serve others.

He would not have done that if you weren't good enough. So He thinks you're good enough.

And if the God of the whole world thinks you're good enough then, well, you are certainly good enough. It's time to get to gift-giving!

Game: Heavy and Light

Bible: Matthew 11:28-30

Topic: God's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Use this holiday game to teach students that God wants us to rest and be refreshed by following Him. If we're weary, we can turn to Him.

As students choose between carrying heavier things or lighter things, they will learn that the "burden" that comes along with following God is not a heavy one; it's actually a light one.

Supplies:

- Santa Sacks (These can be anything from actual Santa sacks to large black garbage bags—if you use garbage bags, you're going to want to triple bag the heavy items)
- Heavy rocks or bricks wrapped in a towel (light enough for a student to be able to pick up, but heavy enough that it's uncomfortable to carry)
- Candy bars.
- Cookies and Milk

Before the game, fill three garbage bags with rocks or bricks and three garbage bags with candy. Wrap the heavy items in a towel before placing them in the bag, so if they hit a player, they will not cause any injuries.

Select six players to choose a Santa sack and complete a series of tasks as you instruct them. Before they choose which bag they want, read them the tasks they are going to have to complete while holding the bag:

- Running from one side of the room to the other.
- Do five jumping jacks.
- Spin around ten times.
- Run across the room again.
- Skip back across the room.
- Finish by eating three cookies and drinking a glass of milk, just like Santa.

Tell the students that they can select any bag they want and that, as long as they complete the tasks while holding Santa's bag, they can keep the gift that is inside of it.

Encourage the players to ask the rest of the group if they think they should choose the heavy or light bag.

Once the players complete all the tasks, they can open their bags.

Ask:

- After all of that work with the heavy bag, all you were left with was a bunch of rocks! Did you think that bag was going to have something better because it was heavier?
- Do you think that the harder things are, the better they are? Why or why not?

TEACH**Say:**

Some of you got the short end of the stick when it came to what was in Santa's bag! Sorry about that!

I think that some of you chose the heavier bag because you thought there would be a better gift in that bag.

We're trained to think that hard things are good things. And sometimes, this is true. We have to work hard to make good grades. We have to work hard to get a good job one day. It's often hard to do the right thing and make the right choices, but it's worth it.

However, not everything that is good is hard and heavy to carry.

Read: Matthew 11:28-30

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Say:

This is so refreshing. Sometimes, we can get caught up in how complicated we think it is to follow Jesus. We can become tired, exhausted, and very, very weak.

And we don't have a God that says, "Tough luck! Suck it up and keep working!" No, that's not His heart at all! He wants us to come to Him and find rest for our souls. He doesn't want to lay a bunch of heavy burdens on us for us to carry, but instead He wants us to know that the journey with Him is easy and light.

That doesn't mean things will always be easy, or that we won't have to work hard. But it does mean that we have someone to help us carry the load.

Ask:

- Have you ever gotten to a point where you just feel so exhausted by all you're trying to do and everything you're trying to carry?
- Do you think that you can find rest in God?

- Would you rather carry your own heavy burdens or God's light ones?
- How is God's burden lighter than our own?

Say:

It can be confusing to think that God's burden is light because we may assume that following Jesus is one of the hardest things to do. But here, He says his yoke is easy and His burden is light. How is that possible?

It's possible for two reasons.

1. Because He already carried your burden.

He already died for your sins. You already have eternal life because He took the burden of all of your mistakes and regrets and sins, and He carried them all the way to the cross where He sacrificed Himself so you can be with Him forever.

2. Because He loves us and knows what we need.

We sometimes have no idea where we're going or what we're doing. And trying to figure those things out can add a lot of heavy pressure on us. But if you're yoked up with Jesus, you can trust Him to guide you in the way you are supposed to go. You don't have to worry about planning your own future out because He's already got that covered.

Ask:

- Have you ever thought about how Jesus already carried your burden for you?
- If He already died for your sins and mistakes, there's no use in carrying them around anymore, is there?
- How does it make you feel to know that yoking up with God can take a lot of pressure and worry off of you?

Wrap up

Sometimes we forget that God loves us so much. I don't know how it's possible that we forget, since He shows us every day, but we're human, and sometimes we do.

But when we wonder how things like this are possible—like how it's possible that following God is easy and light—the answer is often as easy as remembering how much He loves us.

He doesn't want you to be tired and weary, He wants you to yoke up to Him and find rest and peace. His great love for you wants to trade your heavy burden for His light one.

Game: How Many Can You Hold?

Bible: 1 Corinthians 10:23

Topic: Your Main Priority

Use this holiday game to teach students that they can do anything, but they can't do everything. They have to be careful because if there's too much going on in their life, they won't be able to focus on their main priority—which should be Jesus.

As students see how many Christmas gifts they can balance, they will learn that just because something is good doesn't mean it has to be in their life, and just because something needs to be removed from their life doesn't mean it's bad. Good things become bad things when they distract us from spending time with Jesus.

Supplies:

- About 20 wrapped gift boxes of all different shapes and sizes
- About 20 gift bags
- Small throw pillows

Choose two volunteers to play. Have them stand at the front of the room.

Have the rest of the group take turns loading these two players up with the gift boxes and gift bags.

The object of the game is to not drop anything. They can do whatever they can think of to hold all the presents as long as none of them touch the floor.

Since they are all different shapes and sizes, they will have to readjust every couple of turns to be able to hold everything.

Once they have four or five boxes in their arms, have some students start periodically hurling "snowballs" (pillows) at them to make it more difficult.

The first person to make it to holding ten boxes and ten bags without dropping them wins!

Ask:

- Does that game remind you of your life at all?
- Do you ever feel like you have to balance too much in your life?

TEACH

Say:

You guys are actually pretty good at this whole balancing thing!

I don't know about you, but that game kind of reminds me of how my life feels sometimes.

There's so much to do. There's so many responsibilities and friends and things I want to do that I feel like my whole life is this big balancing act. And then life will throw something I wasn't expecting my way, and it all comes tumbling down.

Ask:

- Have you ever felt that way?

Say:

For the rest of your life, you're going to have to balance things. Some of those things are a no brainer—you have to go to school, have to do your homework, you have to spend time with your family. But there are also the things you want to do—like play sports, or hang out with your friends. It can get really difficult to figure out how to fit everything in with the time that you have.

That's why it's so important to know what your priorities are.

Ask:

- What is your biggest priority in life?
- Do you think that the way you spend your time reflects your priorities?

Say:

We all have different priorities, but we should all have the same **main** priority, and that should be our relationship with Jesus.

We should put Jesus above anything else, even the things that we really love. Putting Jesus first means a couple of things. It means spending time with Him—making it a priority to spend time reading the Bible and praying.

It also means making it a priority to follow His path for our life. Reading the Bible is one thing, but we need to actually do what it says.

Ask:

- Is Jesus a priority in your life? Is He your main priority?
- Do you spend time with Jesus every day?
- Do you make it a priority to live your life according to how the Bible says you should?

Say:

The fact is that we all get twenty-four hours each day. That's all. No more, no less. It's up to you to decide how you spend your twenty-four hours, and it's up to you what you fill them with. But when those hours are up, the day is over. You can't do anything to get it back. You spent it how you spent it, and that's that.

That's why it's so important to know what your priorities are. Because, like it or not, you just can't do everything. It's impossible. And if you want Jesus to be your main priority, there are some things that are going to have to go.

Here's the deal—sometimes we hesitate to remove stuff from our life because it's not bad. But if you have a life so full of good things that there's no room for Jesus, are they still good things? Of course they're not.

In the game we played, you guys tried to balance Christmas presents. And when you tried to hold too many, they all fell down.

Are Christmas presents bad? No way! They're wonderful! But that doesn't mean that you can hold them all at once.

Ask:

- Do you think you're trying to balance too many things in your life right now?
- Are there things in your life that are keeping you from spending time with Jesus?
- As we've been talking, has anything specific come to your mind that you may need to give up?

Say:

If Jesus is your first priority (He should be!), then you have to get rid of the stuff that's getting in the way of Jesus. Even if it's not "bad" stuff, if it's keeping you from Jesus, it has to go.

Friends aren't bad. But if you have friends that keep you from living according to how the Bible tells you to live, it may be time to let those friends go.

Sports aren't a bad thing. But if you have so many practices and games that you don't have time to read your Bible or go to church, you may need to reconsider how you spend your time.

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:23

"I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive.

Say:

There you have it, guys. You can do anything, but not everything will benefit you or make your life better.

Wrap up

Keeping your priorities in order is something you're always going to have to deal with. It's never going to be an easy task, but one part of it is easy: deciding what your number one priority is.

I noticed something when we were playing that game. When you dropped the boxes, you didn't have time to grab the most important box or save your favorite from hitting the floor. No, when they fell, they all fell.

That's how life is when you try to balance too many things and don't spend time with Jesus. *All* of your priorities will suffer.

Don't let that happen. Jesus is the most important thing. If there are things in your life keeping you from living that way, then it's time to get rid of them. It may not be fun, but I can promise you that it will be extremely well worth it.

Game: The Human Christmas Tree

Bible: Psalm 150:1-6

Topic: We put so much effort into celebrating Christmas. We should celebrate Jesus and all that He has done for us all year long!

Use this holiday game to teach students that the gift we have in Jesus shouldn't be something we only celebrate around Christmastime. We should celebrate it all year long!

