



10 YOUTH MINISTRY LESSONS & GAMES

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LESSON ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE

Bible: Matthew 13:1-9

Bottom line: Spiritual growth is both an invitation and an opportunity.

SUPPLIES

- Large space, inside or out.

OPENING ACTIVITY: GROW TAG

Before the game, choose one student to be “it.”

Say: When I say, GO, the person who is “it” is going to try to tag you.

If you get tagged, you will now need to hold hands or link arms with the person that tagged you.

Then, you will need to stay together and tag someone else.

You cannot separate and you must stay together.

When the third person is tagged, now only the students on the end can tag people, the person in the middle needs to stay linked with the other people.

The rule is you must remain linked together, and only students on the end can tag others.

As the game continues the link will start to grow and get bigger, making it more difficult for people to escape.

Tag as many students as possible until there is only one student left.

That student is the winner and gets to be “it” for the next round.

TEACH

Ask: In our game, did you notice how quickly the group began to get bigger and grow?

Spiritual growth is something that every follower of Jesus can be a part of.

It is both an invitation and an opportunity.

Let's take a look at a parable in the New Testament.

A parable is a story that Jesus would tell so that others could understand what Jesus was trying to say.

He referenced concepts that the people of the time would understand.

In this case, he talks about sowing seeds – something farmers could relate to.

Basically, Jesus is talking about what is necessary for something to grow.

Read Matthew 13:1-9.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.

Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.

As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.

But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Ask: What do you think Jesus was trying to say?

Allow a few responses from students.

I want you to notice there was a large crowd of people there.

So many people were there that He had to get in a boat so that everyone could see Him.

Then, He told a parable.

Jesus knows the audience He is speaking to, and there were a lot of people present who had to grow their own food to live.

They had to farm, and he was teaching them in a way that they could understand.

This parable was challenging to understand, and so Jesus had to explain what it meant to them.

Let's read his explanation of this parable.

Matthew 13:18-23.

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.

But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Jesus uses the example of growth in comparing it to our relationship with God.

In verse 19, Jesus says if the seed is thrown on the path or if you listen to the message and the evil one, there is no lasting spiritual growth that takes place because the evil one snatches it away.

In verse 20, Jesus says the next seed is thrown onto the rocky ground.

In this instance, Jesus says it's like a person who hears the Word of God and is excited, but since they didn't root themselves in the word of God, they fall away.

The plant only lasted a short time and withered away in the rocks with no soil to take root.

This would be like a person who hears God's Word and says that's great, but then eventually, they turn away from it.

There is no lasting spiritual growth in that.

In verse 22, it talks about seeds that were thrown among the thorns.

The plant would grow, but eventually, the thorns would steal nutrients away from the plant that is supposed to produce fruit, and the plant would die.

In this instance, the person let the difficulty of life and distractions around them to overtake any spiritual growth that would have taken place.

They might have grown a little, but eventually, they stop, and no new growth takes place.

In verse 23, it finally talks about the person that is spiritually growing.

If you genuinely take God's message to heart, desire to grow in your relationship with Him, and back up that desire with action... then you GROW!

Let's go back to grapes.

I know I keep coming back to the grapes; it might be because I'm hungry.

If you want to take a grape seed to make more grapes, you need to plant it in the proper place.

You have to water the soil and remove anything that might try to steal its nutrients.

You have to give it the opportunity to grow.

When it grows, it will produce more grapes.

The same thing is true in your life.

One way spiritual growth happens is by creating a healthy environment around you. Like planting seeds in good soil.

Spending time with other Christians can help you grow spiritually and deepen your relationship with God.

Sometimes you will need to remove toxic people from your life so that they don't choke out your faith.

When you pray and spend time in God's Word, you will grow closer to Him.

Those are all some pretty basic things you've probably heard before.

Another way maybe less talked about is to use the circumstances of everyday life to help you grow spiritually.

Let me explain.

(Note: Feel free to use an example of your own here.)

I worry and get anxious A LOT. When it comes to just about everything. My business, family, friends, the past, the future...you name it.

I'm learning to pay attention when my mind and heart get anxious. I'm beginning to notice how I feel in that moment. I usually get tension in my jaw, and struggle with racing thoughts that I can't seem to control.

I'm learning to notice what's going on in the moment. Pause. Take a breath. And surrender my anxiety or worry to God in that moment. I let go and focus on the calm real presence of God right then and there.

The more I do this when life triggers my anxiety and worry... the more peace and calm I experience.

It's a habit. It's a process.

Over time, I've grown significantly in this area.

I believe this is a huge part of spiritual growth. Allowing life's circumstances to be your path.

Maybe you don't struggle with worry or anxiety. It could be something else for you.

Whatever it is...

- Pay attention when life circumstances come up that trigger something disturbing to you.
- Notice how you feel.
- Surrender the situation to God. Let go.

This is just another way you're creating good soil in your heart that will lead to spiritual growth.

I encourage you to give it a try.

WRAP UP

Spring is here, and if you truly want something to grow you will put it in the right soil, you will water it, you will remove any weeds that might steal its nutrients, and you will do your best to make sure it grows the way it was intended to.

The same is necessary for spiritual growth.

Plant yourself in God's Word, water yourself in prayer, remove any bad habits, and use everyday life as a path to growth.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does spiritual growth mean to you?
2. How have you experienced spiritual growth in the past?
3. What's a difficult situation you're facing right now?
4. Could that situation be an opportunity for growth? Why or why not?
5. In your own words, what does it mean to surrender to God?

LESSON ON ANGER FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE

Bible: Proverbs 29:11(NLT)

Bottom Line: God walks with us through all of our emotions and in every situation.

SUPPLIES

- Four 44-ounce cups (the type you can purchase from convenience store drink stations)
- Duct Tape

GAME PREP

Attach 2 cups together at the bottoms by wrapping duct tape around them—you should have 2 sets.

Divide students into two teams of equal size and have each team form a single file line.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Today, we have a game that might test your patience with yourself and each other.

Put your hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you.

Throughout this game, you cannot take your hands off of their shoulders, no matter what happens.

Give each team a set of the cups that are taped together.

When I say, “Go,” the person at the front of your line will put one end of the cup on their right foot and pass it off to the right foot of the person behind them.

The passing will continue until it reaches the person at the end of the line.

