



Created by Ministry to Youth
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9 Youth Group Lessons

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Youth Group Lesson on Appearance

Bible: 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 23:25-26

Bottom Line: Students spend more time on their outward appearance than they do on most other things in life. The problem with this is that people are the ones who look at the outward appearance; God looks at the heart. He's more concerned with your character than how you look on the outside.

OPENING GAME: Fruit Box Mix-up

SUPPLIES

One coffee cup that is clean on the outside, but dirty on the inside

One coffee cup that is dirty on the outside, but clean on the inside

A mask of a famous person or character

Ten shoeboxes:

- Two that say lemon on the outside
- Two that say orange on the outside
- Two that say banana on the outside
- Two that say apple on the outside
- Two that say lime on the outside

Two lemons

Two oranges

Two bananas

Two apples

Two limes

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Before the game begins, put a piece of fruit in each box, and *make sure the fruit inside the box is different than what the box says*.

Scatter the boxes around the room. Break the group up into two teams.

Tell the teams that they have to find the labeled boxes around the room and gather one orange, one apple, one lemon, one lime, and one banana and bring it back to you. The first team to do that will win.

Let the teams start looking.

If they bring you back the correct boxes without opening them, tell them that's incorrect.

Eventually, someone will open a box and realize that the boxes are labeled wrong.

The teams will then have to scramble to figure out which boxes contain which fruits.

The first team to bring you all five fruits wins.

TEACH – Appearance

Wasn't that game tricky? You didn't know it, but the outsides of the boxes were totally wrong. It didn't matter that you brought me boxes that looked like they were the right ones from the outside, it was what was on the inside of the boxes that mattered.

How much time do you spend on your appearance? Think about it—between your face, your hair, your clothes and shoes...that's a lot of time that you spend every single day.

How much time do you spend thinking about your appearance? Thinking about if people will like the way you look, or if you should try to look like someone else. Thinking about how you could fit in or stand out more with your appearance. Sometimes, we probably spend more time thinking and worrying about our appearance than we actually do on our actual appearance.

Now, there's nothing wrong with spending time on your appearance. It's okay to want to look nice, and it's a good thing to *care* about your outward appearance. It just shouldn't be your focus.

So if outward appearance shouldn't be your main focus about yourself, what should be?

Your heart should be your main focus. Why? Because the heart is what God looks at. He doesn't look at the outward appearance, like we do. No, He looks straight at the heart.

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.”

In this verse, Samuel was choosing the next king. God could have told Him anything about choosing the next king—He could have just told him *who* the next king was supposed to be. Instead, He tells Samuel to not look at appearance or height, because that's not what He looks at. He looks at the heart.

This verse says that *people* look at the outward appearance. So when we put all of this effort and time and thought into our outward appearance, it's obviously for people. I mean, you already knew that, right? It's not like you thought that one day you were going to walk outside and bump into Jesus and say, “Oh, look how nice I look for you today!”

Like I said, there's nothing wrong with wanting to look nice. When it starts to become a problem is when you focus so much on your outer appearance that you forget to focus on your heart.

It's no good to put all of your time and energy into making sure you look good on the outside if you're not going to have any time or energy left to make sure you look good on the inside.

Get out two coffee cups.

I need a volunteer to come up here.

Okay, so I thought we'd share a cup of coffee together. Sound good? Now, I only have two cups here. Since you're my guest, I'll let you pick first.

Hold up the coffee cup that's dirty on the outside first, and then the coffee cup that's clean on the outside.

Which one would you want to drink out of?

If the student chooses the clean coffee cup, show them the inside. Have them pass it around to the rest of the group.

Isn't that gross? What if you came over to my house and we sat down for dinner, and I served you a drink in that cup? It would be disgusting, right?

Why, though? I worked hard to clean the outside of it, since I knew you were coming over. The table looks nice. Everything looks great from the outside—does it really matter what the inside looks like?

Of course it does! You would never drink out of that nasty cup! But that's how we act in our lives, isn't it?

Read Matthew 23:25-26

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.”

The Pharisees were people who prided themselves on being very religious and “godly” in front of other people. They publically paraded around following all of the Biblical rules. They made sure everyone around them knew that they were doing what was right, and they were very quick to condemn others who weren't doing what was right. These people were all about appearance.

But Jesus is quick to call them out here. He says that even though the outside is clean and looks right, the inside is filthy and full of greed and selfishness.

Ouch. That's tough to hear, isn't it? Mostly because we're very guilty of acting like that sometimes.

We look the part, dress the part, and act the part. We go to church, we raise our hands during worship, and we don't take part in things at school or with friends that we know are wrong. Hey, we'll even be quick to tell everyone that they're wrong for doing those things.

But all of that means nothing if our heart isn't right.

Jesus doesn't care how you look to other people; He cares about how you look to Him. And in order to look good to Him, we're going to have to make sure our hearts are in the right place. So how do we do that?

We act like Jesus.

Do you think it's possible to try your best to be like Jesus and to still have a heart that's in the wrong place? I really don't think so.

So if you want to work on your heart, here's a great place to start: look at the heart of Jesus.

Jesus loved others.

He loved others so much so that He was willing to come to a world filled with sin and die for us, so that we could spend forever with Him. If that's not love, then love doesn't exist.

All throughout Jesus' life, we can see how much He loved others. He spent so much time not only telling others about God and His great love, but showing them as well.

If you want your heart to be like the heart of Jesus, you have to love others. And guess what...it takes hard work to love others.

Sure, we don't usually talk about loving others as something that takes a lot of effort. But if we're honest, we know that it does.

Loving others means putting them above yourself. It means taking the time to talk to them, pray for them, and show them love, even when you're busy. It means making sure the things you say and do are said and done in love.

It takes a lot of work.

Jesus knew the Word of God and lived according to it.

His entire time on earth, Jesus lived out the Bible. When you look at the heart of Jesus, you see the Word of God. He followed it, quoted it, told other people about it. It was obviously very important to Him.

It should be just as important to you. You should take the time to read the Bible, to learn the Bible, to pray about what the Bible says and what God is trying to say to you through His Word.

You cannot have a heart like Jesus without knowing what His heart was like—so read about it!

Jesus served others.