As students rush to transform each other into human Christmas trees, they will learn that they should be celebrating God and all He has done for them on a daily basis, not just once a year. Just like we go out of our way to decorate and celebrate Christmas, we should take the time to celebrate Jesus and all He has done for us!

Supplies:

- Garland
- Ornaments
- Wrapping paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Any other Christmas tree decorations you would like to use
- Cookies

Separate the groups into teams of five. Choose one student from each group to be the Christmas tree.

Have the teams transform that student into a "human Christmas tree" with the supplies you've given them. Tell them that at the end of the game, the team who has the player that looks most like a Christmas tree wins.

Turn on some Christmas music and let them get to work! Once everyone is done, have the players who were made into the trees line up in front of everyone else. Ask the group which team they think did the best.

Tell them that you're having a hard time deciding who should win, so there needs to be a tiebreaker. The first Christmas tree who can eat five cookies wins.

This will be interesting, since because the teams didn't know about this part of the game, the players probably do not have access to their hands.

The first player to finish a plate of five cookies wins!

Ask:

- Do you decorate a Christmas tree every year at your house?
- Why do you think Christmas decorations are such a big deal?

TEACH**Say:**

Some of my favorite things about this time of year are all the decorations you see everywhere you go. There are trees, lights, ornaments, snowflakes—it's beautiful! Everywhere in town transforms into a little wonderland—the mall, the streets, even most houses!

I love seeing all the decorations because it's so celebratory. People put out their decorations to celebrate and get into the spirit of this season!

Ask:

- Does seeing Christmas decorations make you feel like celebrating?

Say:

Christmas is such a time of celebration. And we really go out of our way to celebrate. We decorate, sing, have parties, and buy gifts. We go crazy with the cookies and the movies and the shopping. And truly, it's a time of year that represents something worth celebrating!

But, if you're celebrating Jesus...isn't every time of year worth celebrating?

Ask:

- Do you think you celebrate Jesus more at Christmastime than you do the rest of the year?
- Do you think that you should celebrate what Christmas stands for more than just once a year?
- What are some ways you could celebrate Jesus once Christmas is over?

Read: Psalm 150:1-6

Praise the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His acts of power; praise Him for His surpassing greatness. Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise Him with the harp and lyre, praise Him with timbrel and dancing, praise Him with the strings and pipe, praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Ask:

- What does that sound like to you? If you went outside right now and saw this scene, what would you think was happening?

Say:

That's a lot of instruments and a lot of music making and dancing!

If I saw this, I'd probably think there was some huge parade happening. I'd think it was a special event or a big party or something. Whatever it was, I'd know right away that they were celebrating something.

And that's exactly what this verse is saying to do. To celebrate.

But it's not saying to celebrate a rare special occasion or a big party. No, it's talking about celebrating something that is incredibly worth celebrating.

To celebrate God!

God is worth praising, right? I think we could all agree with that. But how often do we just go all out and celebrate God?

If we saw the scene being described in this verse happening around Christmas, we probably wouldn't think too much about it because Christmas is a time of celebration! But what about after Christmas? What about when the trees and the lights and all of the decorations come down? Should the celebration also stop?

Of course not!

Jesus wasn't just born for Christmas. He didn't just die for you for Christmas. He was born and died so that He could save you, so that you could be with Him forever. That fact isn't only true around Christmas; it's something that's true every single day of the whole entire year.

Ask:

- When was the last time you celebrated God?
- Do you think that the things God has done for you are worth celebrating?
- How do you think your life would look if you took the time to celebrate God and all He has done for you every day?

Wrap up

Celebrating at Christmastime is wonderful. It serves as a reminder of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. But if that's the only time we celebrate, isn't that kind of lame?

Think about this—Jesus was born so we could have eternal life with Him. That is a **big deal!** It's worth way more than just a day or a week or a month of celebrating. It's worth a whole year of celebrating!

I don't expect you to go gather your instruments and start parading through the streets celebrating all God has done for you—although that would be pretty awesome! But even if you don't do that, you can still celebrate. You can do it every day.

Celebrate by remembering all God has done for you, and taking the time to thank Him for it. Celebrate by letting that spirit of thankfulness flow over into the rest of your day, bringing a good attitude along with it. Celebrate by telling others why you're so happy and about all that God has done for you.

This year, don't let your celebration end with Christmas. Carry it with you all year long.

Game: Imitating Christmas

Bible: Philippians 2:3-5

Topic: We are supposed to act like Jesus

Use this holiday game to teach students about how we are supposed to imitate Jesus and His attitude in our daily lives.

As students imitate scenes from Christmas movies, they will learn that the best thing they could ever imitate is the way Jesus lived.

Supplies:

- A Timer
- Optional: Some Christmas movie clips to watch after the game.

Split the group into a couple of smaller groups of students. Tell them that each team has sixty seconds to act out a scene from a Christmas movie for the rest of the groups to guess.

You will want to make sure you choose movie options that most of the group is familiar with. Some suggestions are:

1. ELF
2. Frosty the snowman
3. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer
4. Charlie Brown's Christmas
5. The Grinch

Unlike charades, the group has to use words *and* actions! Sit back and laugh as you time your students while they reenact their favorite scenes from Christmas movies. The rest of the groups get to guess what movie the group is acting out.

The team that correctly guesses the most movies wins!

Optional: play a few of your favorite funny Christmas scenes

Ask:

- You guys were pretty good at mimicking those characters—is there anyone else that you act like in real life?

TEACH

Say:

I think that was even better than watching the actual Christmas movies! I had no idea you would be so good at imitating Christmas characters!

Have you ever heard the saying that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery? Well, it is. So The Grinch and Buddy the Elf should be feeling pretty flattered right about now.

We imitate those that we look up to, right? We imitate our mom or dad or maybe a favorite teacher. We sometimes even imitate celebrities because we like the way they dress or the way they do their hair. It really is a form of flattery because it shows who we admire.

Ask:

- Who else do you imitate in your life?

Say:

There's one person that we should all be imitating. Any guesses as to who I'm talking about?

Read: Philippians 2:3-5

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, **have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.***

Say:

We should be imitating Jesus! Of all the people we could imitate, Jesus is the best one.

Ask:

- How do you think you imitate Jesus?
- What does acting like Jesus look like?

Say:

We have a whole Bible full of stories and verses about how Jesus acted and lived. If we have any questions on how we should act like Jesus, all we need to do is open the Bible and read it.

Acting like Jesus is not something that's easy. We're human, meaning we're naturally sinful and selfish. So acting like Jesus is going to take a lot of work on our part.

There are plenty of instructions in the Bible on how we should act like Jesus, but even if we just start with this one verse, it's already going to be a challenge! Let's look and see what we've got to work with.

1. Selflessness.

Right off the bat, we see that we're not supposed to do things out of selfishness. We're not supposed to be only looking out for ourselves, which is often our first instinct. Instead, we're supposed to do things out of *selflessness*. Really, we could just stop here and work on this all week and still not get it all the way right. But let's keep reading.

2. Humility.

We're supposed to be humble by putting others above ourselves. Jesus humbled Himself and did this by dying for our sins, even before we knew Him. It doesn't get more humble than that, so we have a great example to look up to.

3. Have the same mindset as Jesus.

Wow, that's a tough one. The same mindset as Jesus? Where do we even start with this one?

We start with love. Because everything Jesus did was out of His immense love for us. He died for us because He loves us. He forgave our terrible sins because He loves us. He *keeps* forgiving us when we keep messing up because He loves us.

What if we treated others that way? What if we imitated Jesus in this way, loving everyone around us no matter what they did to us?

Ask:

- How can you be selfless in your life right now?
- Do you think you are living a humble life and putting other people before you? If not, is it something that you think you want to do?
- If you really had the same mindset as Jesus and showered everyone around you with love, how do you think it would affect those who are close to you?
- Do you think that imitating Jesus will cause people to look toward Him?

Wrap up

Of all the people in the whole world that you could choose to imitate, none will even come close to Jesus.

We will never be able to be perfect like Him or be as selfless, humble, and loving as Him. But we sure can try. And really—think about how big of a difference that would make in your life.

Really, think about it. What if you just made the decision that, no matter what, you are going to act like Jesus. No matter if someone is rude to you or if you unfairly fail a test or if you mess up terribly, you are going to act like Jesus.

How would your parents react if you started acting like Jesus and being selfless and helping out around your house? What would your friends think if you started acting like Jesus and humbly putting them before yourself? What would strangers think if you decided to act like Jesus and just love them no matter what?

If you ask me, I think it could change the world around you. It could change the people around you. And they'd definitely want to know more about this Jesus person you're imitating.

Game: Jingle Who?

Bible: John 13:35

Topic: Loving One Another

Use this holiday game to teach students that their choices and actions should reflect Jesus.

As students try to determine who the jingle noise is coming from, they will learn that the “noise” they make with their life will show others who they are living for.

Supplies:

- Enough small boxes (shoeboxes, empty tissue boxes, or gift boxes will work) for the group
- Two small bells

Before the game, choose two random boxes to put a bell in.

Pass out the boxes to the group. Explain that two of these boxes have bells in them. If they have a bell in their box, the point of the game is to keep that a secret. If they don't have a bell, the point of the game is to figure out who the two people who have the bells are.

Everyone has to hold their boxes in front of them as you call out instructions. Start with simple things—like walk across the room, sit down and stand up, turn in a circle.