Then, the last person in line will put the cup on their left foot (without taking their hands off of the shoulders of the person in front them) and begin passing the cup back to the front of their line, using their left feet.

The first team to pass the cups back to the front of the line wins!

TEACH

Say: That game might have been a little frustrating for some of you, but you did a great job keeping your feelings under control.

So, today, I have a confession to make—sometimes, I get angry.

Of course, not at any of you.

But at situations that happen in my life.

Like, when another driver cuts me off on the road.

Or someone cuts in front of me in line at Starbucks.

Or when someone eats the last of my (*say your favorite food*).

It's difficult not to show when I get angry.

I have to make the choice to let God help me when I feel angry.

Ask: But, did you know the Bible says it's okay to get angry?

What are some things that make you angry?

Allow a few responses from students.

In the New Testament, we read that even Jesus got angry when people were using the Temple area to cheat, overcharge, and steal from people.

Jesus overturned tables and yelled at people for desecrating God's house.

Ask: Can someone share a time that you let anger get the best of you and then you had to pay the consequences for your angry actions?

Allow a few responses.

Being angry never turns out well for either side.

People can get hurt, physically and emotionally—which can then lead to spiritual hurt.

Read Proverbs 29:11.

Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.

Ask: Name some situations or circumstances when it's okay to feel angry.

Encourage the students to focus on the situation, not a person or group of people.

Examples could be cancer, injustice, pollution, or similar things.

Anger affects people in different ways.

When some people get angry, they might want to punch something or throw something.

Others may want to scream, yell, or stomp their feet.

Other translations of this verse say that fools give full vent to their anger.

That means they just let it all out and unload on anyone and everyone that comes near when they're angry.

But the last part of that Scripture says that *the wise quietly hold it back*.

It doesn't mean the wise don't get angry, but they are not the ones who will vomit their anger all over anyone in their way.

So, what is the difference between the anger that fools vent and the anger of a wise person?

Let's look at Jesus.

When Jesus was angry at the "money-changers" in the Temple, He was angry that they were stealing from people.

They were treating the Temple as just another way to scam people out of money.

Similar to those social media scams that say, "Send me \$19.95, and I'll tell you the secret to making millions from the internet."

Jesus was angry because what they were doing was not right.

When you get angry, are you angry at the person or the situation?

Allow a few responses from students.

A wise person holds their anger back quietly.

It doesn't mean that they never feel angry, but they don't show it very much, very often, or hardly ever at all.

Since every human being on the planet gets angry, including you and I, here are a couple of things you can do to help manage your emotions:

1. Choose your battles.

Wise people who hold back their anger are able to assess a situation and decide what is worth getting angry about and when they should keep quiet.

There are things that every Christian should get angry about, and do something about if they can—and if God directs them to take certain actions.

Even though people can be extremely passionate about situations and issues, remember that people are made in God's image and we are called to love everyone—even if we disagree with what they stand for or believe in.

2. Don't respond immediately.

When we face a situation that makes us angry, we naturally want to lash out in the moment.

But, don't!

Take a breath, walk away, do whatever you need to do to keep from responding negatively in the moment of anger.

Then, once you've considered an appropriate, Christ-like response, explain that you are angry at the situation, but not the person.

For those who may get angry quickly, there are tools you can use to help manage your anger—consider working out or running to let off some steam.

You can also talk to a trusted adult or friend who will pray with you when you need help.

Sometimes, even just separating yourself from a situation can make a big difference in how you react.

You will find that many things are just not worth getting, or staying, angry over.

God has given us so many tools in His Word that help us in every situation in life.

His desire is to walk with us through all of our emotions and in every situation.

God is with you, even when you're angry and you can always turn to Him to help you.

LESSON ON COMPARISON FOR 6TH-12 GRADE

Bible: Philippians 4:10-13

Bottom line: Don't compare yourself to others, instead choose to be content.

SUPPLIES

- 2 Large bags of wrapped candy
- Blindfolds (one per student)

OPENING ACTIVITY: CANDY STEAL

GAME PREP

Play this game in a large room or gym.

Divide the space into two halves and the students into two teams of equal size.

Empty the bags of wrapped candy and place the contents of each bag on opposite ends of the dividing line or opposite walls.

Have teams stand near the candy on opposite walls.

Make sure all the students are wearing a blindfold.

Option: Instead of using blindfolds, have the students walk on their knees.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAMES

Say: When I say GO, I want you to go to the opposing team's side, try to steal their wrapped candy, and bring it back to your team's side.

You can only grab one piece of candy at a time.

After 4 minutes we will stop and whichever team has the most candy wins the game.

There is no running allowed and be sure to have your hands out in front of you, so you don't run into anyone or a wall.

Repeat if time allows.

Let the winning team keep their candy – even if that means some students on the other team didn't win any candy.

TEACH

Say: I really wish all of you were able to enjoy the candy right now, but some of you might not have won in any the game.

That might not seem fair and you may be comparing what you don't have to what the person beside you is enjoying.

There are times when we find ourselves comparing what we have to what other people have – we call that *comparison*.

The reason we do this is that we desire what someone else has.

Whether it is physical appearance, possessions, or personality characteristics... what we are doing is playing the comparison game.

Nobody ever wins in the comparison game, because there is no end to it.

In fact, sometimes people chase after something that is temporary and unfulfilling.

In the game we just played, you played to win candy.

But once you had that candy, it only brought momentary satisfaction – it doesn't last forever.

Those who didn't receive candy might feel bummed because they don't have what you got.

Both of these feelings lead to unfulfillment and a desire for something you can't obtain.

What we should do is strive for contentment.

God has given every person exactly what they need.

His ultimate desire is not for you to find blessings in the possessions you own, but instead what we have in Christ.

Paul is an excellent example of this, let's look at what he has to say.

Read Philippians 4:10-13.

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

In this passage, we see the apostle Paul speaking to the Philippian church.

Earlier in this letter, Paul expresses the value in knowing Christ, the joy of imitating Christ, and then we come to this part where Paul reminds us to be content in Christ.

Paul doesn't talk about the things he has, and he doesn't talk about the things he doesn't have.

Instead, he tells us that in every circumstance he has learned to be content.

There are going to be times in your life where you have more than you need, and there may be times when you don't have the things that you need.

Regardless of your situation, you should find contentment in Christ.

