

TOP 10 YOUTH MINISTRY LESSONS AND GAMES

Created by ministrytoyouth.com

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Game: Loving Others

Bible: Matthew 5:13-16

Game – Jingle Who?

Use this game to teach your youth group a lesson on “love”, so they understand that their choices and actions should reflect Jesus.

It’s a great game to setup a Christmas message on the topic. Or use it any time of the year when doing a youth group message on loving others.

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

How to Play

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.

Play as many rounds as you have time for.

Optional – Award the winner of each round with a prize.

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 – Loving Others

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.

Lesson: Kindness

Bible: Colossians 3:12; Job 6:14

Lesson Overview: We often think about kindness in terms of a single “act of kindness” instead of a lifestyle. However, the Bible tells us that we are to clothe ourselves in kindness, which goes far beyond just doing kind things for others every now and then.

Opening Game: All Wrapped Up

Supplies

- Roll of gauze, tulle, or some other type of fabric that can be wrapped around like a mummy (toilet paper works well too)

Divide the group into two teams and place them on opposite sides of the room.

Have a volunteer from each team go and join the opposing team. When you say go, the teams must start wrapping the fabric around the player from the other team, making them into a sort of mummy.

They have one minute to get creative and wrap the player up the best they can so that it will be difficult to unwrap.

When time is up, the players who are wrapped up must hobble, jump, or otherwise make their way across the room where their team will try to unwrap them as fast as they can.

The first team to completely unwrap their player wins.

Teach – Kindness

Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit. That means if you are living the way you are supposed to be living, according to God’s Word, then kindness will be a fruit that grows out of your life.

When you think about kindness, what comes to mind? Probably an action, right? Doing something nice for someone else?

What if we stopped thinking of kindness as an action and started thinking of kindness as an entire lifestyle?

Colossians 3:12 “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.” –

In the game we just played, you wrapped the fabric all around the player from the opposite team. Now, let me ask you—was it easy to get all of that off? No! Eventually you were able to, but you weren’t able to get rid of all the fabric instantly, because you were clothed in it.

This verse says that we are supposed to clothe ourselves with kindness. Now, when you get dressed for the day, do you just wear your clothes long enough for someone to see them before taking them off? Of course not! That would defeat the entire purpose of wearing clothes!

In the same way, kindness should not be a single action completed and then forgotten. Instead, it should be something we put on, wrapped all around us, and wear all day long.

Do you think that it’s really possible to clothe yourself in kindness and wear it all day long? Do you think it’s really possible for kindness to be something that filters into everything you do all day?

It is!

And I’m going to tell you three ways you can keep kindness wrapped around you all day: with your words, with your actions, and with your attitude.

Kindness with your words

It’s incredibly easy to be unkind with your words. Saying the first thing that comes to mind, or not taking time to think about your attitude before you speak can result in a lot of hurt feelings and a lot of regretted words.

However, it can also be incredibly easy to be kind with your words. How? By taking a little extra time to think about your words before you speak them out loud.

This may sound like a lot of work, but it’s really not. Actually, it’s pretty easy. You just need to ask yourself one question: ***Are these words kind?***

If the answer is yes, that's awesome. Clothe yourself in kindness with your words! If the answer is no, then just don't say them. Think of a different way to say what you want to say, this time using kindness.

Kindness with your actions

Our actions should be kind. This may seem like a “duh” point, but ask yourself—do you take the time to think about whether or not your actions are done in kindness?

In the busyness of everyday life, kindness can quickly become something that is shoved aside in favor of convenience. Why? Because it's just not convenient to be kind! It's way easier to just be selfish.

So this week, as you're going about your normal routine, take the time to purposefully make sure your actions are kind. Don't only think about how your actions affect you, or what people think of your actions. Think about how you can exhibit kindness with your actions. And then do it!

Kindness with your attitude

This can be a tricky one. How many of you struggle with having a kind attitude all the time?

Think about it—when someone is getting on your nerves, is your attitude toward them kind? What about when someone is unkind to you? Or what about when things don't work out the way you wanted them to—does your attitude show kindness?

There is only one person who has complete control over your attitude, and that one person is you. So take control of it! When a situation happens that makes you feel irritated, or selfish, or any other unkind emotion, take a deep breath and choose to react with kindness.

If this is something you struggle with, ask God to help you! When you feel yourself struggling to have a kind attitude, pray and ask Him to help you have more kindness in your heart and less of whatever else is going on. God loves you and wants to help you—so ask!

Job 6:14 “Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.” –

In this verse, fear doesn't mean to cower in the corner, terrified. It means to revere, or to respect.

Here it says that withholding kindness from a friend is forsaking the fear of God. In other words, if you're not being kind to those around you, you aren't respecting God. That doesn't sound too good, does it?