After every couple of actions, say, “Who’s jingling?” And let a volunteer guess who they think is hiding the bell in their box. If they guess wrong, they’re out. If they guess correctly, they get a point!

After each guess, make the instructions more active, like jumping up and down, running to the other side of the room, doing one-armed jumping jacks, etc.

Once both jingle bell boxes have been eliminated, swap the boxes around and start a new round.

The first player to reach two points wins!

Ask:

- How were you able to identify who had the jingle bell?
- If it weren't for the noise, would you have been able to figure it out?

TEACH

Say:

It really didn't matter how sneaky the people with the jingle bells were; once you started making noise, it was game over. You could pretend you didn't have the bells, you could hide the bells, you could even flat out say you didn't have the bells. But the noise you made gave you away!

Ask:

- Have you ever thought about what kind of noise you're making with your life?

Say:

That may sound a little strange—that you make noise with your life—but think about it. Your words, your actions, your decisions and behavior all add up to the type of noise you're making with your life.

You can tell a lot about a person by the type of noise their life makes. Is it angry? Joyful?

When people listen in on your life, the kind of noise you're making should point them to knowing exactly who you are—a follower of Christ.

Ask:

- If you had to sum up the kind of noise you're making with your life right now in one word, what would it be?
- Do you think that when people look at your life, they know that you're a Christian?
- What kind of noise do you think you should be making with your life?

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Say:

You may think that loving one another is a quiet, meek thing, but I beg to differ. I think that loving one another speaks loudly, making a lot of noise.

When you love one another, you go against the grain. You go against what most of the rest of the world does.

When you love one another, you have patience and you forgive. That speaks loudly in a world full of selfishness and unforgiveness.

When you love one another, you put someone else above yourself. You are humble, you serve, and you are kind.

When you love one another, your life makes a kind of noise that points people straight to Jesus.

Ask:

- Jesus could have said anything when He was saying “*This* is how they’ll know you’re my disciple.” Of all things, He chose love. Why do you think that is so important to Him?
- Do you think that your life shows a lot of loving others right now?
- Do you think that those around you would notice that your life was different if you loved others like Jesus says?

Wrap up

Jesus could have said anything, but He said love. Of all the things that could point to Him, loving one another is at the top of the list.

Just like in the game, you can’t hide that kind of noise. Loving one another in this world is going to make you stick out. People are going to know that you are different. Your life is going to sound different than most other people’s lives, in the best way possible.

The noise that your life is making should make people stop and listen, and when they do, it should point them straight to Jesus. Isn’t being a disciple of Jesus something you want to be known for? If it is, now you know exactly what to do.

Love one another. In the loudest way possible.

Game: No Hands!

Bible: Romans 12:5-8

Topic: We're all different parts of the body, and every part is important.

Use this holiday game to teach students how we're all different parts of the body of Christ.

As students decorate gingerbread men without using their hands, they will learn that no matter what part they play, it's an important part. Even if they aren't on stage every week, their gifts are important and they need to use them.

Supplies:

- Gingerbread men
- Gingerbread men decorations, like icing, sprinkles, etc.
- A table

Set out the gingerbread men and decorations on a table. Tell the students that today, they will be decorating gingerbread men.

Line them up at the table and tell them to get started on the count of three.

Say:

One...two...Oh! Wait! There's one thing I forgot!

Tell them that they are not allowed to use their hands. They can decorate the gingerbread men however they want to, but they cannot use their hands.

Count to three and let the students begin to decorate. Let leaders vote on the best-decorated gingerbread men. You can have different awards: best overall, most creative, one that looks the least like a gingerbread man cookie, etc.

You'll probably need to allow for some time after for them to go wash up before the lesson!

Ask:

- Was it hard to do something without your hands?
- Do you think you take for granted how much you use your hands?
- Can you imagine if you had to go through the rest of your life without using your hands?

TEACH

Say:

I don't know who looked more decorated after that—the gingerbread men or you guys!

The point of that game was to see how well you would do without using your hands. No offense to you guys, but you didn't do all that great.

That's because your hands are important! What should have been a pretty simple task was made really difficult when you took the use of one part of your body out of the picture.

Ask:

- If I had asked you before this game, what would you have said the most important part of your body is?
- Did this game make you realize you need your hands more than you think you do?

Say:

If you asked me what the most important part of the body was, I'd probably say the brain. Or maybe the heart. Something big that everyone thinks about when they think about important things.

But this game showed us how important our hands are. Let's face it; you can't decorate a gingerbread man with your brain or with your heart.

Clearly, our hands are a very important body part.

But here's this thing: your hands are connected to your arms. So your hands couldn't work if it weren't for your arms. And your arms couldn't work without your elbows! So does that mean your elbows are the most important part? But wait—your arms are connected to your shoulders. So those are obviously important, too.

Ask:

- Now what do you think the most important part is? Is there just one most important part?

Say:

We could go on like this forever, because God made the human body so amazing and with so many cool parts. Every part is important because each part relies on another part to be able to function.

That's kind of how we are as the body of Christ.

See, your hands have specific talents. They were created to do certain things that no other part of your body can do. The same goes for your eyes, your ears, and your toes. Every part of your body is important because there's no other part that can do its specific job.

This is how the body of Christ is.

God created each one of us uniquely—we all have different talents, we all have different things we love to do and things we're good at doing. God created us with different passions, with different personalities, with different ideas. He made us all different so that we could all work together to serve Him.

Ask:

- Have you ever thought of the church as a body?
- What kind of talents do you have that make you different than other people?
- Do you think you are an important part of the body of Christ? Why or why not?
- Do you think that my job here is more important than your job here?

Say:

When you look at people doing things for Jesus, it's easy to think that some jobs are more important than others. For example, let's say you're really good at noticing when people look lonely. So if someone visits for the first time, you may sit next to them and say hi so they don't have to sit by themselves. That's a talent, and it's a part of the body.

But, is it as important as whoever is on stage every week giving the message?

Absolutely it is.

Read: Romans 12:5-8

So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Say:

See? We all form one body. And just like the human body, all of the members belong to each other because they all need each other to be able to function.

God has given each of us gifts. Whatever gift He's given you, He wants you to use it to benefit us all.

Wrap up

What if one day, your hands decided that your nose was way more important, and they wanted to have your nose's job instead? That would be ridiculous, right? Your hands weren't made to be a nose; they were made to be hands! And they're important!

If you think that your talents and gifts don't make you an important part of the body of Christ, then you're being just as silly as a hand wishing it were a nose.

It's easy to look at the people who are on stage at church and think that their job is more important and that they are a better part of the body of Christ than you are. But that's just not true!

Everyone has a different part to play, but each and every part is incredibly important. No one else can play your part. Make sure you play it!

Game: One Percent.

Bible: Matthew 18:12-13

Topic: Jesus cares about everyone and doesn't want even a single person to die without knowing Him.

Use this holiday game to teach students how God cares about everyone and desires everyone to be able to have eternal life with Him.

As students leave their nine gifts to go search for the one that the other team has hidden, they will learn that God is never going to give up on someone who doesn't know Him.

Supplies:

- Ten wrapped Christmas gift boxes.

Split the group into two teams. Give the first team the ten Christmas presents.

Tell the second team to steal one of the gifts and hide it somewhere in the building.

Team one must try to find the one gift by asking team two for clues. They can ask five questions about the location of the gift.

If they can't find it after five questions, then team two gets to steal another present and hide that one. Team one gets another five questions, this time looking for the two presents.

If they still can't find one, team two steals a third Christmas gift. If they find at least one, though, they get five more questions before team two gets to steal another gift.

If team one recovers all of their presents first, they win.

If team two is able to steal and hide all ten of the presents, they win.

Ask:

- When the game started, you had nine Christmas presents. Nine is good! Do you think it was worth it to risk the nine presents in order to look for just one?

TEACH

Say:

Most people would be happy with nine out of ten. Hey, so what? You lost one present. What's the big deal? You still have nine left! Those are pretty good odds!

But you guys weren't satisfied with just having nine presents because you knew that there were ten presents that belonged to you, and you were going to find them!

Ask:

- Do you know who else isn't satisfied with having all but one?

Read: Matthew 18:12-13

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.

This is one of the many times that Jesus taught using a parable. In this one, He's talking about God.

God doesn't want anyone to live life without Him. He doesn't want anyone to run away from Him. He knows we all need Him, so when one of His children is trying to live life without Him, He wants to do all that He can to bring that one person home.

Ask:

- How does it make you feel to know that God loves you so much that He would chase after you to bring you home, even if you were the only one left?
- Have you ever been like the one sheep in that story and wandered away from God? Do you feel like He kept pursuing you when you did?

Say:

This is pretty amazing because it shows that God loves us even when we wander off.

Think about this—God loves us so much. He gave His one and only Son for us, so we could be with Him forever. He has forgiven our sins and offered us eternal life.

Ask:

- If we wander away from Him after knowing all of that and knowing all He's given us, why should we expect Him to chase after us?

Say:

We shouldn't expect Him to chase after us. We certainly don't deserve it, especially if we choose to leave after knowing all He's done for us and given to us. We deserve for Him to turn His back on us and take back His love and forgiveness.

But He doesn't.

Why?

Because He loves us so incredibly much He can't stand the thought of us spending forever apart from Him. So instead of treating us like we deserve to be treated when we wander away from Him and turn our back on the life He's called us to live, He just shows us more love.

It's a love we could never possibly deserve on our own, but He gives it to us freely.