You might be tempted to compare what you have to others.

When you find yourself comparing something you have to what someone else has, you are no longer content with the blessings God has given to you.

In fact, you are essentially saying, "God, why didn't you give me this. I need it."

In essence what you are saying is "God, I think you got it wrong, I need these things."

So how do you fight off the temptation to not compare yourself to others?

Ask God to give you the strength to overcome the desire to compare yourself to others.

Verse 13 is a very popular verse, "*I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*"

You might see people using this as a slogan in the sports world, like from an athlete looking for the strength he needs during a big moment.

Or maybe you have heard it from somebody who is about to face a difficult task, like a math test.

However, this verse is talking about contentment.

Being satisfied with the things you have or don't have.

Christ is enough, and you don't need anything else. Are you living with this attitude?

Is Jesus enough, or do you tell yourself, "if I just had this, I would be happy"?

The cold hard truth is that because of our sinful nature, we will never have enough when we compare ourselves to others. Be content that you have Jesus.

If you don't have a relationship with God, then comparison might be a big struggle in your life.

Jesus wants you to know that He can fill the void of what is missing from your life.

You don't have to live your life always trying to measure up to other people.

God loves you and He thinks you're really great.

Ask Him to help you find peace, joy, and contentment in knowing and trusting in Him.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some things that you often desire that others have?
2. When was the last time you gave something away that you wanted but knew that you didn't need?
3. Do you ever stress out because you don't have the same personality that others have? Why do you think that is?
4. When you compare yourself to others, do you find yourself imitating who they are? What do you do?
5. What are some things in your life that you compare with others?
6. Is it entirely wrong to want to have what someone else has? Why or why not?
7. What do we do if we are struggling with contentment?
8. Why do we struggle with contentment?
9. Often, we are not content in what we have, relationships, and social statuses.

What are some other areas we are dissatisfied with in our lives?

10. How can Jesus help us not to compare ourselves to others?

LESSON ON POPULARITY FOR 6TH-8TH GRADE

Bottom Line: Be confident in who God made you to be, not in the opinions of others.

Bible: Proverbs 29:23

SUPPLIES

- List of reverse movie plots
- Painter's tape

OPENING GAME: REVERSE MOVIE PLOTS

GAME PREP

Have a copy of the "list of reverse movie plots" on hand for the game.

Be prepared to keep score for each team.

Use painter's tape to mark an "X" on the floor where each team should stand.

Divide students into two teams of equal size and have them stand in a huddle with their group on their team's "X."

LIST OF REVERSE MOVIE PLOTS

1. A superhero gets bitten by a spider and loses his power. (Spiderman)
2. A civilized man turns into a savage and lives with gorillas for the rest of his life. (Tarzan)
3. A group of animals get fed up with dancing lemurs, lock themselves up in boxes, and ship themselves to a zoo. (Madagascar)
4. An insane ogre kidnaps a man's wife, puts her in a tower, alienates his friends, and winds up living in a swamp all alone. (Shrek)
5. A fish and his son travel back from Australia just in time to see a shark spit out his wife and children. (Finding Nemo)
6. A karate master turns his enemies into tiny turtles and returns them to the pet store. (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles)
7. A bunch of dinosaurs go around throwing up humans. Eventually, the humans put them in an amusement park and capture them in eggs. (Jurassic Park)

8. A girl in the big city is in touch with her emotions until she has a breakdown so severe her family has to move back to the Midwest and treat her like a child. (Inside Out)

9. A boy has to take his car back to the dealership after it turns out to be a robot. (Transformers)

10. A man flies around the world, places people in dangerous situations, and then puts on a suit and glasses and goes into hiding. (Superman)

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: This game is called “Reverse Movie Plots.”

I’ve taken some of the most popular movies of all time and reversed the storylines.

Your team’s goal is to be the first to figure out the name of each movie.

Here’s an example of a reverse movie plot: Underwater people repair a ship with an iceberg so they can sail to England.

Any guesses which movie I’m referring to?

Titanic!

So, when I read the movie title, you will discuss it with your team and decide if you know the name of the movie.

When you figure it out, your entire team will race up to the front, where I’m standing and sit down.

You have to wait for me to call on your team before you can answer.

Each of your teams is starting with 10 points and will try to work your way down to 0 points.

For every question you answer correctly, your team will lose a point.

The team with the lowest amount of points at the end of the game – WINS!

Oh, and one more thing – when you race to the front, your entire team must walk backwards.

Ready? Let’s begin!

Read each movie plot out loud and play the game. At the end of the game, announce the winner.

TEACH

In the game we just played, everything was reversed and backwards – how we played the game, the movie plots, even how you scored points in the game.

Often, the values of the world we live in are backwards.

People who have wealth and are stingy are regarded as having a lot when they are actually poor in spirit.

Those who work hard to become well-trained singers with phenomenal talent never have a chance against an okay singer who is beautiful.

And when it comes to being popular, it often has nothing to do with a person's character or abilities.

In fact, some people are popular, just because they are popular.

Say: So, let's begin by answering this question: What does it mean to be popular?

And let's follow up by answering this question: Do you think it's important to be popular?

Allow a few responses from students after each question.

Here's the thing about popularity – it's temporary... it is *always* temporary.

A perfect example is the company "Glamour Shots."

Maybe you haven't heard of it, but I can guarantee that your parents are familiar with the company.

In the 1990s, Glamour Shots were portrait studios located in many shopping centers across the country.

For \$200-300 they would tease your hair, add tons of makeup, and place you in a leather studded jacket – all to create the perfect glamorous photo.

Just for fun, show a few Glamour Shots photos – there are some pretty hilarious ones on the internet.

Everyone had Glamour Shots – celebrities, people with pets, grandmas...

But just like everything else in our culture, it eventually faded, and now only a few studios exist today.

Popularity always fades – nothing in this world remains popular forever.

But the process of how someone becomes popular has been around for a long time.

Think of the “popular” girl or guy at your school... they probably possess a few of these qualities: good-looking, dresses nice, has a lot of stuff, everyone wants to be their friend, etc.

Now, you might be thinking, “that’s just a stereotype” – and it is, but it also has some truth in it because it is based on the opinions of others.

The origins of the word popular can be traced to the early 17th century where it means, “prevalent among the general public.”

