

## 13 Holiday Games for Youth Ministry

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## **Game: Salty Snowmen**

**Bible: Matthew 5:13-16**

### **Topic: Being Salt and Light**

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

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

#### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

#### **Ask:**

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

## **TEACH**

#### **Say:**

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

#### **Ask:**

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

**Read: Matthew 5:13-16**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

So—what job does salt have?

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

But what job *does* it have?

**Ask:**

- What are some things that salt does?

**Say:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Wrap up**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Game: Listening Closely**

**Bible: Proverbs 2:1-5**

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

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

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

### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

Give the following instructions:

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

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

### **Ask:**

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

## TEACH

### Say:

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

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

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

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

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

### Ask:

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

### Say:

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

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

### Read: Proverbs 2:1-5

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

**Say:**

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Wrap up**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## **Game: Snowman Down!**

**Bible: 1 Thessalonians 5:11**

### **Topic: Building Each Other Up**

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

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

#### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Ask:**

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

## **TEACH**

#### **Say:**

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

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:11**

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

**Say:**

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

This is not one of those things.

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Wrap up**

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

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

## **Game: Putting the Pieces Together**

**Bible: Romans 8:28**

**Topic: God will work everything together for our good.**

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

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

### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Ask:**

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

## **TEACH**

### **Say:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

The honest answer? We can't.

But I know someone who can.

**Read: Romans 8:28**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Wrap up**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Game: Santa Who?**

**Bible: Matthew 25:35-40**

### **Topic: Doing for others what you would do for Jesus**

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

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

### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Ask:**

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

## **TEACH**

### **Say:**

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

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

*Let everyone clean up and sit back down.*

**Say:**

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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



**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

**Read: Matthew 25:35-40**

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

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

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Wrap up**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Game: Secret Gifts**

**Bible: Matthew 6:3-4**

**Topic: Giving to others in secret.**

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

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

### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Ask:**

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

## TEACH

### Say:

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

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

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

### Ask:

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

### Say:

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

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

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

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

### Ask:

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

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

### Read: Matthew 6:3-4

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

But that is when you will be the most rewarded.

**Ask:**

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

**Wrap up**

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

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

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

## **Game: Sharpening One Another**

**Bible: Proverbs 27:17**

### **Topic: Working Together**

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

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

### **Supplies:**

- Red and green construction paper
- A marker

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

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

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

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

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

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

The first team to spell out their phrase wins!

### **Ask:**

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

## TEACH

### Say:

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

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

### Ask:

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

### Say:

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

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

### Read: Proverbs 27:17

*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*

### Say:

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

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

### Ask:

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

### Say:

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Wrap up**

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

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

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

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

How cool is that?!

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

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



## **Game: Stay in the Lines**

**Bible: 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

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

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

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

### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

The team whose players all finish first wins!

### **Ask:**

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

## **TEACH**

### **Say:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

**Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

## **Wrap up**

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

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

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

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

## **Game: Ugly Christmas Sweaters**

**Bible: Psalm 139:14**

**Topic: We are God's wonderful creation.**

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

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

### **Supplies:**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Ask:**

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

## TEACH

### Say:

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

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

God. He's SO creative.

### Ask:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Ask:

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

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

### Ask:

- Do you think you are wonderful?

### Say:

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

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

**Read: Psalm 139:14**

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

**Ask:**

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

**Say:**

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

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

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

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

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

**Ask:**

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

## **Wrap up**

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

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

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



## **Game: What are you leaving behind?**

**Bible: Colossians 3:12-17**

### **Topic: What kind of legacy are you leaving behind?**

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

As students follow different strands of yarn around a Christmas tree in order to find out which gift they should be opening, they will learn that, whether they're trying to or not, they are leaving a legacy behind. It's up to them to make it a good one.

#### **Supplies:**

- 5 different colored strands of yarn
- 5 gift boxes
- 5 index cards
- A Christmas tree

Before the game starts, set up a Christmas tree. One at a time, take the balls of yarn and unwind them all around the room. Loop them through chairs, run them along the ground, and wrap them around the tree. Let the yarn end on an index card that reveals the location of a hidden Christmas gift.

Split the group into 5 teams. Assign each team a color of yarn. Starting at the beginning point, they must follow that color all around the room and the tree in order to find the clue that will tell them which gift box belongs to their team and where to find it.

The first team to retrieve the correct hidden gift box wins!

#### **Ask:**

- How were you able to keep track of your yarn when there were four other strands of yarn?
- You were able to find the gift box because of the yarn it left behind. What kinds of things are you leaving behind in your life?