Jesus didn't have to serve anyone—He was the Son of God. But all through His life, we see Jesus serving others. Even when He was tired, He would take the time to help others. On the last night before He was captured to be crucified, He got on His knees and washed His disciples' feet, showing them how important it was to be a servant.

Jesus had a servant's heart. He wanted people to accept Him, but He did not parade around acting as if He were more important than everyone else. Instead, He got on their level and served them, showing such a clear picture of how much God loved them.

Serving others is never going to be an easy choice, but it is the right choice. Do you think that it was easy for Jesus to wash His disciples' feet when He knew what was about to happen to Him? I don't think so. But He still did it, because that was His heart.

If you want to reflect the heart of Jesus, you're going to have to have a servant's heart.

Above all, Jesus cared about God's will.

Jesus was all God, but He was also human. The night before He was captured, He knew what was going to happen. He knew how terrible it was going to be, and He asked God, if it was at all possible, to stop what was about to happen.

But then He said, "Not my will, but Yours be done." Even in the face of great horror and pain, Jesus was more concerned with the will of God than anything else.

There are going to be times in your life where you think that you know best. There are going to be times where nothing seems like it could be better than the plan that you have for your life. And even in those times, you need to mimic Jesus and say, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

You cannot have a heart like Jesus without following God's will. You cannot follow God's will if you're too busy thinking about how your plan is better than His. It takes a lot of trust, but you have to care about God's will more than you care about your own.

So no, having a heart like Jesus is not easy. It's going to take some work.

Having a good outward appearance takes work, right? Of course it does. You don't just roll out of bed in the morning and never think about how you look to other people.

It's time to start working as hard on the inside as you work on the outside.

WRAP- UP

Okay guys, I have an announcement to make.

Put on the mask.

I am now [*character's name*].

I look like him/her, so obviously, that's who I am, right? Do you believe me?

How silly is that? To act like you guys would really think that's who I was, just because my face looked like them. That's crazy!

But that's how we act sometimes.

I hope that tonight has shown you how the outside appearance does not matter nearly as much as the inside appearance, your heart, matters.

We've talked about four different ways we can try to copy the heart of Jesus. I really want to challenge you guys to try your best to follow Him in those four areas this week. If you do, your heart will start looking more and more like Jesus. And that's going to look better than your outside appearance could ever look.

End in prayer.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Do you spend more time thinking about your outward appearance or your heart?

Have you ever thought about which one God is more concerned with?

When you look at Jesus, do you think He was more concerned with His outward appearance or with His heart?

What are some things that you think you need to change about your "inside appearance?"

How can you work on loving people like Jesus loved them?

Do you spend time reading the Bible? Do you think that if you spent more time reading the Bible, your heart would be in better shape?

Do you think that knowing what the Bible says is important?

How can you serve others more?

Do you trust that God's will is better than your own? Why or why not?

Do you think that having a heart like Jesus is possible? How are you going to try to do that this week?

Youth Group Lesson on Attitude

I remember being 14 years old and just starting to “have an attitude problem” (as my dad put it).

Yep, that attitude thing lasted all through high school.

Now, I’ve got 14 year old son of my own. And when I can pry him away from his iPhone to initiate a conversation, it’s like pulling teeth. That “attitude thing” is a barrier that constantly needs to be overcome.

I’m thinking that just about all teenagers can use some help in this area.

Sure, those hormones are going full force. They’re fighting for independence. Those factors (among others) certainly contribute to the problem.

Us youth leaders and parents, can’t press a magic button to improve students’ attitude.

In reality, it’s even tough for teenagers to improve themselves by will power alone.

But God is bigger than all that.

When students focus their heart on God, he changes them from the inside out.

He gives them an attitude like Jesus.

So, then our job is to continually point teenagers to Jesus. Because he’s the one who transforms them.

That’s the heart behind this youth group lesson on “attitude”.

Enjoy!

Nick Diliberto, Ministry to Youth

Youth Group Lesson on Attitude

Bible: Ephesians 4:31-32

Bottom Line: Use this lesson to teach students that they need to get rid of bad attitudes and instead have an attitude like Jesus.

SUPPLIES

Two clear containers

Cereal—enough to fill one of the clear containers all the way up

Sand or dirt—enough to fill one of the clear containers all the way up

Bowls

Tape

OPENING GAME – Cereal Pour

Before the game, place a piece of tape about three-quarters of the way up on each clear container.

Split the group into two teams. Have each team line up in front of a clear container. Give each student a bowl.

Set the cereal and sand or dirt up (either on the floor or on a table) behind the students. The student at the end of the line must run to the table and fill their bowl with cereal. They then must pour it from their bowl into the next student's bowl, who then pours in into the next student's bowl, etc. This continues until it gets to the final student, who has to pour it into the clear container.

Once the final student pours it into the container, the student at the end of the line must run and fill their bowl with sand or dirt, and it must make it's way the all the students' bowls, just like the cereal did.

Continue this, each time alternating cereal and sand/dirt.

The first team to fill their clear container to the taped off line wins!

After the game, discuss these questions:

Do you normally eat this kind of cereal?

Would you have eaten that cereal before the dirt got mixed in?

What about after we played the game—would you eat it now?

After the game, say:

Well, that cereal certainly doesn't look so good now, does it? Now that's it's all mixed in with the dirt, I don't know that I'll ever look at it the same way again!

Have you ever had an experience where a bad attitude just really ruined your day? I think we've all had those types of days. It didn't matter what else had happened, once the bad attitude came, everything was ruined.

Just like the dirt in the game we played, when you add a bad attitude to the mix—even if it's a really good mix—it turns things sour.

Read Ephesians 4:31-32

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Bitterness, rage, anger, slander...those things all sound like a bad attitude, don't they? And if we're honest, those are all things we've experienced every now and then. I know I have!

But those are the kinds of things that our attitude should not reflect. And do you know why that is?

Because Jesus didn't have that kind of attitude! At the end of that verse, it says we're supposed be kind and compassionate and forgiving. Why? Because that's how Jesus was!

Hold up one of the clear containers. Now, what if I were to pour you up a nice, big bowl of this cereal. Would you want to eat it? Of course you wouldn't! It would taste gross because it has been tainted by the dirt and sand. It doesn't matter that this cereal is actually really good on it's own, because it's been ruined by the dirt.