When someone or something is popular, it’s because there is something different that makes them/it stand out from the rest of the world.

Often, in our culture that “something different” is superficial – like their looks, how they dress, and what they have.

So, it creates this idea that in order to be popular or stand out from the crowd, they have to change or improve something about themselves.

Every once in a while, a person who is average, but has amazing qualities like being kind, generous, and loving becomes the “it” person in society, but unfortunately, that’s not typical.

“Average” celebrities don’t get much attention – they have to possess some type of extreme behavior.

And the people at your schools who are just average, good people may not ever grow up to be the high school Prom King or Queen. But that’s okay.

If to become popular you have to sacrifice your character or relationship with God, it’s definitely okay to be average.

Read Proverbs 29:23.

Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.

When we base who we are in the opinions of others, there’s nothing we aren’t willing to do to meet their expectations of us. That’s not what God wants for our lives.

Because He loves each of us the way we are we can be confident in who God made us be.

When your pride and what others think becomes a priority in your life, the Bible says it will end in humiliation.

But, when we are humble and place our value in what God thinks about us, it will ultimately bring honor to God.

Because people will see something different in us that they don't see in everyone else that is racing to be the prettiest, best dressed, and most influential.

It's a matter of changing our focus to God and not what other people think about us.

The next time you're walking around your school, and you don't feel as good as everyone else, remember that it's okay.

When you see those people 20 years from now, they won't be the same people they are right now – popularity fades.

But, you can live a life that honors God now, and 20 years from now, by finding your value in who He says you are in Him.

Close in prayer.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is the most popular person you know? What makes them popular?
2. Do people ever sacrifice their character for popularity? Give me an example.
3. Can you think of something in our culture that was once popular but is not anymore?
4. How are popularity and humility opposites? Is there a time when someone can be popular and humble at the same time? How?
5. Do you think Jesus was popular? Why or why not?
6. Do adults care about being popular as much as middle school students do? Tell me why or why not.
7. What can you do to remain humble in a world that is full of pride?
8. Re-read Proverbs 29:23. How does pride end in humiliation? How does humility bring honor?
9. Besides popularity, what is something that our culture values that aren't necessarily godly?
10. How does grounding your confidence in who God says you are allow you to be unshakable in a world that is always changing?

LESSON ON GOD'S WORD FOR 6TH-8TH GRADE

Bible: 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NLT)

Bottom Line: God's Word works in the hearts of those who believe.

SUPPLIES

- Bibles (one per team)
- Copies of "Hidden Message" PDF – included in the PDF download of this lesson (one per team)
- Pen/pencil (one per team)

OPENING GAME: HIDDEN MESSAGE

GAME PREP

Divide students into teams of 3-4 people.

Give each team a Bible, a copy of the "Hidden Message" PDF (included in the PDF of this lesson), and a pen/pencil.

Have teams spread out across your meeting space.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Today, we're talking about God's Word.

Some people might think that the Bible is complicated to understand and you need to be highly intelligent to read it.

But, we're going to learn that God gave us His Word to help us learn about and grow closer to Him – so, He wants us to understand what it says.

In this game, the message won't be quite as clear.

I've divided you into teams, and I'm going to give you 5 minutes to decipher the "hidden message" on the piece of paper I've given to you.

It might not be as easy as you think, but if you work together, you can figure it out.

You have all the tools you need: the Bible, the sheet of paper, a pen/pencil, and your brains.

Ready? On your mark... get set... GO!

Feel free to walk around and help students as they need it, but try not to give them the answers.

Recognize the first team to decipher the message and read the answers aloud for the teams that were unable to finish the game.

TEACH

Ask: Do you think reading the Bible is as much fun as it was to play that game?

Tell me how you feel when you read the Bible.

Allow a few responses from students.

They say the average home in the United States has over four Bibles – so we have them, but how much do we read them?

Today, we're going to learn that it's not as much about how much you read the Bible, but what you allow God to do in your heart as you read His Word.

You might want to mention at some point in this lesson that if a student doesn't own a Bible, you can help them get one.

Because most of us have grown up with Bibles in our homes, we may not realize there are places all over the world where there is no access to Bibles.

In some places, it's illegal to own a Bible.

North Korea, Libya, Morocco, and many other countries have created laws concerning carrying a Bible that can result in a person suffering imprisonment, persecution, torture, and even death.

In other parts of the world, the Bible has not been translated into the language of a people group.

In fact, there are over 2,163 languages that do not have a translation of the Bible.

For over 60 years, the organization, *Wycliffe Bible Translators*, has submersed themselves in a culture, and sometimes even developed a written language and taught it to a people group, in order to produce a printed copy of the Bible for the people.

Why? Because there are still over 1.5 BILLION people in the world, who do not have a copy of the Bible.

That's insane when you think about how much we can communicate with each other in our society.

We can send pics, texts, and videos at the drop of a hat, but one out of five people in the world can't get a hold of a Bible to study for themselves.

The Bible is essential; otherwise, God wouldn't have given it to us.

Did you realize the Bible we read today was written over a period of 1400 years and by 40 different men?

The Jewish people recognized the Old Testament books for hundreds of years before the New Testament was written.

They studied and taught the Scripture for generations – scribes copied the text by hand, over and over.

We have over 5,800 Greek manuscripts of the Bible that have been compared to each other to look for mistakes that took place in copying.

Because of this, we know that we can trust the copy of the Bible that we hold in our hands.

If you ever have questions about the authenticity of the Bible or how it came about, let's have a conversation about it, and we can do some research together.

Don't let what you hear people say about whether or not the Bible is true get in the way from you discovering the truth.

So, let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about God's Word.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas.

You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.

Scholars believe the Apostle Paul wrote between 8-13 books of the New Testament.

These "books" were in the form of letters that Paul wrote to churches, as God gave Him the words to say and the messages to deliver to the people.

The verse we just read says that the Bible is more than mere human ideas – its more than just words on a page.

God uses His Word to speak to us and work in our hearts and lives.

Ask: What does it mean if someone reads a scripture that “speaks” to them?

Allow a few responses from students.

Share about a time when a scripture came alive and particularly spoke to you.

Here’s an example of how God can speak to you through His Word.

Have you ever felt overwhelmed entirely to the point that you don’t know what to do?

Read Philippians 4:8.

Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

That scripture reminds us to change our thought patterns – instead of allowing stress to overtake our thoughts, think about the things that are *true* (you’re going to make it), *honorable, and right* (if I stay stressed, I’m keeping myself from feeling peace), *pure, and lovely, and admirable* (I might feel stressed out right now, but it’s going to get better).

Allow God’s Word to minister and speak to you as you meditate and think about what

He’s saying through the scripture.

Many times, the answers we are seeking are found in God’s Word.

It’s our responsibility and privilege to open up our Bibles and seek after God.

He’s given us everything we need to follow Him, and He desires to work in our hearts as we dwell in His Word.

Close in prayer.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think God gave us the Bible? What is its purpose?
2. What role does God’s Word play in your life? What does the Bible mean to you?
3. What can you learn from God’s Word? Why is it important?

4. What are some of the qualities of God's Word? *For example: Its words bring peace, it encourages us in our faith, helps us know more about God and grow closer to Him...*
5. How much knowledge of the Bible do you need to have before you can share it with others? *(All you can ever do is share what you know – whether you feel like you know a lot or a little.)*
6. Before today, did you realize there are places in the world where the Bible is illegal or hasn't been translated into the people group's language?
7. How could someone know who God is if they don't have His Word?
8. How often do you read your Bible? Can you see the benefit of being disciplined in how you study God's Word?
9. **Re-read 1 Thessalonians 2:13.** What does the scripture mean when it says, *“And this word continues to work in you who believe.”*
10. Brainstorm some ways to share what's in the Bible with others – be creative!

LESSON ON SELF-ESTEEM FOR 6TH-8TH GRADE

Bible: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT)

Bottom Line: Find your worth in who God says you are – not how you feel about yourself.

SUPPLIES

- Paper Balls (newspaper or scrap paper)
- 2 Large pieces of paper
- Sharpie
- Painter's tape (2 rolls)

OPENING GAME: FACE BALL

GAME PREP

Using the Sharpie, draw a giant face on each of the two large pieces of paper.

Use the painter's tape to hang the faces on the wall.

Also, use the tape to create a line across the floor, about 4 feet in front of the wall where the face pictures are hanging.

Divide students into two teams of equal size.

Give each team a stack of newspaper or scrap paper, and a roll of painter's tape.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Most of us try really hard to have clear skin, and a smooth face, except for you guys that are working on an awesome mustache.

For our game, I have taped two large faces on the wall.

Designate one face for each team.

Each of your teams has been given a stack of paper and a roll of tape.

When I say GO, your teams will stand behind the line on the floor.

Some of you will work on creating paper balls and wrapping them with tape.

And some of you will have the job of hurling your team's paper balls at your team's face.

You can't step over the line at any point during the game.

The goal is to stick as many paper balls as you can to your team's face.

When I call "time's up," I will award a point for each ball that is stuck to your team's face.

The team with the most points wins!

TEACH

Say: Today, we're talking about self-esteem – we all have it, and some of ours needs a little work.

Maybe you have had times when you felt like the face in our game.

Maybe it's not paper balls being thrown at you... but it might be insults or hurtful words that honestly, can feel just as bad.

Our society has a lot to say about how a person looks on the outside.

Webster's Dictionary defines beauty as – "the quality of being physically attractive."

Ask: So, let's begin by answering this question... What do you think makes someone beautiful?"

Allow a few responses from students.

You've probably heard the phrase "Beauty is only skin deep" – but, I want to challenge all of us to look for the beauty that goes beyond what we see on the outside.

Because whether we are what the world considers to be "beautiful" or not, who you are on the inside is everything.

Let's see what the Bible has to say about who we are...

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?

You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price.

So you must honor God with your body.

There are lots of things that we do that do not “honor God” with our body.

That includes allowing ourselves to feel like we aren’t good enough, whether it’s how we look or even our personality.

What would it be like if you could read the minds of your peers as you walk down the hallways at your school?

You can imagine that you would hear a variety of things, and some of them aren’t appropriate for our group, but you would undoubtedly hear a lot of comparisons.

Many times, we decide how we feel about ourselves by comparing ourselves to others or listening to what others say about us, but the truth is that not one bit of your self-worth should depend on how others accept or view who you are.

Because if you find that you are continually trying to prove your worth to anyone, you have already forgotten your value.

Your value doesn’t decrease because someone doesn’t value who you are – and you know what? – Your value doesn’t increase because of what others think about you.

You must find your value in who God says you are.

In the verses we just read, God says that you are the “temple of the Holy Spirit.”

In the Old Testament, the temple was an exceptional place and had specific rules about how it was to be taken care of.

It was a place where priests made sacrifices, and God spoke with them – it was a holy place.

In the Scripture we read, it is obviously speaking through a metaphor – you aren’t a physical temple.

What that scripture means is that when you are a believer and follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God) lives inside of you.

Think about it... God isn’t just outside of the universe, or sitting up in Heaven, just watching everything that’s happening down here – He lives inside of you.

God would never allow His Spirit to live inside of anything that didn’t have value – you have value to God.

But the reason you are so valuable is because of the price that was paid by Jesus so you could come to God and give yourself back to Him – after all, He’s the One who created you.

When we think about being a temple of God, it can motivate us to be careful about where we go, what we eat, what we watch, what we listen to, and how we view ourselves.

It can help motivate us to keep his temple pure.

As God lives in you, it impacts those around you because you are carrying God's Spirit with you everywhere you go.

So, how do you view yourself? Are you happy with what you see?

Think about it and allow God to change how you feel about who you are.

Whether or not you like how you look on the outside, you need to realize that your worth is based on who God says you are – and you're His temple.

Close in prayer.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Bible says you are "God's temple." What does that mean?
2. Do you believe you are God's temple? How does that affect the way you live?
3. Does knowing you are God's temple affect what you say and do? How?
4. How can you remind yourself that you are God's temple every single day?
5. Do you treat others like they are one of God's creations? If so, how? If not, why?
6. What is the hardest thing about yourself to accept? The way you look, your personality, etc.?
7. Why are some people so hard on themselves? Why is difficult for some people to accept how God made them?
8. What can you remember from today's lesson to remind you how valuable you are to God – even when you don't feel like it?
9. How can you encourage others who have low self-esteem, or don't think they are very valuable?
10. What else does the Bible say about who you? Why is it important to know how God feels about you?