Ask:

- Does this change the way you think about living for Jesus? Does it make wandering away from Him seem like a stupid idea?

Wrap up

Most people would be happy with ninety-nine percent. That's an A+. If you took a one hundred question test and only missed one question, wouldn't you be so proud of yourself? That's amazing! It's *almost* perfect. It's everything, except for one.

But God isn't satisfied with that. He wants all one hundred. He wants all of us.

God could force us to be with Him. He could make everyone in the whole world follow Him and live life for Him because He knows it's best for us. But He doesn't do that. Nor does He turn away from us in anger like we deserve.

Instead, He gives us the free will to choose anything we want to. And if we're stupid enough to wander away from Him and His love, He chases after us and asks us to come back.

If someone you loved left you, even though they knew it would hurt you, would you be able to be selfless enough to chase after them and ask them to come back?

That would be really hard to do. That would be a crazy kind of love.

But it's the exact crazy kind of love that God offers us.

Why would we ever want to wander away from that?

Game: One Word at a Time

Bible: Proverbs 18:21

Topic: Our words are powerful

Use this holiday game to teach students that their words are more powerful than they think!

As students try to get the rest of the group to guess the correct Christmas themed subject by only using their words, they will learn that their words have a lot of power, and it's up to them to choose how to use that power.

Supplies:

- Paper
- Pen
- Whiteboard to keep score
- Something to play a Christmas song with that has a pause button that is easily accessible

Before the game, write down several different Christmas themed items in these categories:

- Movies
- Songs
- Traditions

One at a time, students will pick a subject from the pile of things you wrote down. They must then try to get the rest of the group to guess correctly by saying *one word at a time*.

After each word, someone from the group must guess before the player can say another word. The first player in the group that stands up gets to guess.

If they guess right, they get a point, and then it's their turn. If they guess wrong, turn on a Christmas song. They have to do the "chicken dance" to the song until you pause it, or else they can't guess again during that round.

The first student to get to five points wins!

Ask:

- Usually, when you're playing a game where you're trying to get a group to guess something, you're not allowed to use your words. Was it harder or easier to use your words?

TEACH

Say:

Wow, who knew that you could convey so much to your team using just one word at a time? You guys are pretty creative! Clearly, words are a very powerful thing. They're powerful at getting your team to guess the right answer, sure, but they're powerful for many other reasons.

Ask:

- Did you know that God spoke this world into existence with His words?

Say:

Isn't that cool? God created the whole world that we live in with His words. That's just awesome.

Of course, our words aren't that powerful. But they still have a lot of power.

Read: Proverbs 18:21

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Say: The power of life and death. Wow, that's crazy!

Ask:

- Have you ever thought of your words as something that is powerful before?
- That verse says that our words have the power of life and death. What exactly do you think that means?

Say:

Have you ever heard the phrase "speak life" before? Once you read this verse, that phrase makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? If we have the power of life and death in our words, then we have a choice to make. We can either speak life, or we can speak death.

I don't know about you, but I'd much rather speak life than death.

Ask:

- Do you think that having the power to speak life or death is a big responsibility?
- How do you speak life?

Say: We can speak life by choosing our words carefully and only using words that are full of truth and life. Some examples are:

1. Love

If you speak with love—especially if you speak with the love of Jesus—then you will be speaking life.

2. Kindness

Use your words for kindness, not for meanness. Use your words to compliment and not criticize, to build up and not tear down. Encourage other people by showing them the kindness that you have through Jesus.

It's not common to be kind. I guarantee that if you are using kind words, you will be speaking life into someone's day.

3. Truth

Don't be afraid to speak the truth of Jesus. Does it get any more full of life than Jesus? No. So talk about Him! Tell the people around you about Him. Share His love and forgiveness. Nothing can bring life to someone like learning about Jesus!

Ask:

- Do you think you have the power to bring life to someone's day with your words?
- Have you ever had your day (or more) ruined because of someone's words?
- Have you ever had a bad day turn into a good day because of someone's words?
Do you think they were speaking life when this happened?

Wrap up

Our words are powerful, and because of this, they are also dangerous. They can be as quick and vicious weapons, or they can be a quick and calm healer.

People will remember the words that you say to them. And once you've spoken words into existence, you cannot take them back. This means the words that we speak come with a big responsibility.

Of course, we're human and we're going to mess up. We're going to have days where we forget to speak life, where we speak without thinking and then have to apologize. But in order to avoid things like that, here are three questions you can ask yourself before saying something:

- Is this absolutely necessary to say?
- Am I the one who should say it?
- Will I regret saying this later?

Asking yourself those three questions can save you from saying a lot of words that shouldn't have been said.

Your words have power—that is a huge gift. They have the power to speak life into other people, and that's an amazing thing.

Just remember that the way you choose to use your words is a huge responsibility. Choose them carefully.

Game: Putting the Pieces Together

Bible: Romans 8:28

Topic: God will work everything together for our good.

Use this holiday game to teach students that God works the pieces of their life together to create something good even when they don't know what's going on.

As students try to unscramble pieces and put them together to create a picture of something, they will learn that God takes everything in their life—good and bad—and will work it together for their good.

Supplies:

- 4 Printed out photos of Christmas characters (Santa, an elf, a reindeer, etc.)
- Scissors
- Two tables

Before the game, cut each picture into several pieces. Hide the pieces all around the room.

Split the group into two teams. Tell them that there are four pictures scrambled into pieces in this room. They must find the pieces and put them together to create a picture that will have something to do with Christmas.

On your go, the teams have to rush around the room and find the pieces. They have to bring them back to their table and try to put them together.

Since the picture pieces will not all be cut up and hidden together, the teams will eventually have to trade with each other to make an entire picture.

The first team to put two Christmas pictures together on their table wins!

Ask:

- Do you enjoy doing puzzles like that?
- Was it hard to put together a puzzle when you didn't know what it was a puzzle of?
- Does your life ever feel like a puzzle that you don't know how to put together?

TEACH

Say:

Puzzles can actually be a lot of fun. They're challenging, of course, but that's part of the reason people like them so much!

When you're putting together a puzzle without having any idea of what it's supposed to be though, it becomes way more challenging.

Sometimes life is like that. How often have you heard words like "everything happens for a reason" or "everything will work out in the end" or something along those lines? Probably a lot.

Life has a bunch of pieces. Choices, actions, situations...all pieces that are parts of our life.

So we're supposed to believe that all of the pieces—good stuff and bad stuff—will eventually be put together.

But that can be really hard, because it's like you guys running around looking for those pieces. You knew that there were pieces, but you had no idea what they were for or if you had the right ones or not. You didn't know if what you were trying to put together would even work with the pieces that you had.

Ask:

- How can we know that we'll be able to put the pieces of our life in the order they are supposed to go?

Say:

The honest answer? We can't.

But I know someone who can.

Read: Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

Say:

No matter how hard we try to be positive or do the right thing, we can't always work our situations out for good. There are going to be pieces of our life that we don't understand and we have no idea how they are possibly going to fit into the big picture as something good.

But we have someone on our side who is working for our good.

My favorite part of that verse is that it covers everything. We don't only know that God is working for our good in the good situations or that He works for our good in the easy things.

No, He works for our good in *all things*.

Ask:

- How does it make you feel to know that God works for your good in all things?
- What do you think it means to be called according to His purpose?
- Does knowing that God is working for your good change the way you think about the pieces of life you don't understand?

Wrap up

God has called each and every one of you. He has a purpose for you, and He wants to use you for great, wonderful, amazing things.

What a relief it is to know that we don't have to figure everything out on our own. Our life is going to be a puzzle sometimes, and there are going to be plenty of times where we have no idea how to start putting it together.

But we know that no matter what, God is working for our good in all things. We can hand the tough pieces, the confusing pieces, everything over to Him and trust that He's working for our good.

That verse doesn't say, God works for the good of those who follow the exact life plan they're supposed to, but not if they mess up. It doesn't say, He works for the good of those who know what they're doing. Instead, it says for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

God could require us to do a lot of things in order for Him to work for our good, but He doesn't. He just asks that we love Him.

And if you do, you can rest assured that He's working the entire puzzle of your life out for good.

Game: Santa Who?

Bible: Matthew 25:35-40

Topic: Doing for others what you would do for Jesus

Use this holiday game to teach students about how when we do things for others, it's as if we're doing them for Jesus.

As students use cans of whipped cream and candy to disguise each other as Santa, they will learn to view opportunities to help other people as opportunities to help Jesus in disguise.

Supplies:

- 5 cans of whipped cream
- A plastic tarp or garbage bag (to keep the whipped cream from making a mess)
- Small candies, like M&M's and Red Hots

Choose five students who aren't afraid to get messy. These five will be "Santa." Split the rest of the students into five groups.

The purpose of the game is for the students to transform the Santa of their group to look as much like Santa as they can using the whipped cream and candies.

When they are finished, the players getting made over should look nothing like themselves.

The team who does the best job at creating a disguise that makes the player look like Santa wins!

Ask:

- If your friends walked in, do you think they would have recognized your face under all that candy and whipped cream?
- Have you ever worn a disguise to trick someone before? Have you ever been tricked by someone wearing a disguise?
- Do you think that people you know would treat you differently if they thought you were a stranger?

TEACH

Say:

That's quite the makeover you guys got there! I mean, I wouldn't exactly say it's your *best* look...but hey, it's not so bad!

The point of that very messy, sticky game was to disguise the five of you. I have to say, your teams did a great job. I don't know that I would have recognized you!