It's the same way with our attitude. It doesn't matter if we're acting like Christ—being kind and compassionate, obeying our parents, and coming to church on Sundays—if we also have a bad attitude. Bad attitudes ruin everything else. Just like the dirt, they mix into every other part of your life and take away from how good things are.

So what are you supposed to do?

Focus on Jesus. Keep your eyes on him! When you do, he begins to transform you to become more like him. The Holy Spirit does his work in you, changing you to become more like Jesus in your attitude (and actions).

He rids you of anger, bitterness, and anything like that that causes your attitude to be bad instead of like Jesus.

When you focus on Jesus, he gives you a kind and compassionate attitude. An attitude like Jesus is full of love and grace instead of hatred and bitterness. Which attitude would you rather have?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If we're supposed to have an attitude like Jesus, what are some things we should be doing?

Do you think the attitude you have now is one that Jesus would be proud of?

How can you focus on Jesus in your everyday life?

How can you work on having an attitude that is more kind and compassionate?

Do you have any of those things that the verse talked about—bitterness, anger, those things—in your attitude right now? Do you want to get rid of them?

WRAP-UP

As Christians, we model our lives after Jesus. This includes our attitudes as well as our actions.

When things don't go our way, it's always going to be easiest to just have a bad attitude. That's why you've got to make the decision to have a Christ-like attitude and to get rid of your bad attitude, once and for all! And the way to do that is to keep your eyes on Jesus. Focus on him.

When people look at you, they're going to see someone that makes Christ look appealing to them—like the cereal before the game—or their going to see someone with a bad attitude mixed in, which makes Christ seem less appealing to them.

You are the only one who gets to choose what they see! So choose to have a Christ-like attitude. You won't regret it!

Youth Group Lesson on Character

If the students in your youth group are anything like me, character building is not high on their priority list. I want to push a button and instantly be more loving, patient, and kind.

In fact, I often resist the very circumstances that God puts in my path in order to shape and mold me to become more like Jesus.

I'm guessing your students do the same.

I remember my first year of marriage.. I thought being married would be so awesome! I loved God, she loved God, we loved each other – how hard could it be, right?

Ha...did I have a rude awakening! My first year of marriage was brutally tough! Mostly because I thought I had it all together, but in reality I had A LOT of growing up to do.

But with God's help, we got through that first year. God used that first year of marriage (and the 11+ years that followed) as a way to build my character.

At times, I was willing to let God shape and mold my character. And of course there were many times I wasn't willing to go along with what God was doing.

But if you think about it, that's often how God changes us. He uses circumstances in our lives as a way to form His character in us.

Use this lesson to help teenagers get this truth. Enjoy!

Nick Diliberto, Creator of Ministry to Youth

Youth Group Lesson on Character

Bible: Romans 5:3-5

Bottom Line: Use this lesson to show your youth group that every situation they go through can be an opportunity to build some type of character. If they rely on God, He will help them develop good character.

SUPPLIES

Two large white t-shirts

Washable paint

Paintbrushes

A tarp or towel to lay down on the ground

Two blindfolds

OPENING GAME – Paint It

Before the game begins, lay down a tarp or a towel on the ground.

Select two students to wear the t-shirts. Once they have put them on over their clothes, blindfold them and have them stand on the tarp or the towel.

Split the rest of the group into two teams and assign a team to each blindfolded student. Give the teams the paint and paintbrushes.

Let the students take turns putting different colored paints on a brush and then stand with the brush almost touching the blindfolded student. Call out a command that will make the blindfolded students move, such as *spin around three times!*

As the blindfolded students move, they will bump into the paintbrush, causing paint to get on the shirts.

When it's the next student's turn, call out another command, like *do five jumping jacks!*

Continue this until all the students have had a chance to hold the paintbrush.

Have a leader carefully remove the t-shirts from the students wearing them. Lay them on the tarp.

Have the two students remove their blindfold and decide which shirt looks the coolest and should win!

After the game, discuss these questions:

Would the shirts have gotten any paint on them if the students who were blindfolded never moved?

Would they have moved if I hadn't called out things for them to do?

Did they know why I was telling them to move around?

After the game, say:

You guys actually came up with some pretty cool t-shirt designs!

It would have been too easy to let you guys just paint the shirts, so I decided to make it more interesting and have them be blindfolded.

While it would have been easier for them to just stand there wearing their t-shirts, the end product wouldn't have looked as cool! Even though they didn't know why they were moving around and doing all the things I was saying, they were actually creating something really awesome!

They were blindfolded, so they didn't know what was going on. But by walking through the motions I called out, they were transforming something very plain into something very colorful.

Read Romans 5:3-5:

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

Don’t get me wrong; I love this verse. But wouldn’t it be nice and so much easier if it just said, “God will give you character and hope” instead of that our sufferings produce perseverance, which produces character?

But that’s not the way it works. See, every single thing you go through produces some type of character.

We started the game with two white shirts. And if you guys want have wanted to, you could have ignored my instructions. If you had ignored me, you still would have had the shirts when the game was over. They just wouldn’t be as colorful!

With every situation in life that you walk through, it will build your character in some way. You can choose to walk through times of suffering leaning on God, obeying and trusting Him, and that will produce good character, character that leads to hope. Or you can try to get through hard times all on your own, ignoring God completely. That will produce a character that’s hard, isolated, and jaded. That kind of character is hopeless.

Which sounds like the type of character you would rather have?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you ever been through a hard time that made your character better?

Do you think it’s possible to persevere through times of suffering without God?

Would you rather have a character that came from God and produces hope, or a character that you developed on your own that is hopeless?

WRAP-UP

Just like this verse talks about, you are going to go through times of suffering in your life. There's no way to avoid that. But if you persevere through them, that's when good character is made.

So how do you persevere? You turn to God for strength and guidance. You ask Him to help you persevere through the hard, suffering times so that you can develop good character.

If you turn to Him, God will help you. But He doesn't make you turn to Him. In fact, if you want to, you can ignore Him completely, trying to get through everything on your own. But that will only make the times of suffering even harder.

Or, you can turn to Him, have Him walk you through the hard times, and develop amazing character in the process. It's your choice.

I think the choice is pretty clear. Don't you?