GAME ON CHARACTER FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE

Bible: Philippians 1:11 (NLT)

Bottom Line: Your actions demonstrate your true character.

SUPPLIES

- 2 Handheld mirrors
- List of expressions (listed below)
- Paper and pencil

GAME PREP

Divide students into two teams of equal size and have them form straight lines.

Have a leader stand up front with the list of expressions.

Choose someone to keep score throughout the game.

LIST OF EXPRESSIONS

- Sad turtle
- Angry baby
- Surprised cat
- Embarrassed rabbit
- Exhausted cow
- Confused frog
- Bored fish
- Confident chicken
- Happy grandma
- Frightened monkey
- Guilty teenager
- Suspicious bear

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: We're about to play a fun game that's all about expressions.

As we start our game, I'm going to ask one person from each team to come forward.

I will give each person a mirror to hold in front of their face.

Next, I will read an expression for you to display. For example, I might say, "funny bird."

You will look into your mirror and practice making a “funny bird” face.

Then, I will count “3-2-1,” and you will pull your mirror down from in front of your face and look directly at each other.

The goal is to be the last person to break from your expression and earn a point from your team.

If you laugh or change your expression, then the other team will earn a point.

After everyone has taken a turn, we will tally the points and find out which team has the most points.

After the game, have the students return to their seats.

TEACH

Say: You definitely demonstrated your ability to show expression... some of you are real characters!

Being a character is different than *having* character.

Ask: What does it mean when someone has “bad” character?

What does “good” character look like?

Allow a few responses from students.

Your “character” is who you are on the inside - your morals, and the qualities that guide the decisions you make and your behaviors.

It’s easy to observe each other’s facial expressions, but it’s also easy to recognize someone’s character.

Ask: So, how would you describe your character?

Here are some words to get you started: honest, loyal, brave, stubborn, humble, responsible, compassionate...

Would others describe you the same way?

Allow a few responses from students after each question.

Abraham Lincoln once said, “Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.”

Say: Tell me what you think Abraham Lincoln was trying to say about a person's character.

Allow a few responses from students.

Here's what the Bible has to say about our character...

Read Philippians 1:11.

May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation – the righteous character produces in your life by Jesus Christ – for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

Ask: Do you think someone can have good character if they don't follow Jesus? Why or why not?

Allow a few responses from students.

If you don't follow God, you could still have good, even great character, but it wouldn't be righteous – meaning that it brings glory to God.

Most people have a “public face” and a “private face.”

Think about the game we played... that was an example of your public face - it was what you wanted everyone to see.

Hopefully, that face was different than what you were trying to keep under control and hidden, which represents your private face.

Each of us have things we have done, or thoughts we have had, that would cause us to be embarrassed or ashamed if they were on display for everyone to see.

When we seek after God, those things should become less, and He should become more evident in our actions.

So, what can we do to help our “private face” match our “public face”?

We can start with being aware of the things that are influencing us and think about these questions:

- Do those around me have the kind of character I want to possess in my life?
- Am I negatively influenced by other people or do I demonstrate strong character that influences others?
- What actions am I taking to allow God to affect my character? Do I spend time study the Bible and learning from others who have good character traits?

While you can't always control who the people are in your life, you can decide how you will let their character impact yours.

It's important to desire "righteous character."

Ask: What does it mean to have "righteous character"?

Allow a few responses from students.

To have righteous character means that you are becoming more like God - in your words, thoughts and actions.

The righteousness of God is created in you as you grow in your relationship with Him.

In the Bible, we read about men and women who made good and bad choices based on their character.

In the New Testament, we read that Judas, one of Jesus' disciples betrayed Him for a bag of silver coins.

Judas lied, he was sneaky and conniving, and his poor choices lead to Jesus' death, and his own death as well.

We also read about Peter – a man who often reacted irrationally and then had to repent for his actions.

But as he followed after God, he became more like Him and less like himself.

Peter allowed God to help his character become more righteous.

Your character is a representation of the individual choices and decisions you make every day.

You *will* make mistakes, and at some point, even demonstrate bad character qualities.

Don't become discouraged by your poor choices, but realize that God is working in your life and He will never give up on you.

And as you seek God, your actions will become more like His and less like your old ways.

Then, your actions will demonstrate the character of someone who desires to bring glory to God through the way they live.

GAME ON HUMILITY FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE

Bible: James 3:13

Bottom Line: Live well, live wisely, live humbly.

SUPPLIES

- Timer
- Ball

GAME PREP

Divide students into two teams of equal size and have them form single file lines.

Have a copy of this on hand: **Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A**

You will need a timer or stopwatch to use throughout the game.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Raise your hand if you have learned your alphabet.

Great! You should have no problem playing this game.

This is one of those games that sounds much easier to play than it actually is.

I will choose one of your teams to go first and give the first person in line a ball.

The goal of this game is to say the alphabet as fast as you can while passing the ball to the person standing behind you.

So, you will say a letter, pass the ball backwards, then the next person will say a letter, and pass the ball backwards, and on and on.

When the person at the end of the line receives the ball, he or she will turn around and so will everyone else on their team.

Now, the last person is the first person, the ball will begin to be passed backwards again, and the alphabet will continue.

Your teams will play one-at-a-time because we are going to time each team to see who is able to complete the alphabet the fastest.

If, at any point, someone on your team drops the ball, you will return the ball to the beginning of your line and start over—while the timer is still going.

When you have explained the rules, you will choose a team to start, and the game will begin.

After both teams have taken a turn, announce which team was the fastest and who won the game.

Great job!

I know you're wondering why I thought that was going to be a difficult game because it was pretty easy.

I forgot to mention... that was just the practice round.

Now, we will play the actual game.

We're going to do the same thing we just did, but here's the twist: you're going to say the alphabet **backwards!**

Trust me. It's much harder than it sounds.

The first person in line will start with "Z," the next person will say "Y," and so on.

Do you think it will take your team the same amount of time to complete the alphabet this time?

We will see!

You can play the game best two out of three, or as many times as you would like as long as the students are interested.

You can also mix the students up in their lines so that their letter changes for every round of the game you play.

TEACH

Say: You guys and gals are really smart, but that doesn't mean it was easy.

This was probably something you have never done before, unless you have actually practiced saying the alphabet backwards.