Let everyone clean up and sit back down.

Say:

We all treat different people different ways. For example, the way you treat your best friend is different than the way you treat a stranger. The way you act around your teacher is different than the way you act around your siblings.

What you'll do for people also depends on how well you know them. If your best friend leaves their lunch money at home and asks you to buy their lunch, you'd do it. But if a stranger on the street asked you to buy their lunch, you probably wouldn't.

Ask:

- Do you agree that you treat people you know different than you treat strangers?

Say:

We're supposed to love everyone and to treat others as we would want to be treated. Now, of course we should do that to strangers and even people we don't like. We should be kind and loving and compassionate. We should be quick to give them what they need. We should act that way towards *everyone*. But really, it's just easier to do with people who we know and love.

Ask:

- If it was snowing, and a stranger asked you to give them your only coat, would you?
- If you only had one lunch and a stranger asked if they could have it, would you give it to him?
- What if your best friend asked for it?

Say:

Those are tough questions! I mean, I know we're supposed to love everyone, even strangers. I know we're supposed to be giving. But would I really give a stranger my only coat when it was snowing? That's a tough one!

Even if I did, I can tell you that I probably wouldn't have the best attitude about it. I may hand it over, but I would probably do so begrudgingly. Just being honest here! It would be really hard to have a good attitude about giving up something which was important to me for a stranger that I would never see again.

Ask:

- What if it was Jesus asking for your coat? Would you give it to Him?
- Do you think your attitude would be different if it were Jesus you were helping? Would it be better or worse?
- Would you treat Jesus better than you would treat a stranger on the street?

Say:

Of course you would treat Jesus better than a stranger on the street! If a homeless person walked in right now and asked you for your brand new shoes, you'd probably say no.

If Jesus walked in and asked you for your brand new shoes . . . well, that would be a different story!

But what if I told you that Jesus thinks that our reaction to both of those situations should be the same?

Read: Matthew 25:35-40

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Then the righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”

The king will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Say:

This verse really shows us the heart of our God, which is really cool.

He's saying that when you're kind to strangers, when you give food to the hungry, when you are generous and provide something to people who are in need, it's just like you did it for Him.

He cares about how we treat each other so much that He's saying we should view what we do for others--for *strangers*--as if we were doing it for Him.

Ask:

- Does that change the way you think you should treat others?
- Is this going to change how you treat strangers?

Wrap up

In the game, we disguised people as Santa Clause. When you looked at _____, you didn't see him, you saw Santa. A sticky, messy, Santa, but still Santa.

We can learn a lot from that. Because when we look at strangers, we shouldn't see them. We should see Jesus in disguise. We should see an opportunity to do something for Jesus.

The guy who lives on the street, who smells bad and doesn't have anywhere to live? He's not Jesus. But if you give to Him, it's like your giving to Jesus.

The kid that goes to your school who has no friends and is always being bullied isn't Jesus. But if you stick up for him, it's like your sticking up for Jesus.

Jesus loves us all so much. He loves the "least of these" and so should we.

The next time you see an opportunity to help a stranger, remember this verse. Remember that not only is it an opportunity to do something nice for a stranger, it's an opportunity to do something nice for Jesus.

Game: Secret Gifts

Bible: Matthew 6:3-4

Topic: Giving to others in secret.

Use this holiday game to teach students that when they give, they shouldn't brag about it but rather keep it between them and God.

As students toss marshmallows through a wreath and into a gift bag before giving that bag to another student, they will learn that gifts given in secret have much more meaning than those given publically.

Supplies:

- Marshmallows
- A wreath
- A tablecloth
- Gift bags
- Sticky-notes
- Pen

Hang a wreath up in the room with a gift bag behind it. Show students how to toss the marshmallow through the wreath to try to make it into the gift bag.

Once they understand what they are supposed to be doing, have two students come hold a tablecloth under the wreath, so that no one can see the bag.

Each student has thirty seconds to throw as many marshmallows through the wreath as possible. Once they are done, write their name on a sticky-note and secretly put it on the bottom of the bag before setting the bag aside.

Once all the students have gone, pass the bags out among everyone. Tell them that these are gifts, and that they have to try to guess who their gift is from.

Since the table cloth was covering the gift bag, students will not know who was good at this game and who wasn't, making it really hard to guess.

End the game by letting the students have a "snowball fight" with the marshmallows in their bag.

Ask:

- Was it hard to guess who your bag was from? Why?
- Do you think that getting gifts in secret is more fun?
- Do you think that giving gifts in secret is more fun?
- Have you ever received a secret gift from someone?

TEACH

Say:

That's the tastiest snowball fight I've ever seen!

It was fun to keep those gifts a secret. Watching you guys guess when you had no way of knowing who your gift bag came from was pretty funny!

Then, you got to use the marshmallows as ammo for the snowball fight. Some of you had a lot of ammo, and some of you only had a little. Some of you may have even had none!

Ask:

- Would it have made a difference if you had known who your bag was from?

Say:

No, it wouldn't have made a difference! You got what you got, and knowing who it was from would not have changed that.

Sometimes, when we give gifts, we like to show off. Giving gifts is pretty fun, so it makes sense that we would like to make a big deal about it. But I'm not only talking about Christmas gifts. I mean other gifts, too.

Gifts like cleaning the kitchen for your mom because you know she's had a hard week at work. Or using your allowance to buy a kid at your school some ice cream at lunch because you know that they don't have a lot of money.

Those are really great gifts. But do you know what would make them even better? Doing them in secret.

Ask:

- Which gift do you think would mean more:
 - Secretly buying your teacher a coffee and leaving it on her desk with a note that says, "thanks for your hard work!" OR
 - Buying your teacher coffee and bringing it to class, making a big deal about how you bought the coffee.

Say: There's just something about doing something nice for someone in secret that makes it better, right? Jesus thought so, too.

Read: Matthew 6:3-4

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Ask:

- Why do you think that God says it's better to give in secret?
- Why do you think He wants to reward you for things that are done in secret?
- Is your attitude when you are doing something for someone else in secret different than when you are doing something for someone else in front of everyone?

Say:

I think the biggest difference between doing something nice for someone privately and doing something nice for someone publically is your heart.

If you do something in front of everyone, you're going to expect people to think highly of you and say nice things about you. You're going to expect a thank you from whoever you did something for, and you may even expect them to do something nice for you in return.

But when you do something in secret, you're not expecting anything, because no one will know who to thank or compliment. Your motives can't be selfish, because you and God are the only ones who know what you are doing.

But that is when you will be the most rewarded.

Ask:

- What are some ways you can secretly give to others?
- Do you think it would make other people feel loved to know someone was secretly helping them?
- Do you think this is a good way to show God's love to other people?

Wrap up

We live in a very selfish culture. Society tells us that when we do something nice, we should parade it all around, milking it for all it's worth so that others will see us and know how great we are.

But the verse right before the one we read talks about that, and it says the people who do things like that have already received their reward in full. Sure, it's a nice reward, hearing someone say thank you or compliment you. Knowing that people know you did a good thing is nice, of course.

However, it doesn't even come close to equaling the reward of God. So the next time you think about giving to someone, think about your reward for doing so—it can come from people or from God. Which would you rather have?

Game: Sharpening One Another

Bible: Proverbs 27:17

Topic: Working Together

Use this holiday game to teach students the importance of working together and encouraging each other.

As students engage in this game of friendly competition, they will learn that just like iron sharpens iron, they can sharpen one another. It's better to work together than alone.

Supplies:

- Red and green construction paper
- A marker

Before the game begins, write out the following lyrics with one letter on each sheet of construction paper:

- WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
- RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER

Split the group into two teams, and mix all the letters together before splitting them between the two groups.

Tell the group that they have to use their letters to spell out a phrase on the ground. That phrase can be: We wish you a merry Christmas, Baby it's cold outside, Rudolph the red nosed reindeer, or it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

Because you scrambled the letters, they won't be able to spell out a phrase without some letters from the other team.

In order to get a letter from the other team, they have to trade one of their letters.

The first team to spell out their phrase wins!

Ask:

- Was it weird to have a game where you could only compete while working with the other team?
- Was the game a lot easier once you started trading letters?

TEACH

Say:

Now, that was a new twist on a game! Having to actually work with the other team, but trying to beat them at the same time? Interesting, right?

It was still a competition, of course. But by working together, both teams were able to encourage the other team. It wasn't an unfair advantage because you both pushed each other closer to winning.

Ask:

- Do you think it's possible to do that in real life? For friends to encourage each other equally?

Say:

It's not popular to work together with other people and to push them towards winning. That's because we live in a selfish world where we're told to always put ourselves first, even if it means tearing other people down.

But, just like most other things in life, the Bible has a completely different perspective than the world does.

Read: Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Say:

I like this because it focuses on both people in this picture. This is not a verse about only one friend needing help, or about only one friend helping someone else. It's not like a favor is being done by someone who is expecting nothing in return.

No, these friends are helping each other! They are sharpening each other.

Ask:

- What do you think it means to sharpen one another?

Say:

I think that sharpening one another means encouraging and helping each other to be the best that they can possibly be.

Just like iron is at its best when it's sharpened, we are at our best when we're close to God. So sharpening each other would mean pushing each other closer to Jesus. It would mean challenging each other to live the right way and do the right things.