Youth Group Lesson on Community

This past weekend I took our junior high group to the CIY Believe event in Atlanta, GA. Wow, it was amazing

As with all out of town road trips, one of the highlights was the community created among students.

Students bonded with each other and the leaders big time!

In fact, I learned that one student has three pet pigs. What?!? Well, that led to a very interesting conversation all about the pigs. One of those pigs is named “waffle” because it smells like syrup all the time. The dirtier it gets, the more it smells like syrup. Interesting!

The truth is that I learned a lot about all the students on the trip. And they learned a lot about each other.

So, in the spirit of “building relationships”, here’s a quick youth group lesson on “community”. Enjoy!

– **Nick Diliberto, Creator of Ministry to Youth**

Youth Group Lesson on Community

Bible: Acts 2:42-43

Bottom Line: Use this lesson to teach students that the community they choose for themselves is important!

OPENING GAME

SUPPLIES

Water balloons

Access to water (a sink or a hose)

Towels (optional, so student's can dry off after the game if needed)

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Before the game begins, fill up the water balloons. Choose three (or more, depending on the size of your group) students to be the ones to throw the water balloons.

Line the rest of the group up and count down the line, "one, two, one, two, one, two."

Have the team split into groups of two with the person standing next to them. Explain that if they were a number one, their goal is to not get hit by a water balloon. If they were a number two, their goal is to protect their partner from getting hit by a water balloon.

On the count of three, have the chosen students start throwing water balloons. The point is for the number two students to protect their partner by jumping in front of them, using their hands, or whatever else to ensure their partner doesn't get hit. If a number one gets hit with a water balloon, their team is out.

The last remaining team where the number one teammate is still dry wins!

After the game, discuss these questions:

Do you think it was more fun for the number ones of the group or the number twos of the group?

Was it easier to avoid the water balloons when you had someone protecting you?

Did you work well together as a team?

TEACH – Community

After the game, say:

That was probably the riskiest version of dodge ball you've ever played, huh?

In the game, half of you were trying to avoid getting wet, and half of you were trying to protect your teammate from getting hit. Without working as a team, you had no chance of winning! You had to rely on each other as teammates.

We have teammates in life, too. The friends that you choose, the community you surround yourself with, those are your teammates.

What if, in this game, I had told all the number one players that their teammates would be protecting them, but then I never told the teammates what they were supposed to do? It would have been pointless, right? Everyone would have gotten wet!

It's important to choose teammates in life who are on the same page as we are.

Read: Acts 2:42-43

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.”

This verse is talking about what Christians did during this time. They devoted themselves to learning more about God and praying, and they did it together. And because of their belief in Jesus, they had things in common.

It's so important to have a community of Christian friends who have a relationship with Jesus like you do. If they don't, they can be the best friend in the world, but it won't make them a good teammate for you, because you won't ever be on the same page.

If you don't share the same life-beliefs with your community around you, it will be just like it would have been if I hadn't told anyone what to do in the game—it just would have been chaotic. No one would be able to protect each other, even if they wanted to.

As a Christian, the most important thing in your life is your relationship with Jesus.

The community you surround yourself with should be one you can walk through life together with. The ones you turn to when you need help, the ones who help you when you're going through something difficult. And how can you expect that to happen if the most important things in your life don't line up?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Do you agree that the community of friends you surround yourself with should be people who share your belief in Jesus?

Do you think it's hard for people who don't believe in Jesus to support you and be there for you when it comes to the big things in life?

Do you have any friends like the ones in Acts 2, who you can pray with and learn more about God with?

Do you think that you will grow more in your faith if you are surrounded by Christian friends?

WRAP-UP

Please don't leave here thinking that you are never supposed to even speak to people who aren't Christians. If that was the case, how could you ever share Jesus' love with anyone?

What I'm telling you is that it's important that the people closest to you—your community—also have a relationship with Jesus.

When you surround yourself with a community of Jesus-following friends, you set yourself up to be the best you can be. You give yourself a community to grow closer to God and to grow stronger in your faith

That's the best kind of community there is!

Youth Group Lesson on Forgiveness

Bible: Matthew 18:21–35; Colossians 3:13

Bottom Line: Forgive others the way God has forgiven us.

OPENING GAME: Head Square; 9 Square

SUPPLIES

One playground ball and some masking tape for each group playing the game. We recommend setting up one playing area for every 20 players. So, if you have 100 students, then setup 4-5 playing areas.

GAME PREP

Here's how to setup one playing area. Using masking tape, make one large square that contains nine small, equal squares. The nine squares should each be 4-5 feet high and wide.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

This game is a modified version of four square. Here are the official rules of four square –<http://www.squarefour.org/rules>. For this game, players use nine squares instead of four and use their head to hit the ball rather than hands. For a detailed explanation of nine-square, go here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9-Square>.

Ask the following questions after playing the game: Was it easy or hard to use your head instead of hands when playing the game? Explain.

Say: It didn't feel natural to play with your head, did it? You might even say it was awkward, wasn't it? Today we're going to talk about forgiveness. And the truth is that it doesn't come natural to us. We have to work at it. But the more we do it, the more natural it will become.

Optional: If players get real frustrated using their heads to hit the balls, then after a few minutes allow them to use their hands. But make them work for it.

TEACH

Prepare: *During the teaching time, you're going to share personal examples describing two ways people often react to someone hurting or upsetting you. Be prepared to share a time when you ignored being hurt and a time when you were hurt and you got revenge. Be prepared to also share the consequences of ignoring it and getting even.*

Say: Today we're going to talk about forgiveness. Is it easy or hard to show forgiveness to your classmates at school (or anyone for that matter)?

Think of the students in your class. Imagine you are in the classroom and take a look around at everyone that would be there with you. Do you see anyone who has ever done something to hurt or upset you? When you think about what they did to you, how did you respond?

When others do something wrong to you, you have 3 choices for how to respond.

First, you could ignore what they said or did.

This might seem like a good decision, but you never get the chance to deal with your emotions. When you hold on something, it eats away at you.

[Share a time when you ignored something and it ate away at you. Talk about how unforgiveness affected you.]

(Optional – Show a picture of a skin infection.)

An infection can get really bad when you ignore it and do nothing about it. It can get really nasty. When we ignore a wrong done to us, like an infection, it can eat away at our souls.

The second option is to get revenge.