But that's how important kindness is to God. It's so important that His Word says that withholding kindness from a friend is withholding fear and respect from Him. That's a big deal!

It's so important to show kindness to everyone, even the people who you don't feel like being kind to. No matter what people look like on the outside, and no matter what their life looks like from the outside, you never know what they are going through on the inside. It can never hurt to be kind to someone, but it can hurt to be unkind.

Have you ever heard the saying that "You may be the only part of Jesus that someone ever sees?" It means that there are some people in your life who may never go to church or open a Bible, so you are the only exposure to Jesus that they have.

In the same way, there may be some people in your life who think of Jesus as mean and scary, because they've never truly been introduced to Him. So you may be the only example of His kindness that they ever see. That's a big responsibility!

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to you to clothe yourself in kindness? What are some ways you can do that?
2. Have you ever regretted not showing kindness to someone?
3. Do you think that kindness is more of an action or a lifestyle?
4. When you talk without thinking about what you're going to say, is the result usually kind or unkind?
5. Do you take the time to think about whether or not your actions are kind? If not, is that something you want to start doing?
6. Do you think that others would describe your attitude as kind? Why or why not?
7. What are some ways that God has shown you kindness?

8. Do you think it's possibly to live an entire lifestyle full of kindness?
9. Have you ever withheld kindness from a friend? How does it make you feel to know that the Bible says that's like forsaking the fear of God?
10. What are some ways you can practice kindness this week?

Wrap Up

Supplies

- Four clear glasses
- One pitcher of water

Every single day, you are going to be faced with a choice: be kind, or be unkind.

Your words, your actions, and your attitude...these are all things that you'll have to choose kindness in.

Kindness will not always be the easiest choice. In fact, sometimes kindness will be the hardest choice. But it's *right* choice.

Play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1KCzrTg9ic>

While that video was playing, were you thinking of any specific person or situation?

Here's the deal—most likely, you're going to have a few regrets in life. You'll make mistakes, miss opportunities, and do other things that will make your stomach hurt when you look back on them.

I'm telling you right now...don't let a lack of kindness cause those regrets. You have no idea how much your kindness could mean to someone. It could mean just a little, or it could mean everything. But as a follower of Jesus, as an *example* of Jesus, it's your responsibility to be kind.

Before we close, I want to tell you one more thing about kindness.

The more you're kind, the easier it is to be kind. The more kindness you show to others, the easier it is for them to be kind. Kindness is contagious!

*Line up the cups. Pour water into them in the following way:
Fill the first cup up almost all the way.*

Fill the second cup up about a quarter of the way full.

Fill the third cup up halfway full.

Pour the fourth cup up about a quarter of the way full.

I want to show you guys an example of how kindness works. We're going to use water as an example of kindness. *Hold up the first cup.* Let's pretend this cup is you, and that you've chosen to clothe yourself in kindness. So when you have an interaction with someone else (*hold up second cup*), you choose to act in kindness, even though they don't seem very kind.

Pour about half of the water from the first cup into the second cup, bringing the second cup to be about three-fourths full.

So you act in kindness towards them. And then, they leave. You don't know what kind of impact your kindness had, but you know that you did what you should have by acting in kindness.

So then this person you were kind to, let's say they bump into someone else. While their first reaction wouldn't normally be to be kind, they were impacted by the kindness you showed them, so they decide to act in kindness.

Pour about half of the water from the second glass into the third glass, bringing the glass almost all the way full.

Now this person (*hold up the third glass*) is just brimming with kindness because of their interaction with the person that you were kind to. So what happens when they see someone (*hold up the fourth glass*) who seems to be completely empty of kindness, they don't even think twice—they just act in kindness!

Pour until the fourth glass is almost full.

See how all the cups have water in them now? It's the same with kindness...it just spreads and spreads, and the more you give of it (*pour fourth glass back into the first glass until the water overflows*), the more you're filled with it!

If you want to overflow with kindness, start acting in kindness towards others. It won't be long until you're so full of kindness that you just can't contain it!

Lesson: Worry

Bible: Matthew 6:25-27

Supplies:

- Enough blindfolds for half of the group.
- A screen that can play a Youtube video.
- Water Balloons.

Opening Game: Traffic Jam

Have everyone pair up in groups of two. One person will act as the car; one person will act as the driver.

The person acting as the car puts on the blindfold. Have the pairs scatter throughout the room. When you say go, the player acting as a car has to follow your instructions.

Yell things like:

- Red light!
- U-Turn!
- Reverse!
- Turn Left!

When you yell something, the player acting as the car has to immediately follow your instructions. The player acting as the driver must help the “car” avoid hitting other cars by **using only their words**.

For example, if you say “turn left” and the player acting as the car turns left, but there’s another car there, the driver would yell, “stop!” When a car hits another car, both of those cars and drivers are out of the game.