But in this example of working together, you are not only pushing someone else toward Jesus, but you're also getting pushed towards Jesus by them. By encouraging someone else to live in the right way, you're also being encouraged to live the right way. It's not one-sided.

Doesn't that sound like a really great friendship? I think it does.

Ask:

- Do you think you are at your best when you are close to Jesus?
- Do you have any friends that sharpen you by pushing you to be your best?
- Is that the kind of friend that you try to be?
- Is this the kind of friend you think that Jesus would be?
- What are some ways that you can try to be this kind of friend to others?

Wrap up

You can go through life alone, if you choose to. You can face challenges alone and fight battles alone and even experience good things alone. But why would you?

God designed friendship, and here we see such a wonderful picture of it, completely different from what the world says friendship should look like.

The world may say that working together to help each other is a bad idea. The world may say that it's best to be selfish and only care about yourself and only have friends if those friends are going to benefit you in some selfish way. But let me just tell you—the world is wrong.

Iron sharpens iron. Think about that. It means that by sharpening another person, you're becoming sharp yourself. And when another person sharpens you, they're sharpening themselves, too.

How cool is that?!

So sure, you can be selfish and only look out for yourself. Or you can be lonely and go through life on your own.

But when you think about it, working together with others and being an iron-sharpens-iron kind of friend benefits you, because you're getting sharpened, too.

Game: Stay in the Lines

Bible: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Topic: The things the Bible tells us are for our own good!

Use this holiday game to teach students that God's word isn't just a bunch of rules to ensure we don't have fun but rather a guide from the one who knows what is best for us.

As students navigate Christmas ornaments through a maze without letting the ornaments go outside of the boundaries, they will learn that following the instructions in the Bible will lead to the best life possible.

Supplies:

- Christmas ornaments (the round ones)
- Straws
- Tape

Before the game, tape a section of the room into a "maze." Leave the inside of the maze wide enough for two people to be in at one time.

Break the students up into two teams. Two players at a time (one from each team) must navigate their ornament through the maze by blowing on it with a straw.

If their ornament goes out of bounds at any point, they have to stand up, sing a verse of their favorite song, and then start over.

The team whose players all finish first wins!

Ask:

- Was it harder to stay inside the boundaries of the maze than you thought it was going to be?
- Do you think of boundaries as a good thing or a bad thing?
- Is staying inside boundaries something you have trouble with in your life?

TEACH

Say:

Sometimes, we think of boundaries as a bad thing. We view them as rules to make sure we don't have too much fun or keep us from experiencing new things.

Really, though, boundaries are usually there for our own good.

Take a fireplace, for example. Fire is a wonderful thing. It's even a great thing to have in your house, if you have a fireplace. Especially this time of year! Nothing beats curling up next to a fire with some hot chocolate.

Fire is also an incredibly dangerous thing. It can hurt you and even kill you. So how is it possible to have fire in the house?

It's possible because of the boundaries of the fireplace. We know that we have to follow the rules and keep the fire within those boundaries. And if we do that, we can create a really nice evening.

What would happen though, if one day you decided that the boundaries of the fireplace were only there to keep you from having fun? What if you thought that things would be better outside of those boundaries?

Well, it wouldn't turn out too well. You'd burn your house down!

Ask:

- Do you see how boundaries are a good thing?
- Can you think of some other examples of boundaries in your life that are there for your own safety?

Say:

There are a lot of boundaries in the Bible. Just like the fireplace, they are all meant to keep us safe.

Sadly, though, we don't always remember that. Sometimes, we act like we think the rules in the Bible are only there to make sure we don't have too much fun. We can convince ourselves that if we don't live the way the Bible says we should live, we can enjoy life a lot more and experience a lot of new fun things.

However, just like the house would go up in flames without the boundaries of the fireplace, your life would suffer without the boundaries God has laid out for you in the Bible.

Ask:

- Do you sometimes think of the boundaries set in the Bible as a bad thing?
- Do you think you'd have more fun living your life without following the Bible?
- Why do you think God gave us boundaries?

Say:

The Bible is full of boundaries, and they were all crafted out of love.

For example, the Bible says we shouldn't lie. By not lying, we're able to be a trustworthy friend that others can confide in.

The Bible says we should put God before anything else. By doing that, we're able to focus on the important things and really think about our priorities.

The Bible says we should honor our parents. By doing that, we keep peace at home.

Do you see where I'm going with this? When we follow the boundaries that the Bible sets for our life, we're the ones who benefit!

Ask:

- Do you think God's boundaries come from His love for us?
- Can you think of an example of how following God's boundaries resulted in something good in your life?
- Do you think it's important to follow the Bible's boundaries?

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Say:

All scripture is God-breathed. Wow, how cool is that? All scripture came straight from God—that is incredible!

How can we say that the boundaries set in the Bible are only to keep us from having fun once we realize that they are all God-breathed?

There are so many times in life where we say, "I wish I knew what God wanted me to do!" So you want to hear from God? Well, here you have it. Open your Bible!

Ask:

- Does knowing that everything in the Bible came directly from God make you think of boundaries a little differently?
- Knowing how much God loves us, do you agree that the boundaries He set are to protect us?
- Are there any of God's boundaries that you're thankful for because of how they've encouraged you to live?

Wrap up

In that game, it was easy to roll the ornament right outside the boundaries. That's just how it is with life—God lets us make our own decisions and is not going to make us stay within His boundaries. But why wouldn't we?

If you think of some of the best things in your life—love, joy, peace—you'll realize that they come from following God's boundaries and the way His word says we should live.

He knows what's best for us, and He knows what we need. He wants to protect us. He wants to give us good things—and so He gives us boundaries.

We sometimes view boundaries as what stop us from getting to what's good when really they are what keeps us in the best place.

Game: Ugly Christmas Sweaters

Bible: Psalm 139:14

Topic: We are God's wonderful creation.

Use this holiday game to teach students about how they are fearfully and wonderfully made.

As students creatively decorate ugly Christmas sweaters using only food items, they will learn just how unique they are. They are wonderful because He made them!

Supplies:

- 5 plain white sweatshirts
- A plastic tarp or garbage bag (to put on the ground)
- Variety of Condiments
 - Examples:
 - Ketchup
 - Spray Cheese
 - Sauces
 - Jelly
 - Mustard
 - Icing
- Candy, sprinkles, or any other small, edible thing.

Break the students up into five teams and tell them that they are going to have an ugly sweater contest. Since none of them brought an ugly sweater, you're going to let them make their own.

Set up a table (with the plastic tarp or garbage bags underneath) with all of the condiments, candy, and sweatshirts on it. Turn on some Christmas music and tell them to decorate the best ugly sweater using only what's on the table and their white sweatshirt.

Once they're done, someone from their group has to model the sweater.

Have the group vote on the best (or worst!) ugly Christmas sweater.

Ask:

- Do you like being creative and making things?
- Do you think that God was being creative when He made you?

TEACH

Say:

Now, those are certainly some ugly sweaters, but you can't argue one thing: they're unique! If you wore any of those to school tomorrow, you wouldn't have to worry about matching anyone else!

Clearly, you've all proven with this game that you're very creative. So we're going to talk about someone else who's creative.

God. He's SO creative.

Ask:

- When you think about God, is His creativity something you think about?

Now, if you don't think God is creative, I have a question for you: have you ever seen a giraffe? Or a penguin? What about an alligator?

God created those things! He made them up, created them, and breathed life into them. They didn't exist before He thought them up. That's pretty spectacular.

But none of that compares to His most amazing creation of all: **you**.

That's right; God was creative when He made you.

And, luckily, He did a little better than you guys did on the sweaters.

Ask:

- How does it feel to know that God spent time creating you?
- Do you think you are unique?
- Do you think God was being creative when He made you?

God created you. That's just pretty cool! He could have made you just like anyone else. He could have been boring and made all humans exactly the same. But He didn't! Because He is a creative God! Instead of creating a clone, He created a masterpiece.

Ask:

- Do you think you are wonderful?

Say:

Well, if your answer was anything other than a big fat yes, than I have to tell you: you are so wrong.

The truth is, you are more wonderful than you could possibly imagine. Not because of anything you've ever done or could ever do, but because of who created you.

Read: Psalm 139:14

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Ask:

- Now do you think you're wonderful?
- Have you ever praised God for the way He made you?
- You are one of God's works, one of His masterpieces. Should that change the way you think about yourself?

Say:

We see here that God's works are wonderful. And really, that's nothing we didn't already know. All you have to do is walk outside and look up at the sky to see that His works are wonderful and that He creates incredibly beautiful things.

So this verse isn't a huge shock because we know God's works are wonderful.

Something else you already knew is that God created you. It's a fact that you've probably known for a while now.

But, have you ever stopped and put those two things together? That God created you, and that everything He creates is wonderful?

When you add it up, it looks like we have our answer. You are, in fact, wonderful.

Ask:

- Is it hard for you to think of yourself as wonderful? Why or why not?
- Are there times when you don't feel like you are a masterpiece made by God?
- We talk negatively about ourselves way too much. How do you think it makes God feel to hear you talking poorly about His wonderful works?

Wrap up

It's easy to compare yourself to others and start to feel self-conscious, but when you do that, it's like you're telling God that you don't like His creation. How would you feel if you made something that you thought was perfect and unique, and instead of enjoying it, people spent their time saying all the things they thought were wrong with it?

Next time you're tempted to say something negative about yourself—how you're too short, or you don't like your hair color, or you have too many freckles—think about this verse. Think about how God created you—your height, your eye color, your freckles, your ears—He created it all.

