



20 YOUTH GROUP GAMES

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Anger	page 2
Appreciation	page 6
Armor of God	page 9
Character	page 13
Choices	page 17
Compassion	page 22
Discipline	page 28
Easter	page 33
Faith	page 37
Friendship	page 41
God is with You	page 46
God's Guidance	page 49
God's Love	page 53
Humility	page 58
Identity	page 62
Loving Others	page 67
Materialism	page 70
Prayer	page 75
Temptation	page 79
Worry	page 83

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON ANGER

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.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON APPRECIATION

Bible: Philippians 1:4-5 (NLT)

SUPPLIES

- 4 brooms (two per team)
- 1 rubber ball per team (racquetball-sized is good)

GAME PREP

For this game you will divide students into two even teams.

Next, have teams form single file lines, with an arms-length distance between each person in front of them.

The last two people in each team's line will step off, one to each side.

Each will be given a broom and one person on each team will be given a ball, to be placed on the ground.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: This will be a game of skill and concentration.

The teammates with a broom will have a ball in front of one of them.

When I say GO, the teammate with the ball will use the broom to sweep the ball across the floor to the teammate on the other side in a zig-zag pattern between the legs of their teammates in line.

They will continue that pattern, moving the ball across the floor and down the line of people until they reach the end.

Once they get to the end they must return the same way until they reach the beginning of the line, where they will pass off the brooms and replace the next two in line.

The next two will continue the same sweeping pattern until all the people in the line have had a chance and have completed the line.

The first team to complete the game wins.

TEACH

Say: That game was a great combination of teamwork and a little skill, wasn't it?

It also gave each of you a chance to appreciate some of the effort that others gave on behalf of the team.

At home, many of us do chores around the house to help out.

Some of you may even sweep the floor, right?

When we go to school or church or somewhere else, we would notice if the floor was dirty or there was trash all over the place, wouldn't we?

But we often don't appreciate the work and chores that have been done until someone is not doing it.

Parents often do chores too, although sometimes we don't always see them or even know about them.

They just get done.

Even though we may not always say it to them—and we should—we do appreciate their hard work.

Appreciation and gratitude go right alongside each other.

Remember the first time you bought something at the store with your own money that you had earned?

Maybe it didn't cost a lot, but to you it was important because you earned it.

But sometimes, children go to their parents wanting something. The child says "...and it's only \$_____"

Parents can have a hard time with is when their child comes to them and wants them to buy some particular thing, especially when it doesn't appear that the child appreciates them.

Ask: What are some ways that you show appreciation to others?

Allow for a few responses from students.

Preaching the Gospel may not seem like a very difficult job, but for the Apostle Paul, it was both rewarding and challenging.

Because of those challenges, he appreciated the support and prayers of the churches he had helped to start.

Read Philippians 1:4-5.

Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.

When we show appreciation to others, it demonstrates that we not only value their time and friendship, but we also show them that we would do the same for them.

Paul appreciated the Philippian church because the people partnered with him from the beginning.

Appreciation is recognizing and enjoying the good qualities of someone or something, and Paul certainly was appreciative.

I asked you a couple of minutes ago about some ways that you show appreciation to others, but I want you to take a moment and think about who you appreciate most and why.

Many of you will think of your parents or other family members.

We appreciate them because we know they care for us and want the best for us.

One of the best ways to show others we appreciate them is to pray for them as Paul prayed for the churches he ministered to.

He prayed for their needs and for the future.

Another great way to show someone that you appreciate them is to tell them.

Not just a generic “I appreciate you,” but to let them know what it is specifically that you appreciate about them.

Last, but not least, God.

Tell God how much you appreciate all of the blessings in your life and everything He has done for you.

Always remember to show appreciation.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON ARMOR OF GOD

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!

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON CHARACTER

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"?

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.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON CHOICES

Bible: Proverbs 2:11

Bottom Line: God can give you discretion, wisdom, and understanding to make the right choices.

SUPPLIES

- List of “Would You Rather?” Questions
- Index cards (one per student)
- Sharpie
- 2 Pieces of poster board

GAME PREP

Use the Sharpie to write the word “SAFE” in large letters on each index card.