The final team who has not crashed or been crashed into wins!

Lesson – Worry

Say – That was quite the fiasco! Now, I have a question for all the people who were cars. Where you worried at all that your driver was going to steer you the wrong way and you were going to crash?

If so, why didn’t you take the blindfold off and stop playing? Well, because then you would have missed out on the fun of the game.

It's the same way in life—the things we worry about are either going to happen or not happen, and sitting around worrying about them only makes us miss out on life.

If we were to all go around the room and list out all the things we worry about, we would be here all week. But do you know what else? We would probably also laugh at each other. Because there are some things that, once you say them out loud, you realize just how silly it is to be worrying over them.

If you look in the Bible, though, you'll see that worrying isn't only just silly. It's actually the opposite of what God wants us to do.

Read Matthew 6:25-27:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

Say – When you read the end of the verse, doesn't it make worrying seem so stupid? Because it's right, worrying doesn't add any amount of time to our life. In fact, it does the opposite—it takes away from the life we already have.

Now, I need a volunteer. I need someone who is willing to get wet.

Okay, you're going to stand here and worry. Why? Because I'm going to throw these water balloons at you, that's why. But the good news is, I'm going to give you a few seconds to worry. Maybe if you worry hard enough, the water balloons won't hit you. Let's try it.

Throw a few water balloons.

Okay, so that's a silly example. But isn't that how we act sometimes? We know that worrying won't change anything.

So why do we still worry?

This is one of those verses where it's almost like Jesus is talking right to you through it. Like He's saying, “Hey, you worry a lot. Why do you do that? What's the worst that can happen? So what if you don't have any food or clothes. Don't you think I'll take care of you?”

And really, when we worry, we act like we don't think He's going to take care of us. We worry over things that, in the grand scheme of life, are pretty small. We worry about grades and friendships, curfews and colleges, opinions and jobs. And yes, all of these things are important, and they're things we should work hard and care about.

However, if we spend our time worrying, it's basically like we're saying, "Hey Jesus, I know You said You'd be there for me no matter what, but I'm not sure that I believe you. I know You're supposed to be enough for me, but I'm not sure that you are."

That's just crazy talk!

Put on the video of the flowers blooming while you read this verse. You can mute the music. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IENTji39i4k>

Read Matthew 6:28-34:

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

To me, this is one of the most beautiful passages in the entire Bible. It's like there's a picture being painted of just how much God really cares *about* us, and just how much He is always going to take care *of* us.

Let's look at how.

"If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you?"

Let's be honest—how many of you have worried about clothes? Isn't it funny that this verse, which is so many years old, references a problem we still deal with today?

Of course we worry about clothes. We worry about money to buy clothes, and then we worry about which clothes we should buy. We worry about which clothes

we should wear to which places. We worry about what other people are going to think about our clothes. We worry, worry, and worry.

And it's ridiculous.

Have you stopped and looked at any flowers lately? I mean, look at those in that video! Sure, flowers are gorgeous. But when you think of how all that color and beauty and shape and smell just grew right out of the dirt—that's amazing.

And this verse is right, flowers are more beautiful than even the richest king's clothing.

The God who created those flowers—those stunning, incredible flowers that outshine royalty—loves us so much more than He loves those flowers. So why would we even waste a second of our lives worrying about clothes?

“Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”

These are such reassuring words. They just reiterate that God *already knows what we need*. Our heavenly Father is well aware of exactly what we need. It's like a little love letter from Heaven, reminding us that everyone needs these things, but we don't have to worry about them, because He already knows we need them. That's just amazing.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Well, if that isn't the clearest instruction, I don't know what is. We're very clearly told not to worry, but to place our focus somewhere else. And that somewhere else is seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness. After that, everything will fall into place exactly how it should.

Isn't that a relief? Now, this doesn't mean that you have permission to just slack off of everything and throw caution to the wind, claiming that God will take care of everything as long as you read your Bible and pray.

That's not what this verse means. There's a difference between working hard and worrying. God calls us to work hard and not be lazy. But instead of worrying about those things, He calls us to seek eternal things, not temporary things. Seek what really matters, and everything else will follow.

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Now isn't that just the truth. Tomorrow is going to happen whether you worry about it or not, so just let tomorrow worry about itself. There's too much to think about and to do today to have the time or energy to worry about tomorrow.

It's an incredible gift to be able to lay your head on your pillow at night and be able to tell the God who created everything you see that you trust Him. You may have no idea what tomorrow will bring, but you know that He'll be there and that, because He cares for you, He will take care of you.

Now, how do you avoid worrying?

Read Philippians 4:6

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Next time you start to worry about something, I want to remember this verse. This verse gives you a clear formula for how to deal with worry. Are you ready?