He made you exactly how He wanted you to be. You are unique because your Creator wanted you to be unique. You are wonderful because He made you.

Game: What are you leaving behind?

Bible: Colossians 3:12-17

Topic: What kind of legacy are you leaving behind?

Use this holiday game to teach students the importance of how they live. Their attitude and actions make up the legacy that they are leaving behind.

As students follow different strands of yarn around a Christmas tree in order to find out which gift they should be opening, they will learn that, whether they're trying to or not, they are leaving a legacy behind. It's up to them to make it a good one.

Supplies:

- 5 different colored strands of yarn
- 5 gift boxes
- 5 index cards
- A Christmas tree

Before the game starts, set up a Christmas tree. One at a time, take the balls of yarn and unwind them all around the room. Loop them through chairs, run them along the ground, and wrap them around the tree. Let the yarn end on an index card that reveals the location of a hidden Christmas gift.

Split the group into 5 teams. Assign each team a color of yarn. Starting at the beginning point, they must follow that color all around the room and the tree in order to find the clue that will tell them which gift box belongs to their team and where to find it.

The first team to retrieve the correct hidden gift box wins!

Ask:

- How were you able to keep track of your yarn when there were four other strands of yarn?
- You were able to find the gift box because of the yarn it left behind. What kinds of things are you leaving behind in your life?

TEACH

Say:

I'm kind of digging the whole yarn decoration thing! Who needs garlands and Christmas lights when you've got yarn?

That was a pretty fun hunt. But I have a question for you: how exactly did you find that gift?

You knew nothing about that gift. I didn't tell you anything about it or give away its location. The only thing you knew about it was that there was a string of yarn that would lead you to it in one way or another.

Just like that yarn, twisting and turning and hiding, you're leaving a path behind you.

We tend to think of a legacy as something that only happens once someone passes away. But that's just not true—you're leaving a legacy right now, as we speak.

Ask:

- Do you spend a lot of time thinking about the kind of legacy you are leaving behind?
- If someone were to look for you, what kind of path would they be following?

Say:

As a Christian, you have a responsibility to live a certain way because you reflect Christ. The path you leave behind you—your decisions, your words, your actions—all of those things should also reflect Christ.

Ask:

- Does being a Christian change the way you live your life?
- What type of legacy do you think Jesus wants you to leave behind?
- Do you think that if someone saw your legacy right now, they'd know you were a Christian?

Read: Colossians 3:12-17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Say:

Well, if you had any questions about how you should live in order to leave a legacy that reflects Christ, here's the answer! And it can be summed up in just a few words.

Compassion & Kindness

If you want to leave a Christ-like legacy, start by being kind. People will know right away that there's something different about you, because sadly, kindness isn't all that common.

Humility & Gentleness

Humility is definitely not popular. It's not cool to be super humble and to put others before yourself. But, it's how you're supposed to live!

Patience & Forgiveness

If you want to truly reflect Christ, you have to live your life with patience and forgiveness. Trust me, that's just hard. I mean, really hard. But it's also incredibly worth it. Be patient with others and forgive them, because that's what Jesus would do.

Peace & Love

There are going to be times where you disagree with others, and that's okay. Stay peaceful anyway. Love them anyway. Peace is more important than being right, and love is more important than anything else. Love people with the love of Jesus.

Thankfulness

Be thankful to God always. In the good times and in the not so good times. There's nothing that confuses people faster than someone who is thankful when things aren't going so well. So start confusing people and start thanking God no matter what the circumstances are!

Ask:

- Can you think of a time when someone forgave you for something you did? How did it make you feel?
- Do you think that being thankful when life is hard would set you apart from others?
- Does your life right now reflect humility and gentleness?
- How can you be more loving and forgiving in your life?

Wrap up

In this game, you were able to find the gift because you followed the yarn that belonged to it. In the same way, people should be able to find Jesus by following the path you're leaving behind.

That's a lot of responsibility, and it can seem a little bit intimidating. But here's the thing: you are going to leave a legacy behind no matter what you do. You're going to be known for something. The path you leave behind is going to lead somewhere.

It's up to you to decide where that path leads. When people look at your actions and words and decisions, they're going to see something. It's up to you to decide what they see.

Game: What's on the Inside?

Bible: 1 Samuel 16:7

Topic: Man looks at the outside, but God looks at what's on the inside.

Use this holiday game to teach students that it's not how someone looks from the outside that counts because that's not what God looks at.

As students try to judge what's inside several different stockings, they will learn that you can't always base your decision about someone by what's on the outside. It's what's on the inside that really counts.

Supplies:

- Several different stockings
- Everyday items (pencils, a washcloth, nail clippers, etc.)
- Small gifts (like candy)
- One or two bigger gifts (iTunes gift card, etc.)

Before the game starts, put these items in the stockings so that each stocking has one item in it. If you want the game to be even harder, you can wrap the items in tissue paper before putting them in the stockings.

Have the students sit in a circle. Tell them that you're going to pass some gifts out. Some are good gifts and some are pretty plain, but everyone is going to get to choose what gift they want to keep.

Explain that once they get the stocking, they can either decide to keep it, or pass it on to the next player.

Give the first player the first stocking. When they try to open it up, stop them.

Say: "Wait? What are you doing? Oh no, you don't get to open the stocking before deciding if you want to keep it or not. You only get to look at it from the outside."

Let the students pass the stockings around, feeling the item from the outside. Encourage them to guess what it is out loud before opening it or passing it to the next person.

The game is over when all of the stockings have been opened.

Ask:

- Would the game have turned out better for you if you had been able to actually open the stocking before making your decision?
- Was there any way possible to truly know what was inside the stocking by only looking at the outside?

TEACH

Say:

Is everyone happy with their “gifts” they picked? No, it doesn’t look like it!

I’m just wondering, though—why do you think looking on the inside would have changed the game?

After all, we sure spend a lot of time in life making decisions solely based on the outside appearance of other things and people.

Ask:

- Do you tend to judge people you don’t know based on how they look without getting to know them first?
- Do you make decisions about certain situations based on how they look from the outside, without taking the time to understand what’s really going on?

Say:

It’s easy to judge things based on how they look from the outside. It’s especially easy to judge people based on how they look from the outside. But that doesn’t mean it’s right.

There are some things you will never be able to understand or learn by only looking at the surface.

There’s a story in the Bible where God sends a man named Samuel to anoint the next king. He tells him that it’s going to be one of Jesse’s sons. Jesse is so excited about this that he has all of his sons line up outside for Samuel to look at.

Well, not *all* of them.

He didn’t have his youngest son, David, there. He was young and small, and even his own dad didn’t think there was any chance he would be king.

So Samuel goes down the line of these brothers, who apparently all looked like they had what it took to be king. At each one he thought, “Surely this is the one!” and at each one, this is how God responds:

Read: 1 Samuel 16:7

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

Ask:

- That's pretty clear, huh? Physical looks do not matter. How is that different from what the world says is important?
- What's the difference between what you look at when you see a person and what God looks at when He sees a person?
- Do you think you should try to be more like God and look at the heart instead of the outside appearance?

Say:

Samuel was chosen by God to go anoint the next king, so obviously he was a pretty good guy who God trusted. And even he struggled with judging people from the outside.

It's just easy to make decisions based off of shallow information. It's easy to see someone ignore everyone at school and just assume that they are rude and want to be alone when in reality they may just be shy and lonely.

It's easy to look at someone who is pretty and popular and decide they have it all together and their life is easy when in reality their life at home could be absolutely horrible. You just don't know things about people from how they look or from how their life looks.

Ask:

- What do you think people would think of you if they only judged you based on how you looked? Would they be right?
- Why is it important to get to know people's hearts before making decisions about them?
- Would you want God to judge you based on what everyone else thinks about you, or would you want Him to look at your heart?

Wrap up

When David comes in from where his father had him working, he was anointed as king. That was something that no one—even his own father—saw coming.

But that didn't matter. It didn't matter that his dad and brothers didn't think he had what it took to be king. It didn't matter that he had been left out. Do you know what did matter? His heart.

God saw his heart, and that is why he was chosen to be king.

No matter what your appearance or your situation is, that's not what God is looking at. If He wants to use you, your looks and your circumstances aren't going to stop Him. What other people think about you isn't going to stop Him.

He's not even going to look at those things. He's just going to look at your heart.

Game: Wrapped in What?

Bible: Luke 2:7

Topic: God doesn't care about things looking fancy or being popular; He cares about people coming to know Him.

Use this holiday game to teach students that God is more concerned with people knowing Him than He is with how things look.

As students decorate Christmas trees with plain, everyday items, they will learn the significance of Jesus being wrapped in something very plain when He was born and placed somewhere very plain instead of somewhere fancy.

Supplies:

- Two Christmas trees (mini or full size will work!)
- Plain, everyday items.
 - Examples:
 - Paper Towels
 - Ziploc Baggies.
 - Pencils
 - Hangers
 - Newspaper
 - Utensils
 - Etc.
- Scissors
- Tape
- Two covered Rubbermaid containers to put the items in.

Split the group into two teams and give them each a Christmas tree. Tell them that you're going to have a contest to see who can decorate the best tree in five minutes.

Give them the containers of the "decorations" and tell them they can't open them until you say go.

Once they get past the confusion of seeing what they have to decorate the tree with, tell them to get creative and see how pretty they can make the tree with what they were given.