You could do to them the exact same thing that they did to you. Or better, you could do something even worse than what they did! I think we all know that this is not the wisest choice.

For many of us, revenge is what comes naturally. It's like a knee jerk reaction. Your brother hits you for no reason, and you whack him on the head. A classmate at school plays a prank on you, and you get even doing something even worse to him.

[Share an example of when you got even with someone. Talk about the negative consequences that occurred.]

The third option, forgiveness, is much better than the first two.

You could choose to forgive the person for what they said or did. Forgiveness allows you to give the whole situation to God and let Him help to fix the broken friendship. Even if you can't be friends with the other person, God can work in you to heal your pain.

Forgiveness is always the best option. It's not just the best of the three choices; it is also a command from Jesus.

Matthew 18 tells us about a conversation that took place between Jesus and the disciples. **Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus responded to Peter by saying, "I tell you, not seven times but seventy-seven times."**
(Matthew 18:21–22)

The disciples must not have understood Jesus' response, so He explained it by telling them a story called a parable.

In the story, there was a King who wanted to collect the debts of all his servants. Each of the servants had to go before the King and pay him what they owed. If they could not pay, the custom was to be thrown in prison until the debt could be paid.

One of the servants owed a great deal of money to the King. The Bible says that the debt was equal to 10,000 bags of gold! I'm going to use these buckets to represent the debt of the servant. There are 10 buckets. Each bucket represents 1,000 bags of gold that the servant owed to the King.

Place 10 large buckets or flowerpots on stage to represent the debt. Be sure to use large pots to emphasize the magnitude of the servant's debt.

When the King learned that the servant couldn't pay the debt, He ordered that all of the man's possessions be sold. On top of that, the man, his wife, and his children were ordered to be sold as slaves! The servant fell to his knees and begged the King to have mercy on him.

Read Matthew 18:27

"The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go."

Can you believe that? This massive debt was just erased, and the man was free to go!

After he left, the servant went and found another man who owed him money. The Bible tells us that this man owed him around 100 silver coins. I'm going to use this bucket to represent that debt. This is nothing compared to that huge debt over there.

Place 1 small bucket or flowerpot on stage to represent the 2nd debt. Make an effort to compare the two debts and the drastic difference in amounts.

The man fell to his knees and begged for mercy because he couldn't pay his debt. Sound familiar? Listen to what happened in the end of this story.

Read Matthew 18:30–34.

This man was forgiven so much (*point to large buckets*), and yet he couldn't forgive someone else for this little amount (*point to small buckets*). The point Jesus was making was that we have all been forgiven for so much by God. He chose to love us and offer us forgiveness for sin. If we have been forgiven for so much, how can we not forgive a friend or classmate who has done something wrong to us?

Forgiveness is always the best option.

It's not easy to forgive others, but it is what Jesus commands us to do. Even if the other person is not really sorry, we still have to forgive and give it over to God.

Read Colossians 3:13

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

Remember, we should forgive others the way God has forgiven us.

End of Lesson

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

Note: This small group activity is optional and would probably work best with junior high/middle school students rather than high school students.

SUPPLIES

Flash paper (1 per student) & Sharpie’s. You can purchase flash paper here on Amazon:http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/B00XKOJCWU/ref=dp_olp_new?ie=UTF8&condition=new.

As of the publication of this lesson, that link is valid. However, if for any reason it is no longer active, then simply do a Google or Amazon search for “flash paper”.

Take those sheets and cut them into fourths leaving four smaller rectangles. You can also do a search on Google for – flash paper magic. You can find multiple other sources for the flash paper.

Each student will receive a piece of flash paper and a marker (Sharpie’s work best). Ask the students to write something that someone has done to them. Something that they haven’t yet forgiven. Remember the paper is small and thin, so remind them they don’t need to write every sin, just something that represents it. Ask them to take some time and pray over the paper, praying for God to forgive those sins. Then they should bring you the piece of paper. Don’t let the students do the lighting!

You should be stationed in an area with no flammable things close by sitting or standing behind a lit candle.

Take the student's paper and pray over it. Then light just the edge of the paper and throw it into the air.

The paper will burn in a flash leaving behind no ashes or other residue. Make sure you practice burning it before the students arrive. It takes a little practice to get it right.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What connection does this activity have with forgiveness?
2. Are some things easier to forgive than others? If so, what actions are easier to forgive? What actions are harder to forgive?

Have students take out their Bibles. One student reads Matthew 18:30–34 while everyone follows along in their Bible.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What do you think is the point of the story?
2. Does it make it easier for you to forgive others knowing that Jesus has forgiven you on so many things? Why or why not?

Youth Group Lesson on Gossip

Bible: Proverbs 20:19

Bottom Line: Use this lesson to challenge your students' views on gossip. As they play an interactive, silent version of the age-old game of telephone, students will take part in what gossip really is—blindly repeating words without having any idea if they're true or not.

SUPPLIES

Pen & paper

Various props—since you will be creating the prompts, whatever props you have will work.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Before the game starts, write down several prompt sentences for students to act out.

Line the students up. Give the first student in line a prompt to act out for the next person in line to guess by using motions and the provided props—but no words.

While the first student acts out the prompt, everyone except the next person in line has to close their eyes.

Once the student guessing has an idea of what the answer is, they then turn to the next person in line (who then opens their eyes) and acts out what they think the prompt is.

Continue down the line this way, but make sure no one talks or opens their eyes when it's not their turn!

Once the game reaches the end of the line, have the whole group open their eyes.

Have the first person act out the starting sentence, and then have the last person in line act out the sentence they guessed.

Tell the students what the sentence actually started out as, and go down the line to see what their guesses were.

Ask:

How big of a difference was there in what (first student) was trying to get you to guess and what (last student) was trying to get you to guess?

Was the game more difficult because you couldn't speak up and say what you wanted to say?

Does this remind you of any real life situations?

TEACH – Gossip

Say: I have to say; it was pretty funny watching you guys try to communicate with no words.

It was even funnier to hear how drastically the original message changed as it went down the line.

Even though this game was hilarious, it was also reminiscent of a real life problem that's not so funny.

Ask: Does anyone know what I'm talking about?

Say: I'm talking about gossip, something that seems to exist in every single school.

Even if I don't personally know you, your friends, or your school, I can guarantee you'll be faced with gossip at some point this year. It's just a sad fact.