1. No matter what the situation is, do not be anxious.
2. With a thankful heart, pray and tell God what you need.

That's it! Seem too easy? Well, when you have a God who's got your best interests in mind, who you can talk to at any time, it really is.

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. What are some things you spend a lot of time worrying about?
2. Do you agree with the statement that worrying is acting like you don't believe God's promises?
3. How does it feel to know that God cares about you and is going to take care of you?
4. Does the flower analogy put into perspective how silly it is to worry about clothes?
5. What are some ways you can seek the kingdom of Heaven first?

6. Why do you think we worry so much, even though we know God will take care of us?

7. Why do you think God tells us not to worry?

8. Does talking to God about the things your anxious about help you worry less?

9. Would it hurt your feelings if you told your best friend you were going to bring them lunch, but they spent the whole morning telling everyone they were worried that they weren't going to have anything to eat that day? Do you think that's how God feels when we worry about things He's already said He'd take care of?

10. What can you do this week that will help remind you to not worry?

Teach – Closing

The temptation to worry is never going to go away. There are always going to be things in your life that *you could* worry about. You just have to choose to not worry about them.

But here's the thing—after reading those verses and seeing how much God loves and cares for you, how could you *not* choose to give up worry?

The next time you start to worry, do like that verse in Philippians says, and talk to God about it. If you still struggle with worry, sit down and open your Bible. Google “God’s Promises” and look those verses up. Read those promises, and decide if you believe them or not.

If you don't, then yes, you've definitely got a lot to worry about. More than you could ever deal with on your own. But if you do trust in those promises, what an amazing gift you have. It's a gift of knowing that someone is looking out for you and providing for you. It's a gift of knowing that someone is taking care of you.

It's a gift of knowing you don't have to worry.

Lesson: Evangelism

Bible: Matthew 13:44

Topic: Telling others about Jesus

Use this youth group game and lesson to challenge the way your students think about sharing Jesus with their friends.

As students search for hidden treasure with no direction from their friends, they will learn how important it is to share directions to the most important treasure of all: Jesus.

Opening Game – Hidden Treasure

Supplies:

- **A “treasure” (something like enough candy for the winning group)**
- **Clues written down to the location of the treasure: both true and false**

Before the game starts, hide the treasure somewhere in the building, or outside, if that works with your location. Split the students into two groups.

Choose one student from each group and pull them aside. Tell them where the treasure is, but tell them that they cannot give their teammates any hints at all.

Send the surely confused students back to their groups and tell everyone to start looking for the treasure—without giving them any rules or hints to where it may be.

After teams have been looking for a while, start passing out clues. For every true clue you give the students, also give them a false clue.

After the students run around confused for a few minutes, eventually give them enough true clues to allow one of the groups to find the treasure.

Ask:

- Wasn't that a confusing treasure hunt?
- Did the false clues make it a lot harder to find what you were looking for?
- Wouldn't it have been easier if I had given you directions at the beginning of the game?

Teach – Evangelism

Say: Now, I'm going to confuse you all just a little bit more. What if I told you that (names of students you pulled aside at the beginning) knew where the treasure was the entire time?

Pause and allow students to react.

Say: That's right, they knew exactly where the treasure was. They even knew that some of the clues I gave you were wrong!

If they had spoken up, your entire team would be enjoying candy right now!

Ask:

- What kind of friend keeps their mouth shut when they know something that could help their friends?

Say: Sadly, a lot of you may be that kind of friend this year.

You see, as you go back to school, you're going to rub elbows with a lot of people who don't know Jesus on a daily basis. You may even become close friends with some of them.

Ask:

- What kind of friend would you be if you didn't tell them about Jesus?

Say: If you know Jesus, you already have found the greatest treasure in the entire world.

Ask:

- What reasons do you have to not tell your friends about Jesus?
- Do you agree that knowing Jesus is like having a treasure?
- If you think of knowing Jesus as a treasure, does that motivate you more to share him with others?

Say: It's easy to just go throughout the school year focused on yourself. It would be really easy for you to just worry about your assignments and making sure you got in with the right group.

It would be easier to *not* worry about telling people about Jesus this school year. But if you did that, you would be withholding the secret to the greatest treasure there is.

Read: Matthew 13:44

"The Kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Say: Isn't that verse so cool? It shows us how excited we should be over the fact that we know about Jesus and Heaven.

The man in this story was so excited that he rushed to give away everything he had so he could get the treasure.

Now, if he was that excited, don't you think he told all of his friends once he got the treasure?

Wrap up

Maybe you've never thought of having a relationship with Jesus as having a treasure. I hope that after reading that verse, you will.

Think of how many people in your school don't know Jesus and are just blindly wandering around looking for something.