Ask:

- What was your reaction when you saw what you had to decorate the tree with?
- Do you think the trees look better or worse than they would if you had normal Christmas decorations?

TEACH

Say:

You guys got creative and did a pretty good job! It's cool to see how something plain can actually be pretty beautiful!

When you think of Christmas decorations, you probably don't think of these things, right? You think of lights and garland and ornaments not pencils and newspapers.

Ask:

- Give me the first word that comes to mind when you think of Christmas decorations.
- I noticed that not one of you said the word "plain." Why is that?

Say:

Well, plain isn't exactly something that shows up a lot in Christmas decorations, is it?

Do you think Christmas would be the same without all the glitz and glam?

Would it still be Christmas if things weren't as flashy?

Let's look at the very first Christmas ever and see if we can find an answer.

Read: Luke 2:7

And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them.

Say:

Wow. There's a whole lot of "plain" going on here. Really, there's no sparkle or fanciness in sight.

Jesus is born—if ever there was a time that you would expect there to be glamour and celebratory decorations, it's now. I mean, the savior of the world has just been born!

But there are no decorations. They're not in a decked out nursery, celebrating. There's not even a decorative baby blanket to wrap Jesus in. Instead, He gets wrapped in cloths. Not a blanket or baby clothes, but cloths. And then, if that's not plain enough for you, He gets put in a manger.

Do you know what a manger is? It's a trough that animals eat from.

So the savior who is going to save the world from their sins is born, and He is wrapped in a cloth and instead of having a nice crib to lie in, He gets put in a trough where the cows and donkeys eat their dinner.

Ask:

- If you had never heard this story, is this what you would expect the birth of Jesus to look like? Would you expect it to be fancier?
- Do you think there is anything significant about how plain the birth of Jesus was?

Say:

It's kind of crazy to imagine Jesus—powerful, amazing, important Jesus—lying in a dirty, smelly manger on the first night of His life here.

But it kind of shows us what kind of God we have.

Jesus didn't come to the earth to be popular. He didn't come to put on a show. Sure, God could have made sure that the place where Jesus was born looked nice and fancy. He could have made sure there were the best amenities possible for Jesus when He was born. Or He could have at least made sure there was a bed.

But He didn't. And because He didn't, we see that from the very first moments of Jesus' life, He was willing to sacrifice for us.

Jesus didn't live a glamorous life because that wasn't important. The important thing was for people to realize who He was and to realize that they could have eternal life with Him. To realize that He provided a way for their sins to be forgiven so they could spend forever in Heaven.

Ask:

- How does it make you feel to think that the first night Jesus spent on earth, He slept in the place where farm animals eat their food?
- Do you think that reflects how much God loves you?
- Does it make you realize that maybe the way things look on the outside aren't so important, after all?

Wrap up

Sometimes, we can get caught up in the way things look. Not just at Christmas, but in our lives. We can think that maybe Jesus can't use us because our lives aren't the prettiest. Or that people won't listen to us tell them about Jesus because we're not popular and we don't have a big house for them to hang out in.

I'm just going to tell you something that you hopefully have already realized through tonight's message—**God does not care about those things**. He doesn't care about the way things look on the outside; He cares about your heart. He cares about people coming to know Him.

If He cared about the way things looked, Jesus would have been born in a fancy hotel and wrapped in a soft, clean blanket and placed in a beautiful crib. But He wasn't because that's not why He came.

Whether you think you're more like the Christmas tree that's decked out at the mall, with beautiful lights and garland and ornaments, or more like the Christmas trees tonight, plain and practical...it does not matter. What matters is that God wants to use you to bring other people to know Him. Plain or glamorous, it's your heart that matters.

If you have a heart willing to be used, that is all God needs.

Game: Yoked Together

Bible: 2 Corinthians 6:14

Topic: We aren't supposed to be unequally yoked

Use this holiday game to teach students that we are supposed to be “yoked up” with people who believe in Jesus and those who will encourage us in our beliefs.

As students navigate obstacles with someone who has a disadvantage, they will learn how spending a lot of time and sharing their life with someone who doesn't believe in Jesus can bring them down.

Supplies:

- Oreos
- Duct tape
- Garland
- Mini Christmas tree
- Christmas lights
- Chairs set up in a “maze” formation
- Baseball bat
- Disadvantages
 - *Examples*
 - Oversized stocking that someone has to wear, causing them to only be able to hop.
 - Garland to wrap their arms by their side so they can't use them.
 - Mittens, so they can't use their fingers.
 - A Santa hat pulled over their eyes, so they can't see.

Set the chairs up in a maze formation. Spread out the following obstacles along the maze.

Oreo station

Mini Christmas tree and lights

Tangled up garland

Baseball bat

Hopscotch “drawn” out of duct tape on the ground.

Split the group into teams of two. In each team, give one member a “disadvantage.” Then allow them to start the maze. Tell them they have to hook arms with their partner the entire time. At each obstacle station, they must complete a challenge together.

At the Oreo station, they have to each lick the icing off one Oreo. At the Christmas tree station, they have to wrap the lights around the tree. At the garland station, they have to untangle the garland and lay it out in a straight line. When they get to the baseball bat, they have to put their head on it and spin around five times before hopping through the hopscotch squares.

After each team goes, have a leader re-tangle the garland and take the lights off the tree.

The team with the fastest time wins!

Ask:

- Those of you who had the disadvantages: do you think that you had a harder time completing those challenges than your partner did?
- Those of you who didn't have the disadvantages: do you think your game was slower because of your partner?
- Would this game have been easier to complete by yourself, without a partner?

TEACH

Say:

Usually, things are easier when you have a partner. Sometimes, you can even get things done in half the time when you have two people working together. That definitely was *not* the case with this game. I'm not going to name any names here, but there are some of you that were clearly slowing your partners down.

It's not like it's anyone's fault because you didn't get to pick your partner. You just got stuck with who you got stuck with, disadvantages and all.

It's a good thing life isn't like that, right?

Or is it?

Ask:

- Do you think your real life ever looks like this game?

Say:

You didn't get to choose your partners in this game, but you do get to choose your “partners” in life. Your friendships, the people you spend your time with, the people you ask for advice...you get to choose all of those people.

Knowing that, you would think that we would choose only the best people to be in our lives, right? You would think that we would surround ourselves with people who encourage us, who will push us to be better and will push us closer to Jesus.

But that's not always the case, is it? In fact, sometimes we don't even *choose* our friends, we let them choose us. We like the fact that someone wants to spend time with us, so we just go with it.

Ask:

- Do you put a lot of thought into choosing your friends?
- Are the people you spend the most time with now people that are good influences on you?
- Do you think that Jesus cares about the kind of friends you choose?

Say:

When you think about it, choosing who your friends are going to be will be some of the most important decisions that you ever make. Your friends aren't only people you hang out with; they're people that you share your life with.

Because of that, it's so important to pick good friends. Most importantly, you should pick friends who also love Jesus. It's so important to surround yourself with people who share your biggest belief.

That's not to say that you shouldn't befriend people who aren't Christians—because if you didn't, how would they ever learn about Jesus? I'm talking about your close friends. The ones you spend a lot of your time with. Those people should believe in Jesus.

Ask:

- What's your favorite part of Christmas?
- Do you like seeing Christmas decorations around town and hearing Christmas music everywhere you go? What about Christmas movies?

Say:

Let's pretend that you *love* Christmastime. That it's your absolute favorite. That everything, from the lights to the weather to the songs, makes it your favorite part of the entire year.

Now, if your best friend just totally disagrees with you and hates Christmas, they're not going to be very fun to share the season with, are they?

Of course not! Because if one of you is Buddy the Elf and one of you is the Grinch...well, it's just not going to be a very enjoyable December.

That's a silly example, but it's definitely how we act sometimes.

We pick the people in our life and act like it doesn't matter what they believe or if we believe different things.

Ask:

- Do you think it matters what your friends believe?

Let's see what the Bible has to say about that.

Read: 2 Corinthians 6:14

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

This verse isn't talking about shallow friendships; it's talking about being yoked together—being attached.

In that game, you were attached to your partner. The things they did wrong affected you because you were yoked to them. You couldn't go any faster than them because you were stuck together. It doesn't matter how great you may have done on that game on your own because your partner brought you down.

If you have close friends who don't believe in Jesus, it doesn't matter how great or fun or sweet they are. You have a big, big difference in an extremely important area, and if it is someone you are going to choose to yoke yourself too, it's going to cause you some problems.

Ask:

- People who don't believe in Jesus have no reason to live like the Bible says you should live. Do you think that would cause problems in a close friendship?
- How do you think it makes Jesus feel if you choose to spend big parts of your life with people who don't care about Him?
- Do you agree that there's a difference between just being friends with someone and being yoked up with them? What's the difference?
- Do you think you are the kind of friend that encourages other people to be closer to Jesus?

Wrap up

When you choose to follow Jesus, you make an important decision. It's a decision to treat your relationship with Him as more important than anything else in your life, including your friendships.

Jesus loves everyone so much. The people that don't believe in Him? He doesn't love them any less. And neither should you. But there's a difference between loving someone like Jesus loves them, and spending your life with them.

It's way easier to be pulled down than you think it is. And if you're spending all of your time with people who don't believe in Jesus, then your relationship with Him is going to suffer for it. And that's just not worth it.

Choose people who are going to encourage you in your relationship with Jesus. To be able to push each to be closer to Jesus is one of the coolest things you can ever have in a friendship.