Some of you were the weakest link because you weren't ready when it was your turn or couldn't think fast enough on your feet—and that's okay because it was just a game.

Ask: Have you ever known someone who wasn't good at something but wanted everyone to think that he was? No names, please.

Allow a few responses from students.

Be careful that they don't use each other as examples.

It can be tough to admit when we aren't good at something.

In fact, it can require *humility* on our part, and that isn't part of our human nature.

Read James 3:13.

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom.

This verse points out that there is a humility that comes from wisdom.

Ask: Think about the people you would consider to be "wise." Are they also humble?

Allow a few responses from students.

Jesus was all-knowing when He was on the earth, but He didn't act like a know-it-all.

He was humble.

Truly wise people are always humble because they realize their wisdom isn't their own but comes from God.

When we live with love and respect for each other, following God's commands and living for him, humility will be part of our character.

It is impossible to be boastful, full of pride, or rude when you are living with wisdom that comes from God.

Ask: What are some reasons that people would act like know-it-alls or try to present themselves as wise, when they really aren't?

Allow a few responses from students.

Any time we try to live in our own strength, we end up failing, but we don't want to look like we are failing. No one does!

So, we try to come across like we have it all together when we're really falling apart.

Ask: How can God help us realize that we are trying to live in our own strength?

Allow a few responses from students.

Share a personal experience of when you tried to do something in your own strength and failed.

Many times, we believe that, in order for God to help us, we must be perfect and have it all together.

But that's a lie we believe that can keep us from turning to God in the times when we are weakest.

God is always willing to help us when we come to Him in humility, admitting our weaknesses and our desire for Him.

It takes courage to admit your faults and the areas where you need God's help.

But the truth is that all of us have faults and we all need God, even when it seems like things are going really well.

Watch out for those areas in your life where you think you don't need God's help.

At the root of that attitude is pride, which is the opposite of humility.

You will find that the less you think you need God, the more you actually do.

God's wisdom is always available. If you ask, He will give it to you.

The only way to learn wisdom is by going through situations requiring that you rely on God and not yourself.

I want to leave you with these closing words: Live well, live wisely, live humbly.

GAME ON THE ARMOR OF GOD FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE

Bible: Ephesians 6:11

Bottom Line: Get dressed. Stand Firm. Fight!

SUPPLIES

- Cell Phones
- List of challenges (see below)

GAME PREP

Divide students into groups of 2-3 students.

Each group will need a cell phone for the game.

Have a copy of this list of challenges on hand:

- Text a family member, "I love you." The first team to get a reply and read it out loud will get a point.
- Take a picture of your entire group pretending to fly. The first person to take the photo, run up front and show it to me will get a point.
- Create a slow-motion video of your group that isn't actually in slow motion. The first team to create the video, run up front and show it to me will get a point.
- Take a picture of your group and upload it to social media. The first team to get a "like" from someone who isn't on their team will win a point.
- Look up this verse in the Bible in the New Living Translation. The first team to find it and read it out loud will win a point: Ephesians 6:11 (*Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.*)
- Take a picture of your youth pastor and edit it to make it the "perfect pic." The first person to show me their "perfect pic" (and I like it) will win a point.
- Who has the most unread emails in their inbox? Find it on your phone and tell me the number. The team who has the highest number will get a point.
- Who has the lowest battery percentage on their phone? Run up here and show me. The team with the lowest percentage will get a point.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: You're going to really like this game.

How do I know? Because most of you really like your phones.

You have been divided into teams and each team has a phone they are using for the game.

I'm going to read a "challenge" and give your team the opportunity to win a point.

At the end of our game, the team with the most points will win the game.

Begin the game by reading the list of challenges.

If the game goes by too quickly, feel free to add extra challenges.

At the end of the game, declare the winning team.

TEACH

Say: I'm so glad all of you got dressed before you came today.

Most of us could never imagine leaving our homes without being fully clothed.

Imagine someone showing up to school half-dressed—do you think anyone would notice?

I'm pretty sure someone would stop them before they even got on the bus or entered the school.

Ask: I'm going to ask a silly question: Why do we wear clothing? I'm expecting your answers to be appropriate for our group.

Allow a few responses from students

Clothes protect us from the effects of weather—hot and cold temperatures.

We wear clothes to look good; it's part of how our culture expresses themselves.

And mostly, we don't want to walk around naked—I know I don't!

As followers of Jesus, we clothe ourselves with other things besides jeans and t-shirts.

And even though we're talking about wearing spiritual clothing we physically can't see, it's pretty evident to those around us whether or not we are clothed.

Read Ephesians 6:11.

Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

Let's take a look at what this Scripture is talking about.

In this verse, Paul tells us to "put on all of God's armor."

We understand that battle armor is meant to protect someone when they are in combat or fighting in a war.

Throughout history, armor has traditionally been made of metal, iron, leather, or some other type of weapon-resistant material.

If a soldier went into battle only wearing parts of their armor, it would be ineffective because the enemy would see the vulnerable parts that weren't protected and target those areas.

Just like your friends would tell you if you were half-dressed, a fellow soldier would most likely say, "Hey! You forgot to put on your helmet." Or, "Where is your shield?"

Why? Because they wouldn't want another soldier to get hurt.

Ask: So, what is the "armor of God?"

Obviously, it's not something we physically wear, so what is it?

Allow a few responses from students.

In the verses that come before the one we read, the Apostle Paul talks about the Sword of the Spirit, Helmet of Salvation, Shield of Faith, Breastplate of Righteousness, Belt of Truth, and more.

These are the pieces of spiritual armor we wear as Christians.

We wear them by reading the Bible, praying, allowing our faith in God to grow, living God-honoring lives, etc.

Every piece of the armor is essential.

The Belt of Truth stands for God's truth, and knowing God's truth protects us from the lies of the world and the devil.

As you study each piece of the "armor of God" you understand that each one plays a vital part and without one, you are vulnerable to the enemy.

The scripture says that the armor helps us to stand firm and not waver or be shaken in our faith, no matter what type of battle we face.

Ask: It also says that it helps us to stand firm against the “*strategies of the devil.*”

What are the strategies of the devil?

Allow a few responses from students.

Share a personal story that sheds light on a time when you could have given in to one of those strategies, but God gave you the strength to overcome.

God does not want you to be defeated in your walk with Him, but it’s your choice of whether or not you go “to battle” in His strength and protection, or try to do it on your own.