Just like in the game, they don't have clear direction on where they should be looking. They're receiving false advice on where they should be going. They're waiting on someone to tell them something that makes sense.

You could be that someone. Someone needs to tell the students at your school about the greatest treasure they could ever have. Is it going to be you?

Game: Gossip**Bible: Proverbs 20:19****Topic: Gossip**

Use this back to school game 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.

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 and 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 apart 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 too 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.

Game: Summer Slam

Topic: How to Treat Others

Bible: Philippians 2:1-4

Use this free summer game in your youth group, youth ministry or sunday school. It's perfect for a summer event or youth camp. Play it just for fun or use the lesson that goes with it, based on Philippians 2:1-4 on the topic of "how to treat others". Enjoy!

Supplies:

- 2 kiddie pools or very large containers to hold water
- 8 five gallon buckets
- 20 pieces of pool noodles that are cut to 2 feet long each
- Colored tape or markers to mark buckets
- 4-6 dodgeballs

***Note:** Supplies are adequate for about 30-40 students. If you have a larger group, then additional supplies will be needed.*

Directions:

1. Divide students into 4 equal teams with 8-10 players in each team. If you have more than 40 students, break into more than four groups.
2. Fill the pool noodles with water and place them in the pools.
3. Mark the eight buckets with four different colors – two buckets with each color.
4. Assign colors to each team.
5. Place buckets in a line about 20-30 feet across from the pool. You want them to be far enough away so students will have to run to them.
6. Make sure no team's two buckets are directly next to each other in the line.
7. On go teams will send one member at a time down to the kiddie pool to grab a noodle filled with water.
8. They can only use their hands to hold the water in the noodle.
9. Once they reach the buckets they need to dump the water into another team's bucket.
10. As players are running to fill up the buckets with water, have leaders (or other students) throw dodgeballs at them. If hit, they have to empty the water in their noodle, fill it up again, and dump it into another team's bucket.

11. Once they return the noodle to the pool, another team member can grab a noodle and go.
12. Once both buckets from a team are filled they are out.
13. Continue playing until only one team has one or more unfilled bucket and wins.

After the game, say: Wow, wow, wow was that crazy. You all looked like you were having a great time, well until both your buckets got filled to the top. To the winning team congratulations and great job. As I was watching you all run around and fill each other's buckets, I began to think about a book you may have read before. It is called – *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*

The concept is really easy. We all have this imaginary bucket of feelings we carry around with us. When the bucket is full we are happy and feel great. When the bucket is empty we are sad and depressed. When other people come into play it has an effect on other people's buckets. When we say something nice or do something for someone we are helping fill his or her bucket. We become bucket fillers. But when we talk about people, make fun of others, pick on people, and just do mean things we are emptying their bucket. We become bucket dippers.

Ask:

- What does it look like in your lives to be a bucket dipper?
- How do you respond when someone is dipping your bucket?
- Do you think you are a bucket dipper?
- What are things you do to fill people's buckets?
- Is there anyone you know that is a great bucket filler?
- Are there things you need to do to be a better filler?

Say: It can be a great feeling when we do something to make someone happy. And the opposite is true when we do something to make someone sad. When we do things for God we make Him happy, and He is smiling as we are filling His bucket. When we sin we are dipping His bucket and making Him sad. So what do we have to do to stop being God's bucket dipper? By having a Christ-like attitude.

Read Philippians 2:1-4:

"Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from His love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."

You see in the game you worked hard to fill the buckets to win the game. Do the same in your life; work hard at filling God's bucket. Live by these verses and watch how much God's bucket overflows with love and joy in your lives.

Close in prayer.

Lesson: Discipleship

Bible: Matthew 8: 18-22 & Matthew 5:3-10 (MSG)

Ask: When you hear the word disciple...what do you think about? (Get responses)

- People who followed Jesus?
- 12 people way back in Jesus' time?
- Devoted followers?

Anyone here a disciple?

Whether you know it or not, we are all disciples...we all follow something.

Question is...what are we following?

What Is a Disciple?

A disciple is a follower, a student of a mentor, teacher, or other figure.

Why would you want to be a follower or a student?

Because we all need to learn!

When you think you know it all – you are one of two things: dead or a fool!

So we are all being taught by someone...a mentor, teacher, friend. We are all following something.

What does discipleship look like?

Well, if you are a disciple of baseball, then it looks like practicing, working out, focusing on techniques, and repetition. You eat, sleep, drink, and live baseball. You talk about baseball, watch baseball, read baseball articles...you think baseball!

If you are a disciple of music, then it looks like learning the theory of music, notes, rhythm, reading sheet music, and chords. You are patiently practicing your instrument. Sometimes so much your fingers bleed. Your hands hurt; your voice can't utter another sound. You live in music stores and always have earphones in your ears. Music soothes your soul.