## **TEACH**

#### **Say:**

I'm kind of digging the whole yarn decoration thing! Who needs garlands and Christmas lights when you've got yarn?

That was a pretty fun hunt. But I have a question for you: how exactly did you find that gift?

You knew nothing about that gift. I didn't tell you anything about it or give away its location. The only thing you knew about it was that there was a string of yarn that would lead you to it in one way or another.

Just like that yarn, twisting and turning and hiding, you're leaving a path behind you.

We tend to think of a legacy as something that only happens once someone passes away. But that's just not true—you're leaving a legacy right now, as we speak.

**Ask:**

- Do you spend a lot of time thinking about the kind of legacy you are leaving behind?
- If someone were to look for you, what kind of path would they be following?

**Say:**

As a Christian, you have a responsibility to live a certain way because you reflect Christ. The path you leave behind you—your decisions, your words, your actions—all of those things should also reflect Christ.

**Ask:**

- Does being a Christian change the way you live your life?
- What type of legacy do you think Jesus wants you to leave behind?
- Do you think that if someone saw your legacy right now, they'd know you were a Christian?

**Read: Colossians 3:12-17**

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

**Say:**

Well, if you had any questions about how you should live in order to leave a legacy that reflects Christ, here's the answer! And it can be summed up in just a few words.

**Compassion & Kindness**

If you want to leave a Christ-like legacy, start by being kind. People will know right away that there's something different about you, because sadly, kindness isn't all that common.

**Humility & Gentleness**

Humility is definitely not popular. It's not cool to be super humble and to put others before yourself. But, it's how you're supposed to live!

**Patience & Forgiveness**

If you want to truly reflect Christ, you have to live your life with patience and forgiveness. Trust me, that's just hard. I mean, really hard. But it's also incredibly worth it. Be patient with others and forgive them, because that's what Jesus would do.

**Peace & Love**

There are going to be times where you disagree with others, and that's okay. Stay peaceful anyway. Love them anyway. Peace is more important than being right, and love is more important than anything else. Love people with the love of Jesus.

**Thankfulness**

Be thankful to God always. In the good times and in the not so good times. There's nothing that confuses people faster than someone who is thankful when things aren't going so well. So start confusing people and start thanking God no matter what the circumstances are!

**Ask:**

- Can you think of a time when someone forgave you for something you did? How did it make you feel?
- Do you think that being thankful when life is hard would set you apart from others?
- Does your life right now reflect humility and gentleness?
- How can you be more loving and forgiving in your life?

## **Wrap up**

In this game, you were able to find the gift because you followed the yarn that belonged to it. In the same way, people should be able to find Jesus by following the path you're leaving behind.

That's a lot of responsibility, and it can seem a little bit intimidating. But here's the thing: you are going to leave a legacy behind no matter what you do. You're going to be known for something. The path you leave behind is going to lead somewhere.

It's up to you to decide where that path leads. When people look at your actions and words and decisions, they're going to see something. It's up to you to decide what they see.

## **Game: What's on the Inside?**

**Bible: 1 Samuel 16:7**

**Topic: Man looks at the outside, but God looks at what's on the inside.**

Use this holiday game to teach students that it's not how someone looks from the outside that counts because that's not what God looks at.

As students try to judge what's inside several different stockings, they will learn that you can't always base your decision about someone by what's on the outside. It's what's on the inside that really counts.

### **Supplies:**

- Several different stockings
- Everyday items (pencils, a washcloth, nail clippers, etc.)
- Small gifts (like candy)
- One or two bigger gifts (iTunes gift card, etc.)

Before the game starts, put these items in the stockings so that each stocking has one item in it. If you want the game to be even harder, you can wrap the items in tissue paper before putting them in the stockings.

Have the students sit in a circle. Tell them that you're going to pass some gifts out. Some are good gifts and some are pretty plain, but everyone is going to get to choose what gift they want to keep.

Explain that once they get the stocking, they can either decide to keep it, or pass it on to the next player.

Give the first player the first stocking. When they try to open it up, stop them.

**Say:** "Wait? What are you doing? Oh no, you don't get to open the stocking before deciding if you want to keep it or not. You only get to look at it from the outside."

Let the students pass the stockings around, feeling the item from the outside. Encourage them to guess what it is out loud before opening it or passing it to the next person.

The game is over when all of the stockings have been opened.

### **Ask:**

- Would the game have turned out better for you if you had been able to actually open the stocking before making your decision?
- Was there any way possible to truly know what was inside the stocking by only looking at the outside?