Give each student an index card to use during the game.

On one poster board, write the letter “A.”

On the other poster board, write the letter “B.”

Choose a space where all of the students can stand throughout the game.

Make sure there is also enough space for students to sit down when they are out of the game.

Place the “A” poster board on the left side and the “B” on the right side of the room.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Today, we’re going to play our own version of the game “Would You Rather?”

Each of you have received an index card with the word “SAFE” written on it.

I want you to hold onto that card, and I will tell you what to do with it in a minute.

I have a list of Would You Rather? Questions.

Every time I read a question, I will give you an "A" answer and a "B" answer.

When I finish, you will choose your answer and stand near the poster board of the answer you have chosen.

Next, I will let you know the predetermined correct answer.

Now, you might not agree that the answer is correct, but that's what has been decided before you arrived here today.

If you answered incorrectly, you are out, and you will sit down unless you decide to use your "SAFE" card.

If you want to stay in the game, you will bring your SAFE card to me and remain in the game.

You should consider how many people are left in the game before you use your card and decide if it's worth using it.

The last person standing is the winner.

You can play multiple rounds based on how many questions you have left at the end of each round.

The correct answer will be underlined for each question.

WOULD YOU RATHER? QUESTIONS

1. Would you rather (A) have super sensitive hearing or (B) super sensitive taste?
2. Would you rather (A) be too hot or (B) too cold?
3. Would you rather (A) be a deep-sea diver or (B) an astronaut?
4. Would you rather (A) be able to fly or (B) be invisible?
5. Would you rather (A) live in a giant desert or (B) in a giant dessert?
6. Would you rather (A) have no eyebrows or (B) only have one eyebrow?
7. Would you rather (A) have a dog that could hum or (B) a cat who could whistle?
8. Would you rather (A) spend the rest of your life being itchy or (B) being tickled?
9. Would you rather (A) be able to change the past or (B) see into the future?
10. Would you rather (A) live without music or (B) without tv?
11. Would you rather (A) eat tacos or (B) pizza?
12. Would you rather (A) get up early or (B) stay up late?
13. Would you rather (A) be able to jump incredibly high or (B) run incredibly fast?
14. Would you rather (A) have many good friends or (B) one very best friend?
15. Would you rather (A) have adventure or (B) relaxation?
16. Would you rather (A) have fame or (B) wisdom?
17. Would you rather (A) be without your phone for a week or (B) without internet?
18. Would you rather (A) be Batman or (B) Superman?

19. Would you rather (A) be the youngest or (B) the oldest sibling?
20. Would you rather (A) be too busy or (B) be bored?
21. Would you rather (A) read a good book or (B) watch a good movie?
22. Would you rather (A) be a kid your whole life or (B) be an adult your whole life?
23. Would you rather (A) be 4'5' or (B) 7'8"?
24. Would you rather (A) be a villain or (B) a hero in a movie?
25. Would you rather (A) play the piano or (B) the trombone?
26. Would you rather (A) be born with a giraffe neck or (B) a unicorn horn?
27. Would you rather (A) live in the country or (B) live in the city?
28. Would you rather (A) be a huge mouse or (B) a tiny elephant?
29. Would you rather (A) live on Mars or (B) live on the moon?
30. Would you rather (A) spend a day at the beach or (B) a day in the mountains?

TEACH

Say: There were so many choices in the game we just played.

You might not have agreed with what I considered the correct answer, but the point of our game was to demonstrate how the choices you make affect your life.

You make over 35,000 choices every day... that's insane!

Researchers at Cornell University have discovered that you make about 226 decisions each day on food alone.

Choices always result in consequences... whether good or bad.

Some of the choices we make daily affect whether or not we are safe.

Think about this...

You wear a seat belt when you ride in a car.

You put on a helmet when you ride a bike to protect your head.

At school, you practice fire drills to ensure you and your classmates know what to do... just in case.

Fast-food workers wear gloves and continuously wash their hands to keep from spreading food diseases... well, at least we hope they do those things.

When you stop and think about it, safety measures are all around us.

Over time, we have learned that wearing a bike helmet reduces your chance of a head injury by 50%.