If you are a disciple of literature or poetry, then you're learning allegory, foreshadowing, etc.. You are reading all kinds of literature, like Treasure Island,

Les Miserables, and The Man in the Iron Mask. You go to book clubs, attend public readings, and even begin to write on your own.

What does a disciple of Jesus look like?

Read Matthew 8: 18-22 (MSG)

When Jesus saw that a curious crowd was growing by the minute, he told his disciples to get him out of there to the other side of the lake. As they left, a religion scholar asked if he could go along. "I'll go with you, wherever," he said. Jesus was curt: "Are you ready to rough it? We're not staying in the best inns, you know." Another follower said, "Master, excuse me for a couple of days, please. I have my father's funeral to take care of." Jesus refused. "First things first. Your business is life, not death. Follow me. Pursue life."

Jesus puts it another way...

Read Matthew 5: 3-10 (MSG)

"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule."⁴ "You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. "You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought. "You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat. "You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for. "You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world. "You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family. "You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.

Why is Discipleship Important?

With baseball, it's about the thrill of the game.

With literature/poetry it is important to be able to express yourself through the art of writing.

With Jesus, it's important to show the world what the people of God looks like. It's important to show the world that despite all the evil and wrong in the

world...there is hope! It's important to display the glory of God and invite everyone around you into that story.

Baseball is great...

Literature is awesome...

But being a disciple of Jesus...it gives us life. It sustains your life.

There's a reason why baseball is America's "pastime". It's a fun competitive game with a long history.

There's a reason poetry exist. Those emotions, the pain, the triumph, all trying to grasp the thing that sustains life.

Being a follower of Jesus means that you are following him and his ways. You are practicing loving God with all you heart, soul, and mind. You are loving your neighbor as yourself, and you are inviting other people to join this story with you.

End in Prayer

Small Group Questions

- Say your name, school, and if you prefer Coke or Pepsi.
- In your opinion, what is the definition of disciple?
- What are you a disciple of...what do you follow?
- Why is it easier to be a "disciple" of sports or music than it is to be a disciple of Jesus?
- What does a disciple of Jesus look like? How can you adopt those traits?

Game: Angry Potatoes (Topic – Anger)

Use this free youth group game to teach students how to deal with anger.

Bible: Ephesians 4: 26-27

Supplies:

- Potatoes
- Sling shots
- Raw spaghetti
- Marshmallows
- Black sharpies

Note: If you have a large youth group, then you might want to have two groups of students do this activity upfront on the stage.

Break up students into groups of 3-4.

Give each group a few minutes to build a tower using marshmallows and raw spaghetti.

If you want, have students compete to see who can build the highest tower.

Give each group 2-3 potatoes.

Instruct students to write down on the potatoes with sharpies what makes them mad. It could be specific situations, actions or people.

Assign each group the task of knocking down another team's tower. The goal is to be the first team to knock down a tower. (But be sure to have the activity continue until all the towers are knocked down.)

The towers are knocked down by placing the potatoes in a sling shot and shooting them from 15-20 feet away.

(Optional: If a sling shot is not available, then have players simply throw the potatoes at the towers).

Award the winning team a prize.

After the game, say:

This game is a picture of what can happen when we're angry.

On our potatoes we wrote down things that made us mad.

Those very things (the potatoes) were used to destroy something.

Just like anger has the power to destroy, tear down and hurt others.

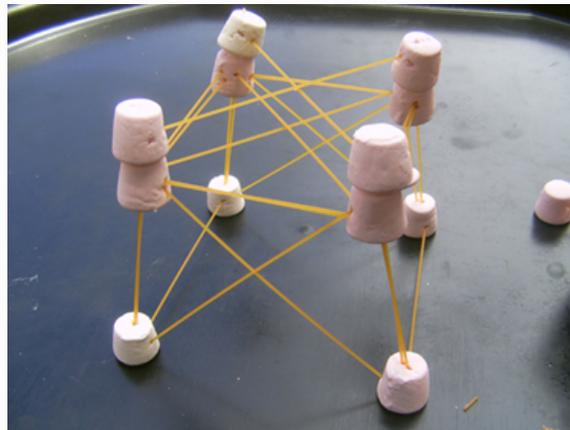
Read Ephesians 4: 26-27:

“And don’t sin by letting anger control you. Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil”.

Small Group Discussion Questions:

- What did you write down on your potatoes? Why does it make you angry?
- What does “don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry” mean to you?
- How can anger be a “foothold” for the devil...and what does “foothold” mean?
- How can we deal with our anger in a healthy, rather than destructive way?

Note: *If you’re wondering what a marshmallow & spaghetti tower looks like, then see the pic below. However, feel free to have students get as creative as they wish 😊*



Lesson: Choices

Bible: Romans 12:1-2 (MSG)

Say: Ever think about the everyday choices we make?