## TEACH

### Say:

Is everyone happy with their “gifts” they picked? No, it doesn’t look like it!

I’m just wondering, though—why do you think looking on the inside would have changed the game?

After all, we sure spend a lot of time in life making decisions solely based on the outside appearance of other things and people.

### Ask:

- Do you tend to judge people you don’t know based on how they look without getting to know them first?
- Do you make decisions about certain situations based on how they look from the outside, without taking the time to understand what’s really going on?

### Say:

It’s easy to judge things based on how they look from the outside. It’s especially easy to judge people based on how they look from the outside. But that doesn’t mean it’s right.

There are some things you will never be able to understand or learn by only looking at the surface.

There’s a story in the Bible where God sends a man named Samuel to anoint the next king. He tells him that it’s going to be one of Jesse’s sons. Jesse is so excited about this that he has all of his sons line up outside for Samuel to look at.

Well, not *all* of them.

He didn’t have his youngest son, David, there. He was young and small, and even his own dad didn’t think there was any chance he would be king.

So Samuel goes down the line of these brothers, who apparently all looked like they had what it took to be king. At each one he thought, “Surely this is the one!” and at each one, this is how God responds:

### Read: 1 Samuel 16:7

*But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*

**Ask:**

- That's pretty clear, huh? Physical looks do not matter. How is that different from what the world says is important?
- What's the difference between what you look at when you see a person and what God looks at when He sees a person?
- Do you think you should try to be more like God and look at the heart instead of the outside appearance?

**Say:**

Samuel was chosen by God to go anoint the next king, so obviously he was a pretty good guy who God trusted. And even he struggled with judging people from the outside.

It's just easy to make decisions based off of shallow information. It's easy to see someone ignore everyone at school and just assume that they are rude and want to be alone when in reality they may just be shy and lonely.

It's easy to look at someone who is pretty and popular and decide they have it all together and their life is easy when in reality their life at home could be absolutely horrible. You just don't know things about people from how they look or from how their life looks.

**Ask:**

- What do you think people would think of you if they only judged you based on how you looked? Would they be right?
- Why is it important to get to know people's hearts before making decisions about them?
- Would you want God to judge you based on what everyone else thinks about you, or would you want Him to look at your heart?

**Wrap up**

When David comes in from where his father had him working, he was anointed as king. That was something that no one—even his own father—saw coming.

But that didn't matter. It didn't matter that his dad and brothers didn't think he had what it took to be king. It didn't matter that he had been left out. Do you know what did matter? His heart.

God saw his heart, and that is why he was chosen to be king.

No matter what your appearance or your situation is, that's not what God is looking at. If He wants to use you, your looks and your circumstances aren't going to stop Him. What other people think about you isn't going to stop Him.

He's not even going to look at those things. He's just going to look at your heart.

## **Game: Wrapped in What?**

**Bible: Luke 2:7**

**Topic: God doesn't care about things looking fancy or being popular; He cares about people coming to know Him.**

Use this holiday game to teach students that God is more concerned with people knowing Him than He is with how things look.

As students decorate Christmas trees with plain, everyday items, they will learn the significance of Jesus being wrapped in something very plain when He was born and placed somewhere very plain instead of somewhere fancy.

### **Supplies:**

- Two Christmas trees (mini or full size will work!)
- Plain, everyday items.
  - Examples:
    - Paper Towels
    - Ziploc Baggies.
    - Pencils
    - Hangers
    - Newspaper
    - Utensils
    - Etc.
- Scissors
- Tape
- Two covered Rubbermaid containers to put the items in.

Split the group into two teams and give them each a Christmas tree. Tell them that you're going to have a contest to see who can decorate the best tree in five minutes.

Give them the containers of the "decorations" and tell them they can't open them until you say go.

Once they get past the confusion of seeing what they have to decorate the tree with, tell them to get creative and see how pretty they can make the tree with what they were given.

### **Ask:**

- What was your reaction when you saw what you had to decorate the tree with?
- Do you think the trees look better or worse than they would if you had normal Christmas decorations?



## TEACH

### Say:

You guys got creative and did a pretty good job! It's cool to see how something plain can actually be pretty beautiful!

When you think of Christmas decorations, you probably don't think of these things, right? You think of lights and garland and ornaments not pencils and newspapers.

### Ask:

- Give me the first word that comes to mind when you think of Christmas decorations.
- I noticed that not one of you said the word "plain." Why is that?

### Say:

Well, plain isn't exactly something that shows up a lot in Christmas decorations, is it?

Do you think Christmas would be the same without all the glitz and glam?