Without God’s protection, you will lose every time because we were never meant to live in our own strength.

When you put on the armor of God, you are completely covered with everything God knows you need to fight against the devil.

And when you see a fellow “soldier” without some of their armor, you should remind them to put it on.

If you go to school tomorrow and see someone telling lies or listening to gossip about someone, you can say, “Hey! You’re not wearing your armor.”

When we participate in lying or even listening to lies, we have just made ourselves vulnerable to attacks from the devil.

How?

Because those actions do not demonstrate a desire to stand firm in God’s Truth.

Instead, you are willing to settle for the lies of the enemy.

So, today, I want you to choose to wear the armor of God—and don’t just put part of it on and walk around half-dressed, but ask God to give you everything you need to stand firm in who He has called you to be.

Get dressed. Stand firm. Fight!

GAME ON WORRY FOR 6TH-12TH GRADE

Bible: Matthew 6:34

Bottom Line: Instead of worrying about tomorrow, trust God today.

SUPPLIES

- Cell phone
- Potato
- Music playlist

GAME PREP

Have your entire group form a circle and sit down.

As the leader, allow the group to use your cell phone for the game—make sure you have a good case and screen protector on the phone that is used.

Give both the potato and the cell phone to one person in the group.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Now that we have everything we need, let's talk about how to play the game.

We will call this game, "Cell Phone Selfie Hot Potato."

Now, you had probably played hot potato when you were a child, so you know how to do that part of the game.

While the music is being played, we're going to pass a potato around the circle.

But, there's a twist...because that would be too easy and you're too old just to play a game of hot potato.

At the same time the potato is going around our circle, we will also pass a cell phone from person to person.

When the game starts, the person holding the cell phone and the potato will pass the cell phone to their left and the potato to the person on their right.

At the beginning of each round, the person holding the phone will set the 10-second timer on the camera.

Make sure the camera is set in selfie mode so you can see your face on the screen.

You will pass the phone from person to person with your arms extended away from you, like you're taking a selfie.

If the timer goes off and you're holding the phone, remember to smile, because you're going to see that picture again in the future.

But, unfortunately, if you're holding the phone when the timer goes off, you're also out of the game.

If you're just holding the potato when the timer goes off, nothing happens.

Then, start the next round.

The potato and cell phone will continue to be passed around the circle, beginning with the last person that was holding each item.

There's another twist.

If you happen to be holding the potato **AND** the cell phone when it takes the picture, then you are saved by the potato, and you can stay in the game.

Option: You can do a double elimination where people are out if they are holding the potato or the cell phone for each round.

For extra fun, upload all of the funny photos that are taken to your youth group's social media page—it could be hilarious.

TEACH

Say: Who would have thought you could have so much fun with a potato and a cell phone?

Some of you looked a little panicked when the phone was passed to you or even when you thought one of your friends would be out.

It's okay to feel panicked in a game, but if you've ever felt that way in real life, it's not so fun.

Panic and worry are often a part of our everyday lives.

In fact, a recent study found that 38 percent of us struggle with worry every single day.

Ask: What are some common things we worry about? What do you worry about?

Allow a few responses from students.

Share what you worried about when you were the age of the students.

We could write a very, very, long list about what people worry about because it's different for each person.

Some of you might struggle with your grades in school and worry if you will even pass your classes.

Our families can provide a source of worry—maybe your parents don't get along, or a relative is sick, and you're nervous about what could happen.

Many of us have had the experience of going to bed, and suddenly our minds are racing with worst case scenarios.

If you've had any of those experiences, then you might be struggling with worry.

There's an anxiety disorder called the "what-if disease."

That's when you really let your mind think about all of those things that could happen.

There was a study conducted where they had people write down everything they were worried about for two weeks, and asked them to try and guess what might happen with the things they were worried about.

Here's what they found: Instead of the things the people worried about being bad or negative, 85% of the things they worried about were positive!

The things they worried about not only didn't happen, but in the end, they turned out okay. (*According to the book, The Worry Cure by Robert L. Leahy, Ph.D.*)

So, let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about how we should handle worry.

Read Matthew 6:34.

"So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."

This Bible verse is part of the "Sermon on the Mount."

At this point in Jesus' ministry, crowds gathered wherever He went.

One day, when Jesus saw the people coming, He went up to a mountainside, sat down, and started talking.

Right before the verse we just read, Jesus talks about having a healthy view of money (don't love it), he talks about our possessions (realize that God has given us everything), and that we should store up treasures in Heaven (the things we do for the glory of God).

Ask: Do you think there's a connection between the things I just read and the verse we read earlier about worry?

Allow a few responses from students.

Worry can stem from putting our eyes on other things (such as money, the stuff we have, our problems, etc.) instead of focusing on God.

God wants us to focus on Him.

While Jesus was on earth, He had plenty of things He could have worried about: people didn't like Him, they called Him names and talked about Him, and eventually killed Him.

Jesus never lost focus of His mission or took His eyes off of God, His Father—but that wasn't easy.

Jesus was still human, so when He says, "*Today's trouble is enough for today,*" He knew what He was talking about because He had trouble in His life.

So, here are three things you can do when you start to worry:

1. Think about something else.

When you find yourself thinking about the same things over and over, find something else to dwell on.

You can pray or write down prayers to God.

Make a list of the things that are bothering you and then ask God to help you put your eyes on Him and not the things you have written down.

As long as you dwell on the things you're worried about, you will continue to worry.

2. Read the Bible.

Of course, you should read your Bible, but there are several reasons why it will help you when you are filled with worry.

Although the people that are mentioned in the Bible lived a long time ago, you might be surprised to know that they struggled with the same areas you do, just a little differently.

The Bible is relevant, and because we believe it's the Word of God, it still speaks to us today.

Find a scripture passage you can study that will remind you of God's faithfulness and let it soak into your heart and mind.

3. Talk about what you worry about.

Worry can eat you up inside if you let it.

Talk to a friend, parent, sibling, or pastor and ask them to pray for you.

We were never meant to live our lives by ourselves.

You might find they have worried about similar situations and God has helped them in their situations.

Today, I want you to remember that worrying is a choice.

A better choice to make would be to focus on God and learn to depend on Him.

So, instead of worrying about tomorrow, trust God today.