I know you guys had your eyes closed during the game, so why don't I tell you what I saw?

I saw some written words start out pretty good, and then get twisted really fast.

The words got twisted so fast because once the game got going, no one was getting the story from the original source.

It changed from person to person, getting more mangled as the game went on.

This is exactly what happens with gossip.

What may start out as a true story or concern quickly changes as it is passed from person to person.

Ask: Have you ever had gossip circulate around school about you?

Have you ever participated in gossiping about someone else?

Say: Gossiping is an extremely easy trap to fall into.

I mean, think about it. You overhear something interesting in class, so you want to repeat it.

If you want to be a part of someone's conversation, it's easy to just drop a few lines about what you overheard. It seems harmless, really.

But in reality, it's anything but harmless.

You see, there was another similarity to gossip and our game, and that's the fact that none of you were allowed to speak up.

Think how quickly the game would have ended if you were able to use words and ask questions instead of blindly gesturing and using props that were given to you.

This is exactly how gossip works.

All you're doing is passing along words that were given to you. You're doing this blindly, because really, you don't know if they're true.

And the person you're talking about? They don't get the chance to speak up for themselves.

Read Proverbs 20:19

"A gossip betrays confidence; so avoid anyone who talks to much."

Say: Ouch. Are you really betraying confidence when you repeat a little harmless gossip? Absolutely.

This year in your school, you're sadly going to be surrounded by gossip. And while you may not be able to stop gossip from starting, you can definitely stop it from continuing with you.

Ask: How does it make you feel to realize that the Bible advises avoiding people who gossip?

Does this verse change the way you think about gossip?

Why do you think it's so tempting to participate in gossiping?

WRAP-UP

When you're tempted to join in with others gossiping this year, I want you to remember two things.

One, I want you to remember just how silly you all looked and felt as you were acting out your guesses that without knowing if they were true or false, and remember that gossip is very similar to that.

Two, I want you to remember this verse.

You don't want to be the type of friend who betrays confidence.

And even more than that, you don't want to be a person who the Bible recommends avoiding.

Just like in the game tonight, gossip would end so much quicker if someone spoke up.

So don't be afraid to speak up and stick up for those who are being gossiped about.

Because those actions are the actions of a person you can be proud of.

Youth Group Lesson on Joy

I remember going through a lot of ups and downs as a teenager.

I was on cloud 9 when I found “the love of my life” as a 15 year old. Then, three months later we broke up. I was devastated.

As you know, the key to attaining true joy is found in our relationship with God. And that can be experienced regardless of the circumstances of life.

Yes, for a teenager, that’s easier said than done. I get it.

But it is possible for this to happen, which is why we created this free lesson for your youth group.

Enjoy!

– ***Nick Diliberto, Creator of Ministry to Youth***

Youth Group Lesson on Joy

Bible: Romans 15:13

Bottom Line: Use this lesson to show students that with the God of Hope, it's possible to have joy in all circumstances.

SUPPLIES

Glow sticks

Tape

Balls (soft, ones that wouldn't hurt if they hit a student)

OPENING GAME

Before the game, tape the glow sticks to all of the balls except for one.

Split the group into two teams, and have each team split into four groups, with the two groups of each team standing facing each other, a couple steps apart.

Show the students the ball that does not have the glow stick taped to it. Ask them if they think throwing it and catching it between the two groups of each team seems possible.

Get a leader to turn the lights off.

Ask the group if they think it's possible now that the room is dark. If they do, ask them if they think it will be harder without the light.

Then, bring out the balls that are glowing from the glow sticks. Ask if they think it is possible now, with the glow sticks.

Give the balls to one group from each team. Have them toss the balls to the group across from them. Anyone who does not catch a ball is out, and all the balls that were not caught are out of play.

Have that group throw the balls back. Again, the students who do not catch any are out. Continue with this pattern until all of the students on one team are out.

The last team standing wins!

After the game, discuss these questions:

Before I explained that there were glow sticks, did you think that catching the balls in the dark was going to be impossible?

Have you ever experienced circumstances where it seemed really hard to have joy?

Do you think that it's possible to have joy when you're not feeling happy?

TEACH - Joy

So when I first asked you if you thought throwing balls back and forth was possible, it seemed pretty obvious, right? It's something we all learned pretty early on. But when the element of light was taken away, it suddenly seemed very difficult. Something that had just seemed very possible moved into something that seemed impossible, just because of the circumstances.

It's like that with joy sometimes, isn't it? When things are going good, joy seems easy. You don't even have to think about it, it just comes! But when you take away the good circumstances, joy turns into something that seems very hard, and at times even impossible.

But just like the glow sticks introduced a way to make something that seemed impossible, possible, I'm going to introduce you to something that makes joy possible at all times, even when the circumstances are bad.

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: That's a pretty cool image, isn't it? An image of God *filling* you with joy. See, that verse doesn't say, "May you have joy all the time." It doesn't say, "May God help you keep your joy." No, it says, May God *FILL* you with joy.

There are going to be circumstances in your life where you just don't have any joy, no matter how hard you try. Just like in the game we played, there are going to be situations where life seems so dark, you can't imagine joy being possible.

And that's when you have to turn to God.

This verse calls Him the God of hope, because that's exactly what He is. He is our hope. And it's because of that hope that we're able to have joy, no matter what the circumstances are.

I don't know about you, but overflowing with hope sounds like something I want to do! And doesn't joy seem like something that would just happen if you were overflowing with hope?

Just like those glow sticks provided a way to toss the balls back and forth in a dark room, the hope that God gives us provides a way for us to be filled with joy when our circumstances seem dark.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What's an example of a way God is your hope?

Is joy something that is hard for you to have sometimes?

Have you ever asked God to give you joy?

Can you remember a time where it didn't make sense that you were joyful, but you were able to have joy because of God?

Do you think it's truly possible to have joy, no matter what?

WRAP-UP

While it would be nice to never have to go through any hard times in life, we know that we will. They're going to happen, it's just a fact of life. But as Christians, we also know another fact—that we can have joy no matter how hard things get.

When you lose your joy, remember where your hope comes from. Remember that it comes from God. Ask Him to fill you up with joy, and He will!