Would it still be Christmas if things weren't as flashy?

Let's look at the very first Christmas ever and see if we can find an answer.

### Read: Luke 2:7

*And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them.*

### Say:

Wow. There's a whole lot of "plain" going on here. Really, there's no sparkle or fanciness in sight.

Jesus is born—if ever there was a time that you would expect there to be glamour and celebratory decorations, it's now. I mean, the savior of the world has just been born!

But there are no decorations. They're not in a decked out nursery, celebrating. There's not even a decorative baby blanket to wrap Jesus in. Instead, He gets wrapped in cloths. Not a blanket or baby clothes, but cloths. And then, if that's not plain enough for you, He gets put in a manger.

Do you know what a manger is? It's a trough that animals eat from.

So the savior who is going to save the world from their sins is born, and He is wrapped in a cloth and instead of having a nice crib to lie in, He gets put in a trough where the cows and donkeys eat their dinner.

### Ask:

- If you had never heard this story, is this what you would expect the birth of Jesus to look like? Would you expect it to be fancier?
- Do you think there is anything significant about how plain the birth of Jesus was?

### Say:

It's kind of crazy to imagine Jesus—powerful, amazing, important Jesus—lying in a dirty, smelly manger on the first night of His life here.

But it kind of shows us what kind of God we have.

Jesus didn't come to the earth to be popular. He didn't come to put on a show. Sure, God could have made sure that the place where Jesus was born looked nice and fancy. He could have made sure there were the best amenities possible for Jesus when He was born. Or He could have at least made sure there was a bed.

But He didn't. And because He didn't, we see that from the very first moments of Jesus' life, He was willing to sacrifice for us.

Jesus didn't live a glamorous life because that wasn't important. The important thing was for people to realize who He was and to realize that they could have eternal life with Him. To realize that He provided a way for their sins to be forgiven so they could spend forever in Heaven.

### Ask:

- How does it make you feel to think that the first night Jesus spent on earth, He slept in the place where farm animals eat their food?
- Do you think that reflects how much God loves you?
- Does it make you realize that maybe the way things look on the outside aren't so important, after all?

### Wrap up

Sometimes, we can get caught up in the way things look. Not just at Christmas, but in our lives. We can think that maybe Jesus can't use us because our lives aren't the prettiest. Or that people won't listen to us tell them about Jesus because we're not popular and we don't have a big house for them to hang out in.

I'm just going to tell you something that you hopefully have already realized through tonight's message—**God does not care about those things**. He doesn't care about the way things look on the outside; He cares about your heart. He cares about people coming to know Him.

If He cared about the way things looked, Jesus would have been born in a fancy hotel and wrapped in a soft, clean blanket and placed in a beautiful crib. But He wasn't because that's not why He came.

Whether you think you're more like the Christmas tree that's decked out at the mall, with beautiful lights and garland and ornaments, or more like the Christmas trees tonight, plain and practical...it does not matter. What matters is that God wants to use you to bring other people to know Him. Plain or glamorous, it's your heart that matters.

If you have a heart willing to be used, that is all God needs.

## **Game: Yoked Together**

**Bible: 2 Corinthians 6:14**

### **Topic: We aren't supposed to be unequally yoked**

Use this holiday game to teach students that we are supposed to be “yoked up” with people who believe in Jesus and those who will encourage us in our beliefs.

As students navigate obstacles with someone who has a disadvantage, they will learn how spending a lot of time and sharing their life with someone who doesn't believe in Jesus can bring them down.

### **Supplies:**

- Oreos
- Duct tape
- Garland
- Mini Christmas tree
- Christmas lights
- Chairs set up in a “maze” formation
- Baseball bat
- Disadvantages
  - *Examples*
    - Oversized stocking that someone has to wear, causing them to only be able to hop.
    - Garland to wrap their arms by their side so they can't use them.
    - Mittens, so they can't use their fingers.
    - A Santa hat pulled over their eyes, so they can't see.

Set the chairs up in a maze formation. Spread out the following obstacles along the maze.

*Oreo station*

*Mini Christmas tree and lights*

*Tangled up garland*

*Baseball bat*

*Hopscotch “drawn” out of duct tape on the ground.*

Split the group into teams of two. In each team, give one member a “disadvantage.” Then allow them to start the maze. Tell them they have to hook arms with their partner the entire time. At each obstacle station, they must complete a challenge together.

At the Oreo station, they have to each lick the icing off one Oreo. At the Christmas tree station, they have to wrap the lights around the tree. At the garland station, they have to untangle the garland and lay it out in a straight line. When they get to the baseball bat, they have to put their head on it and spin around five times before hopping through the hopscotch squares.