People not wearing a seat belt are 30 times more likely to be ejected from a vehicle during a crash.

And washing your hands alone doesn't keep food safe.

Wearing gloves when handling food drastically reduces the chance of spreading germs – it makes a difference.

But here's the thing, you don't *have* to do the things I just mentioned.

Some of them, you're supposed to do them, but the choices you make are always up to you.

You see, having knowledge and understanding isn't enough; you have to use the knowledge you have to make the right choices.

Read Proverbs 2:11-12.

Wise choices will watch over you.

Understanding will keep you safe.

In some translations of that verse, instead of "wise choices," they use the word "discretion."

Discretion is having good judgment that causes you to think about the choices you are making... and then, choose the right thing to do.

Discretion knows what to do, when to do it, and how to do it when situations come your way.

Here's an example of how "wise choices" or "discretion" will watch over you.

Your math teacher hands you a test she has just graded.

You realize that you scored 5 points higher than what is written on your test.

So, you get up, walk to the front of the classroom and tell the teacher that they don't know what they're doing.

That would be an example of the wrong choice.

Using discretion would encourage you to try a different way.

Your teacher hands you the test, you realize the mistake, and decide to talk to her privately after class.

Your teacher apologizes, and you express that you are happy that your score was a little better.

The first choice would get you in trouble... in fact, it could go badly for you.

The second choice demonstrates that you know how to think about a situation instead of just reacting.

And because you have chosen the right response, you are saved from detention, suspension, getting in trouble with your parents, and embarrassing yourself.

Discretion has protected you from a negative outcome and harmful consequences.

We need discretion to help us make the right choices every day.

Think about how many times you have the opportunity to make the right or wrong choices.

Someone says something on social media that makes you mad – how do you respond?

You can either lie to your parents about something or tell the truth and get in trouble – which choice honors God?

Your siblings bother you constantly – do you let it bother you or just ignore them?

You can buy something insignificant and use all of your money or save it and get what you really want later – is it worth it to sacrifice now for what you can have later?

It isn't easy to make the right choices.

Otherwise, the Scripture we read wouldn't be in the Bible.

God wants us to choose the things He would choose.

So, if we ask for His wisdom and understanding and then trust what He tells us to do, we will make the right choices and be protected from the consequences of making bad choices.

Begin each day by praying that God will give you discretion, wisdom, and understanding to make the right choices.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON COMPASSION

Bible: Psalm 145:8; John 13:34-35

Bottom Line: Genuine compassion always leads to action.

SUPPLIES

- Index cards (enough for each group of students to have 5 pieces)
- Pens/pencils (one for each group of students)
- A bucket
- Index cards with the answers (provided below)

GAME PREP

Divide students into five groups of equal size and have them form huddles.

Give each group five index cards and a pen/pencil.

Place the bucket up front.

Write the following, one word on each index card:

1. H.H.M.H. (Helping Hands Monkey Helpers)
2. T.C.I.F. (Tall Clubs International Foundation)
3. B.B.I. (Best Buddies International)
4. S.O.I. (Sports Outreach Institute)
5. W.B.P. (Women's Bean Project)

Have a leader on hand that can keep score for all the teams.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: How many of you enjoy helping other people?

I'm glad to see that you think it's important, because it is!

All over the world, there are groups and organizations that help others.

In our game today, we're going to learn the names of a few of them.

I will read the initials of an organization out loud.

With your huddle, you will come up with a word for each letter of the initials, write them down on your team's index card, and place them in the bucket.

You will want to come up with something that is super convincing because it will help you win.

For example: If I read the letters "H.F.C.," you might guess something like, Help Feed Children.

The real answer is: Heroes for Children.

But, if you came up with a convincing answer, then you would get points for every team that chooses your answer—I will tell you more about that in a minute.

I will also place a card with the actual answer in the bucket with everyone else's answers.

Next, I will read each card out loud.

When I read your team's answer, don't make it obvious.

The goal is to write down an answer that is so convincing that the other teams will think it is correct.

Then, we will go around the room and hear which answer your team thinks is the correct one.

After everyone has chosen an answer, I will reveal the real answer.