He is your hope. No matter how dark life gets, He will be there to light it up with joy.

Youth Group Lesson on Perseverance

Bible: Hebrews 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:7; Romans 5:3-5

Bottom Line: Perseverance is hard, but it is important. It is possible to persevere through hard times because rather than destroying us it can build character, because Jesus persevered for us, and because we know who Jesus is and who we are through Him. If you keep persevering, you cannot fail.

OPENING GAME: Marshmallow Toss

SUPPLIES

Marshmallows

Plastic cups (enough for every student)

Bowls (enough for each team of two)

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Split the students into groups of two. Give each team two plastic cups, a bowl, and some marshmallows.

Have the teams start arms-length apart, each holding a plastic cup. They must toss a marshmallow from one plastic cup to the other.

Once they successfully get the marshmallow transferred between cups, they must put it in their team's bowl.

After that, one team member must take a step back before they toss the next marshmallow. Once they successfully toss the marshmallow from one cup to the next, they put it in the bowl.

For every marshmallow that hits the ground, they must remove one from their bowl.

This continues until the team is ten steps apart and has ten marshmallows in their bowl. If all the marshmallows have been removed by the time they get ten steps apart, the must continue tossing from this length until they get ten marshmallows in their bowl.

Once they have ten marshmallows, they must eat them all.

The first team to get ten marshmallows in their bowl and eat them all wins!

TEACH – Perseverance

Do you know what's pretty fun? Eating marshmallows.

Do you know what's not pretty fun? Not being able to eat marshmallows until you perfect tossing them between cups.

Perseverance really isn't a fun topic to talk about, because it's **hard**. It's hard to persevere through hard times. It's hard to press on when things are tough. There's really nothing fun about it, but it's incredibly important.

In the dictionary, perseverance is defined as “***steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.***”

Steadfastness. Staying steady. Holding steadfast to something and sticking out the situations that are difficult, where success seems really far away.

So tonight, while we talk about perseverance, I want you to be thinking about the answer to this question: What are you holding steadfast to?

Read 2 Timothy 4:7

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Have you ever heard that verse before? It's the essence of perseverance. Fighting the good fight, finishing the race of life, and keeping the faith the whole time.

Don't you want to be able to say that? When you get to the end of your life, don't you want to be able to confidently say that you persevered through the hard circumstance, that you kept fighting your way through the tough times? Or do you want to look back on your life and just see time after time where you chose quitting over perseverance?

Perseverance is really, really hard. But it is possible! Let's look at why it's possible to persevere through hard times.

It's possible to persevere through hard times because we know that Jesus persevered for us.

Read Hebrews 12:1-2

“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, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Here, the race comes up again. And here, we see that in order to run the race marked out for us, we have to have perseverance. But that's not all we see in this verse.

We see that not only do we need to have perseverance, but that we need to fix our eyes on Jesus. Why? Because He persevered.

Look at that—for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross.

Jesus endured so much for us. He had to go through far worse than any of us will ever have to go through. He persevered for us.

Jesus is the example we are supposed to follow. He is the pioneer and perfecter of faith, and we see here just how much He endured. So we know that it's possible to persevere through hard, tough, sometimes even terrible situations, because He persevered for us. So we can certainly persevere for Him.

It's possible to persevere through hard times because it builds character.

Romans 5:3-5

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

When perseverance is necessary, it's usually because there's some sort of suffering involved. We're suffering through a tough situation, suffering through a confusing time, suffering through a time where accomplishing anything seems very far off. So suffering causes the need for perseverance.

So what does perseverance cause?

Character, which causes hope. So having perseverance leads to hope. And not just any hope—hope that doesn't put us to shame, because it's the hope of God's love, which He's poured into our hearts.

So no, perseverance isn't really fun to think about. And it's certainly not fun to have to do. But the result of perseverance is a really beautiful, incredible form of hope. And it is well worth it.

It's possible to persevere through hard times because we know who Jesus is and who we are through Him.

Romans 5:6-8

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Jesus Christ died for you. Before you were godly, before you were righteous, and while you were still a powerless sinner, **Jesus Christ died for you.** Why? Because He loves you with a crazy, overwhelming kind of love.

If you were worth dying for, you must be pretty amazing.

Knowing who Jesus is—the King and Savior of us all—and knowing what He did for us should give us confidence to persevere.

We know we can persevere through anything, because Jesus knows we can. He gave His life for us because He thought we were worth it. Knowing that, there's no other choice but to persevere and keep running the race He has marked out for us!

I want to show you a video that I think really highlights perseverance and why it's so important.

Play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpQLkxqIKA>

If there's anything we can learn from that video, it's that if you keep persevering, you cannot fail. Did he win? No, he didn't. In fact, he came in last place. But did he fail? Absolutely not. Because He ran the race and fought the fight, even when his race got incredibly difficult. He finished the race.

Just like that man's father came to help Him, our heavenly Father helps us. His father couldn't do it for him, and he couldn't take his pain away or make it any easier, but he could walk right beside him and encourage him.

When we persevere in life, even when it's incredibly hard we know that God is walking right beside us, cheering us on, and helping us persevere.

It's not worth it to give up. It may feel like it, and there may be times where you don't know how you can possibly keep going. Quitting may sound like a really incredible idea at some points in a tough situation.

When that happens, you just have to remember: if you do not quit, if you keep persevering, then you cannot fail.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have there been times in your life where you had to choose if you were going to persevere or quit? What did you choose?

Does knowing that Jesus persevered for you make you want to persevere for Him?

At the end of your life, do you want to be able to say you fought the good fight, finished your race, and kept your faith? If so, do you think you'll need perseverance to be able to do that?

When you think of how much Jesus had to endure and persevere through, does that make the situations you have to persevere through seem less difficult?

Perseverance can sometimes be viewed in a negative way because it implies hard situations. Now that you know it leads to hope, does it seem like more of a positive thing to you?

Does knowing that Jesus died for you make you feel more confident?

Have you ever had an experience where you feel like the fact that you persevered through a situation built character?

Do you agree that you should keep your eyes on Jesus while you are running the race of life?

Do you think Jesus is a good example of how we should persevere and run our race? Why?

Do you think that persevering and keeping our faith is something that makes Jesus happy? Does that make you want to do it more?