Like for real!

Why do we dress the way we do?

Why do we talk and act the way we do?

Why do we hang around the people we hang with?

Why are we sitting in this room right now?

Before today is over, I want you to ask yourself three questions...

- Who makes my choices?
- How am I making my choices?
- Why am I making them?

Who Makes Our Choices?

Who or what pressures us to do what we do?

Wear what we wear...

Talk how we talk...

If we are honest with ourselves, we would say that the culture around us has a huge say in what we do, what we wear, how we act, and how we talk.

And when I say culture, I'm talking about social media, movie stars, recording artist, athletes, where we live, the school we go to, and the friends we hang out with.

I'm talking about technology, books, and whatever social class people put us in.

Maybe your parents make all the choices for you. Either because they are afraid that you are going to turn into a heathen, or because they want to "protect you"!

Maybe your friends make your decisions for you. Because they are the closet family you have, and you're afraid you will lose them too!

Maybe money makes your choices. Because you don't have any, and you are tired of living broke! Or you have a lot of "stuff" and that's what drives you.

That's a few examples of what could be making your choices.

Let's look at how we are making our choices.

How are we making our choices?

How can music influence the choices you make? How does it influence how we act, talk, and what we wear? (Get responses)

The rapper Drake made a song called "Motto". I don't suggest you guys go and Google the song, but most of you probably have it on your phones. Drake's main message is "YOLO", you only live once. A lot of people adopted this "motto" and starting to live life like there was no tomorrow.

Now what happens when you live like there is no tomorrow? Then all of a sudden, tomorrow comes.

You've been spending all your money.

Telling people what's on your mind, because you know they deserve it.

Maybe you started gravitating towards drugs and alcohol.

Skipping school and sleeping in.

What happens then?

What happens when someone disrespects you and you're like "YOLO"!

What happens when you are tempted to steal from the mall, knowing the police is in there, knowing they have people watching you, knowing they have cameras...but you're like "YOLO"!

What happens when your boyfriend or girlfriend is pressuring you to have sex, and you're like "YOLO". Then a month later someone is pregnant!

That's just one example of the culture around us can influence our choices.

The idea is to be aware of what is influencing you and how you make the choices you do.

What is the "why" behind our choices?

Again, if we are honest – music, money, friends, movies, sports shape the choices we make for two reasons:

Acceptance and fear!

Pretty much any choice we make hinges on those two things.

We dress like our friends because we FEAR that we will look different, and we want to be ACCEPTED by our friends. We want to fit in!

We chase money or “stuff” because we FEAR that we won’t live a good life and have good things. We fear that we won’t be ACCEPTED if we don’t have a lot of money or “stuff”.

We flirt and sleep around because we FEAR that we are not good enough for someone to love us, and we want to be ACCEPTED by our boyfriends and girlfriends.

We get drunk at parties and do drugs because we FEAR that people will label us “goody goodies”, and goody goodies are not ACCEPTED by the circles we run in.

Listen to what Romans 12:1-2 has to say about choices.

Read Romans 12:1-2 (MSG):

So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you

(Note to leader – Talk a little about the meaning of this passage in your own words)

Let me give you a choice to make.

Live free following Jesus!

Or..

Be enslaved to FEAR and ACCEPTANCE

Who's going to make that choice for you?

How are you going to make that choice?

Why will you make that choice?

I hope this message has challenged you to think about the choices you make.

I hope you're inspired to ask God to show you the source of your choices, how you make them, and why you make them.

(Note to leader: End the message with a time of reflection for students. Have the worship band (if you have one) come up and play a song. If you don't have a worship band, play a worship video or song. During the worship song, encourage students to reflect on the message, bringing their choices before God. Allowing Him to speak to them about the choices they make.)

Small Group Discussion Questions:

- Say your name, grade, and if you prefer Apple or Android.
- How easy is it to cruise through a day and not even think about the choices we make? Why is it so easy?
- How do things like music, media, celebrities sports, etc. influence the choices we make?
- How/why do we allow our friends to influence the choices we make?
- What does "the renewing of you mind" in Romans 12:2 mean to you and how can your mind be renewed?

Lesson: Judging Others

Bible: John 8: 3-11; Ephesians 2: 8-9; Mark 2: 15-17; Matthew 7: 1-5 (NLT)

Say: Let me start off with telling you a story.

You see there was this lady.

She was caught doing something, well, pretty bad.

She was caught in the act of adultery, cheating on her husband.

And all the people where she lived found out about it, and wanted to punish her.

Severe punishment!

They wanted to kill her!

Then there was this dude...who told them if they never did anything wrong in life, they could be the one to kill her.

And everyone kind of just backed down.

Because he made a good point.

