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17 Holiday Games for Youth Ministry

OVERVIEW OF GAMES

Thanksgiving Games

Chain of Events	Trusting God (Matthew 2:7-12)	page 2
Getting in the Way	Getting Rid Of Sin (Hebrews 12:1)	page 6
Remember That?	God's Word (Psalm 119:11)	page 9

Christmas Games

A House For Elves	Solid Foundation (Matthew 7:24-27)	page 13
Christmas Cookie Crumble	Gods Always There (Psalm 46:1-2)	page 16
Completely Covered	Love Covers Sin (1 Peter 4:8)	page 19
Fill it up	Trusting Jesus brings Joy (Romans 15:13)	page 23
Fishing for What?	Spreading The Gospel (Mark 1:17)	page 26
Gift Relay	Use Your Gifts (1 Peter 4:10)	page 30
Heavy and Light	Being Rested (Matthew 11:28-30)	page 33
How Many Can You Hold?	Your Main Priority (1 Corinthians 10:23)	page 36
The Human Christmas Tree	Celebrating Jesus (Psalm 150:1-6)	page 40
Imitating Christmas	Acting Like Jesus (Philippians 2:3-5)	page 44
Jingle Who?	Loving One Another (John 13:35)	page 48
No Hands!	Body Of Christ (Romans 12:5-8)	page 51
One Percent	Jesus Loves Everyone (Matthew 18:12-13)	page 55
One Word at a Time	Words Are Powerful (Proverbs 18:21)	page 58

Game: Chain of Events

Bible: Matthew 2:7-12

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH**Say:**

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Read: Matthew 2:7-12

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

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap Up

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

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

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

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

Game: Getting in the Way

Bible: Hebrews 12:1

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

But sometimes, we don't.

Read: Hebrews 12:1

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

Game: Remember That?

Bible: Psalm 119:11

Topic: Hiding God's word in your heart.

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

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

Supplies:

- Pens
- Pieces of paper
- A Bowl

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

I'm talking about the Bible.

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

Read: Psalm 119:11

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

Game: A House For Elves!

Bible: Matthew 7:24-27

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Read: Matthew 7:24-27

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

Which one do you want to be like?

Game: Christmas Cookie Crumble

Bible: Psalm 46:1-2

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Read: Psalm 46:1-2

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

He's always, always there.

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

Game: Completely Covered

Bible: 1 Peter 4:8

Topic: Love covers a multitude of sins

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

The first team to complete this task wins!

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

And that's what love does.

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

How are you going to react to that?

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

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

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

See? Love changes things.

Read: 1 Peter 4:8

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

Let me tell you about another example.

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

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

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

But He didn't.

Because He loved them.

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

Do you see how love can change things?

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

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

Game: Fill it up!

Bible: Romans 15:13

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

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

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

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

Ask:

- Did you know that God fills us with gifts?

Read: Romans 15:13

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

Say:

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Game: Fishing for What?

Bible: Mark 1:17

Topic: Jesus calls us to fish for people.

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

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

Supplies:

- Candy canes
- A table
- A chair

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

Read: Mark 1:17

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

Ask:

- How do you fish for actual fish?

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

Game: Gift Relay

Bible: 1 Peter 4:10

Topic: We should use our gifts to serve others.

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Actually, there is a way.

Read: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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

Say:

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

Do you want to know how I know that?

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

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

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

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

Game: Heavy and Light

Bible: Matthew 11:28-30

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH**Say:**

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

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

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

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

Read: Matthew 11:28-30

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

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

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

Say:

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

It's possible for two reasons.

1. Because He already carried your burden.

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

Game: How Many Can You Hold?

Bible: 1 Corinthians 10:23

Topic: Your Main Priority

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

- Have you ever felt that way?

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:23

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

Say:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

Game: The Human Christmas Tree

Bible: Psalm 150:1-6

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH**Say:**

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

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

Ask:

- Does seeing Christmas decorations make you feel like celebrating?

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Read: Psalm 150:1-6

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

To celebrate God!

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

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

Of course not!

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

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

Game: Imitating Christmas

Bible: Philippians 2:3-5

Topic: We are supposed to act like Jesus

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

The team that correctly guesses the most movies wins!

Optional: play a few of your favorite funny Christmas scenes

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

- Who else do you imitate in your life?

Say:

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

Read: Philippians 2:3-5

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

Say:

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

1. Selflessness.

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

2. Humility.

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

3. Have the same mindset as Jesus.

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

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

Game: Jingle Who?

Bible: John 13:35

Topic: Loving One Another

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The first player to reach two points wins!

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

Love one another. In the loudest way possible.

Game: No Hands!

Bible: Romans 12:5-8

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

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

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

Say:

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Clearly, our hands are a very important body part.

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

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

This is how the body of Christ is.

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Absolutely it is.

Read: Romans 12:5-8

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

Say:

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

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

Game: One Percent.

Bible: Matthew 18:12-13

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

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

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

Supplies:

- Ten wrapped Christmas gift boxes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Read: Matthew 18:12-13

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

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

But He doesn't.

Why?

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

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why would we ever want to wander away from that?

Game: One Word at a Time

Bible: Proverbs 18:21

Topic: Our words are powerful

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

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

Supplies:

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

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

- Movies
- Songs
- Traditions

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

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

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

The first student to get to five points wins!

Ask:

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

TEACH

Say:

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Read: Proverbs 18:21

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

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

Ask:

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

Say:

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

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

Ask:

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

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

1. Love

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

2. Kindness

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

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

3. Truth

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

Ask:

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

Wrap up

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

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

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

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

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

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

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