*After each team goes, have a leader re-tangle the garland and take the lights off the tree.*

The team with the fastest time wins!

**Ask:**

- Those of you who had the disadvantages: do you think that you had a harder time completing those challenges than your partner did?
- Those of you who didn't have the disadvantages: do you think your game was slower because of your partner?
- Would this game have been easier to complete by yourself, without a partner?

**TEACH**

**Say:**

Usually, things are easier when you have a partner. Sometimes, you can even get things done in half the time when you have two people working together. That definitely was *not* the case with this game. I'm not going to name any names here, but there are some of you that were clearly slowing your partners down.

It's not like it's anyone's fault because you didn't get to pick your partner. You just got stuck with who you got stuck with, disadvantages and all.

It's a good thing life isn't like that, right?

Or is it?

**Ask:**

- Do you think your real life ever looks like this game?

**Say:**

You didn't get to choose your partners in this game, but you do get to choose your “partners” in life. Your friendships, the people you spend your time with, the people you ask for advice...you get to choose all of those people.

Knowing that, you would think that we would choose only the best people to be in our lives, right? You would think that we would surround ourselves with people who encourage us, who will push us to be better and will push us closer to Jesus.

But that's not always the case, is it? In fact, sometimes we don't even *choose* our friends, we let them choose us. We like the fact that someone wants to spend time with us, so we just go with it.

**Ask:**

- Do you put a lot of thought into choosing your friends?
- Are the people you spend the most time with now people that are good influences on you?
- Do you think that Jesus cares about the kind of friends you choose?

**Say:**

When you think about it, choosing who your friends are going to be will be some of the most important decisions that you ever make. Your friends aren't only people you hang out with; they're people that you share your life with.

Because of that, it's so important to pick good friends. Most importantly, you should pick friends who also love Jesus. It's so important to surround yourself with people who share your biggest belief.

That's not to say that you shouldn't befriend people who aren't Christians—because if you didn't, how would they ever learn about Jesus? I'm talking about your close friends. The ones you spend a lot of your time with. Those people should believe in Jesus.

**Ask:**

- What's your favorite part of Christmas?
- Do you like seeing Christmas decorations around town and hearing Christmas music everywhere you go? What about Christmas movies?

**Say:**

Let's pretend that you *love* Christmastime. That it's your absolute favorite. That everything, from the lights to the weather to the songs, makes it your favorite part of the entire year.

Now, if your best friend just totally disagrees with you and hates Christmas, they're not going to be very fun to share the season with, are they?

Of course not! Because if one of you is Buddy the Elf and one of you is the Grinch...well, it's just not going to be a very enjoyable December.

That's a silly example, but it's definitely how we act sometimes.

We pick the people in our life and act like it doesn't matter what they believe or if we believe different things.

**Ask:**

- Do you think it matters what your friends believe?

Let's see what the Bible has to say about that.

**Read: 2 Corinthians 6:14**

*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?*

This verse isn't talking about shallow friendships; it's talking about being yoked together—being attached.

In that game, you were attached to your partner. The things they did wrong affected you because you were yoked to them. You couldn't go any faster than them because you were stuck together. It doesn't matter how great you may have done on that game on your own because your partner brought you down.

If you have close friends who don't believe in Jesus, it doesn't matter how great or fun or sweet they are. You have a big, big difference in an extremely important area, and if it is someone you are going to choose to yoke yourself to, it's going to cause you some problems.

**Ask:**

- People who don't believe in Jesus have no reason to live like the Bible says you should live. Do you think that would cause problems in a close friendship?
- How do you think it makes Jesus feel if you choose to spend big parts of your life with people who don't care about Him?
- Do you agree that there's a difference between just being friends with someone and being yoked up with them? What's the difference?
- Do you think you are the kind of friend that encourages other people to be closer to Jesus?

## **Wrap up**

When you choose to follow Jesus, you make an important decision. It's a decision to treat your relationship with Him as more important than anything else in your life, including your friendships.

Jesus loves everyone so much. The people that don't believe in Him? He doesn't love them any less. And neither should you. But there's a difference between loving someone like Jesus loves them, and spending your life with them.

It's way easier to be pulled down than you think it is. And if you're spending all of your time with people who don't believe in Jesus, then your relationship with Him is going to suffer for it. And that's just not worth it.

Choose people who are going to encourage you in your relationship with Jesus. To be able to push each to be closer to Jesus is one of the coolest things you can ever have in a friendship.