You see that dude is Jesus, and those people were all the religious people!

But it's not about what Jesus told the religious people.

It's what he told the lady.

Go and sin no more!

Why do we find that so hard to do?

John chapter 8 verses 3-11 depicts what I want to talk about today:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of

you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

I want to talk about something that I know we all struggle with...

Judging others!

We are going to look at why we judge and condemn ourselves. Then we are going to look at how we judge other people.

So speaking about judging ourselves...why are we so hard on ourselves when we mess up?

Jesus wasn't hard on the lady!

Point #1 – We condemn ourselves

Jesus told the lady to go now and leave your life of sin.

How many people here have ever done anything wrong before?

How many of us still beat ourselves over the head about doing those wrongs?
Why is that?

Is it because we don't think we deserve to be forgiven?

Is it because we don't trust that God has forgiven us? Or, is it because we don't trust that God has the capability to forgive us?

You beat yourself up because yo got mad and cursed some dude out.

Or you were on the computer the other day and looked at something you shouldn't have.

We are constantly mad at ourselves for messing up!

Why can't we ask for God to forgive us and be done with it?

In John, Jesus tells the lady to GO! An act! He told her to MOVE!! And sin no more.

Point #2 – We don't have to earn it

We condemn ourselves because we think that we have to earn God's forgiveness and love!

We think we have to be good enough.

We have to go through the motions of being a Christian...

Read a chapter in the Bible a day.

Pray for an hour a day.

Go to church.

Read all the books...

We then give up on God because we try so hard to earn his love.

When we fail, we start to beat ourselves up all over again.

Read Ephesians 2: 8-9:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Let's break this verse down.

“It is by grace”

Who can give me a definition of grace? (Get responses)

It is the infinite, never failing, love and mercy, and favor, that God shows to us.

Has anyone here ever been given a break before?

Have your parents let you off easy on a punishment? Well then, that was grace.

“Through faith”

How many people here sat in your chairs and didn't have to think if they were strong enough to hold you? That's faith – placing your trust in something.

“The gift of God”

What gifts does God give you?

- His love
- His mercy
- His grace
- His son
- His provision
- His comfort
- His invitation to you to be a part of what he is doing in the world
- The list goes on...

“Not by works”

You don't have to earn God's great gift, as if you are competing in the Olympics or something. We don't have to be “good” enough for God to love us, or accept us!

Point #3 – We think we are beyond hope

We condemn ourselves because we think we are beyond hope.

We mess up and think there is no way God can STILL love us.

Mark chapter 2 verses 15-17 gives us hope:

“While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and “sinners” were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the “sinners” and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

There is hope!

Jesus came for those who had no hope, sinners, me and you. He desperately loves us, wants to do life with us, give us hope!!!

Point #4 – We judge others

It is so easy to judge someone else isn't it?

We see someone messing up...and we are quick to give our opinion of how it should be done.

We see someone smoking a cigarette and we immediately think that they are going to hell.

We see someone with tattoos and immediately put them into a social class.

Why are we so quick to pass judgment on people?

Let's see what Jesus has to say about the topic of judging others.

Read Matthew 7: 1-5:

“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

“And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

What is all this talk of a piece of wood in our eye?

Maybe your friend got drunk at this party last week, and you just saw them actually singing in worship.

You think to yourself, “They got drunk last week, and they have the nerve to sing to God!”

But then, you struggle with your own “sins”, don't you?

In fact, you might drink too much sometimes, but you do it in private.

And if it's not that...then it's something else. You have your own “sin” issues to deal with, so why would judge someone else?

Point #5 – When we judge others, we are comparing ourselves to them.

What are we really doing when we judge others?

We are comparing ourselves to them.

- Our stuff
- Our reputation
- Our looks
- Our identity

We are trying to convince ourselves that we are better than them, and we actually think we deserve more!

And anytime we want to be better than everyone else...

Anytime we think that we deserve better than anyone else, what are we doing?

You and I are saying that...

- I am the man...
- I am the woman...

The truth is there really is only one "I AM" and that is God.

He's the only one who can judge, because He is the only one who is perfect, he is the only one who can purely judge without any evil intentions or hidden agendas.

God doesn't love one person more than another.

He doesn't love me more than he loves you.

So, just like Jesus told the religious people (you without sin throw the first stone)...

- Don't judge people because they don't have what you have.
- Don't make the same grades you do.
- Don't like the same things you like.

But show them the love of God by not condemning them, or making fun of them, but just hanging out with them and getting to know them.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What's your name, school, and dream car?
2. Why are we so hard on ourselves when we mess up?

3. Do you live like you have to earn God's love (have to do certain things to gain favor with God)? Why or why not?
4. Why is it so easy to judge other people?
5. Have you been judged by someone? How did it make you feel to be judged by that person?