WRAP-UP

Do you remember the question I asked you at the beginning of tonight? I asked what it was that you were holding steadfast to.

So, what is it? When you're in a time that is hard, what do you hold on to?

Is it selfishness? Wanting to get out of the situation by making it as easy as possible for yourself?

Is it a friend? Clinging to friendship to help you get through a situation?

Is it Jesus? Fixing your eyes on Him and holding steadfast to Him while you persevere through tough circumstances? Because that's what it should be.

All that you've learned tonight doesn't make perseverance any more fun. It isn't going to make the next tough situation you go through any less tough. It isn't going to make a hard time into sunshine and butterflies.

But now you know that it's possible to persevere, and you have some reasons to persevere. You know that Jesus persevered for you, and He's there to encourage you as you persevere for Him.

You can persevere, or you can be a quitter. Those are really the only choices you have when it comes to hard times and tough circumstances. Sure, it's going to be tempting to quit sometimes. But when that happens, just remember all we've talked about tonight. Remember who is on your side and what's at stake.

And remember: if you don't quit, you can't fail. If you keep going, if you persevere, then you win no matter what. And that is so much better than quitting.

Youth Group Lesson on Serving Others

My natural default mode is NOT to give, serve, or put others first.

In fact, I often put myself first. I'm a work in progress.

I'm married with three kids, ages 13, 11 and 9. Our family loves taking a trip to Costco and loading up on tons of groceries. Yum!

The best part is coming home and taking inventory of all the goodies. As soon as we get home we usually dive right in and eat 4-5 of our favorite snacks on the spot. Awesome!

The problem arises when we have similar favorites.

For example, my two favorites we regularly get a big box of are Kind Granola Bars and Kashi Chocolate Chip Cookies.

The problem is that both my son Joey (11 year old) and daughter Emma (9 year old) love them too.

Sometimes the box is completely empty because they devoured them after only a day or so. This drives me crazy because I wanted some too! Grrrr.

So, I figured out a solution to this problem.

Hide them in my office closet so they can't find them in the pantry. That way I can have them all to myself! Genius!

Well, maybe not for obvious reasons. When doing this, I'm putting myself first and not thinking of them.

Not a good way to live nor is it a good lesson to teach my kids.

But, like I said, I'm a work in progress.

The teenagers in your ministry probably struggle with the concept of giving as well. Like me, they know it's the right thing to do. They just neglect actually living it out in every day situations.

Use this free youth group lesson to teach students the importance of giving.

Help students realize that when they give to others, God gives to them.

Enjoy!

– *Nick Diliberto, Creator of Ministry to Youth*

Youth Group Lesson on Serving Others

Bible: Luke 6:38

Bottom Line: Use this lesson to help students understand the importance of a serving heart.

SUPPLIES

Different sized jars, cups, and bowls

Pennies

Colored Tape

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Set up the jars, cups, and bowls on the floor. You can put some close to each other and some spread out more.

Mark several lines with the tape in front of the jars. Make the first line right in front of them, the next line a few feet back, the next line further back, etc. Do this until the final line is all the way across the room from the jars.

Give each student five pennies. Explain that the goal is to get the pennies into the jars (and cups or whatever else you have put out).

For each penny they land in a jar, they get two more pennies. If they don't make it in the jar, they get nothing.

Have the students line up behind the first line and let everyone toss a penny. Give the students who make it into a jar two more pennies. The ones who don't are down one penny.

Once everyone has gone, have them move to the next line and repeat this. Again, give the winners two more pennies.

Continue going through all the taped off lines. Once a student runs out of pennies, they are out.

Once you get to the last line, have remaining students compete until there is just one student left. The last student to still have any pennies wins.

After the game, discuss the following questions:

Was that game harder than you thought it was going to be?

Do you think you would have had a better chance of winning if you had stayed at the first line the whole time?

Did it make it harder to win since the only way to get more pennies was to give up the ones you already had?

After the game, say:

That was a pretty interesting game, right? To win, you had to get more pennies than anyone else. But in order to get more, you had to give up the ones you already had. That made it difficult, right?

That's kind of how it is in life, isn't it? God gives us things—money, talents, time—and we have the choice of what to do with those things. We can have an attitude that says it's all about us, and we can choose to hold tightly to everything we have, making sure we never give anything away.

Or, we can choose to have a giving heart.

Which one do you think will work out better for us in the end?

Read Luke 6:38:

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Does that remind you of anything? What do you do when a bag is full, but you're trying to fit more into it? You press it down, right? You shove the stuff in, shake it around, and try to make room for more.

That's what this verse is saying. The measure in which it will be give back to you will be so much that it's been pressed down, shaken together, and it's *still* running over.

I don't know about you, but that's something I want to get in on!

But first, we have to give. And that just doesn't make sense, does it? That we have to give in order to get?

In the game we played, you could have held onto all of your pennies and never tried to make them into a cup or a jar. But if you had done that, you never would have gotten any new pennies, either.

This verse is not just talking about money; it's talking about everything. It can be hard to get rid of that "everything is all about me!" kind of attitude, but that's what God wants us to do.

See, God has already blessed you. Think about it! Sure, some of you probably have money, but that's not all He's blessed you with. He's given you time, talents, friendship, compassion, and so many other things that you have to give.

You can choose to hold onto those things and keep them for yourself. You can choose to not have a giving heart.

Or, you can choose to have a giving heart, and in turn, things will be given back to you.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Does it make sense to you that giving leads to getting more than you had in the first place?

Would you describe your attitude right now as one that has a giving heart, or one that is all about yourself?

What are some things that you have that you can give?

Has there ever been a time before where you've been blessed because you chose to give?

WRAP-UP

Listen, I'm not saying that if you put five dollars in the offering today, that ten dollars will show up in your locker tomorrow. Of course, it might! But that's not what this is about. It's about your heart.

Let's say there's someone at your school who doesn't have any friends and who's kind of an outsider. God has given you friendship, and you get to choose who to give it to. Imagine that you befriend this person, giving of your friendship and time. In turn, God blesses you with the best friend you've ever had, because you were willing to give.

That's the heart of God. He wants to give back to you, pressed down, shaken together, and still overflowing. But He can only do that if you have a giving heart.

Having a giving heart blesses others *and* it blesses you. I'd say that's a win-win situation, wouldn't you?