If your team guessed correctly, you will get two points.

You will also get a point for every team that thought your answer was correct.

The team with the most points after all five rounds, wins!

TEACH

Say: Winning team, how did you feel about that game?

Did you feel bad for the teams that lost the game?

Allow a few responses from students.

Ask: Have you ever felt genuinely sorry for someone?

What situation occurred that made you feel sorry for them?

Allow a few responses from students.

Share a personal story of a time you felt sorry for someone and how you responded with your actions.

Other situations that make us feel sorry, or sad, for someone might be:

If you see someone trip and fall—hopefully, you don’t laugh, but instead, you feel bad for them.

Or when someone tries to do something and they don’t do as well as they had hoped—like being the last runner to finish in a race.

How about when someone is rejected by a friend who turns their back on them or betrays them?

Not only do those types of situations make us feel sorry for the people involved, but they can also produce *compassion* for others and their situation.

Today, that’s what we’re talking about: *compassion*.

The meaning of *compassion* is, “to suffer together.”

It goes beyond just feeling and emotion, and leads to action.

For example: the person that trips and falls while carrying all of their school books—you see them fall, run to them, help them stand, and pick up their books.

Genuine compassion always leads to action.

A person could not say they had compassion if they only watched the person struggle to stand back up, dust themselves off, and keep going without any help.

Compassion is demonstrated in how we act towards others.

In the United States, there are over 1.5 MILLION charities.

I said MILLION.

Typically, a charity is founded out of a desire to help a group of people or a cause.

Most of us are familiar with charities that help kids with cancer, homeless people, or animals who need to be adopted.

But, there are also charities that I’ve never heard of, and maybe you haven’t either, that are one-of-a-kind.

For example, “Shaving Away the Eyebrows” was a charity fundraiser by a man named Si Burgher in Indiana.

Si had to brush his 3-inch eyebrows every day to keep them out of his eyes—wow!

He decided to raise money for a polio foundation by allowing people to trim his eyebrows.

He raised over \$1600 for trimming his eyebrows!

Or, there’s this one: “The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention.”

Worried about your dog or cat becoming too chubby?

You can give to this foundation that is researching healthy ways to keep our pets from becoming obese.

Here’s one more—a man named Matt Jones allowed himself to be hit by 21,000 paintballs to demonstrate how many children die from poverty every single day.

He allowed himself to feel pain in order to help others see the number of children who are dying from not having enough food and water.

Each of those stories, although they might seem strange or extreme, represent people who were moved to compassion because they believed in a cause and wanted to make a difference.

As followers of Jesus, we should feel compassion towards others.

Why? Because God has shown compassion for us.

Read Psalm 145:8.

The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.

When we look at the people and situations all around us, sometimes it can be difficult to show compassion.

Maybe you get frustrated seeing the situations that people allow themselves to live in.

Why don’t they just change how they live?

Or, it might be difficult to have mercy towards people who don’t show mercy to others.

God could feel the same way about us, but instead, He shows compassion.

He isn't impatient when we make bad decisions—He loves us.

And God demonstrated the ultimate form of compassion when He sent Jesus to earth.

Ask: How does God show love and compassion to us every day?

Allow a few responses from students.

Ask: Has anyone ever shown compassion to you when you didn't feel like you deserved it?

How did that affect you?

Allow a few more responses from students.

When we show compassion and mercy to others, whether we feel like they deserve it or not, we are demonstrating the heart of God.

Compassion isn't based on what we've done, deserve, or even what we need.

If compassion was based on whether or not someone deserved it, God would have never shown compassion to us.

Each of us have disobeyed God's commands and sinned against Him, but God's compassion is founded in mercy and love.

So, we should be so full of the same mercy and love that God pours into our lives that it flows into the lives of others.

When we do this, we are following what God tells us in His Word:

John 13:34-35 says, *“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”*

We show that we are disciples of Jesus when we show love to others.

Ask: When you think about the world around you, how can you demonstrate compassion in how you live?

Is there something that you could do to show compassion?

Allow a few responses from students.

You might want to write down the things the students suggest and consider starting a compassion initiative together as a youth group.

I'm really proud of the ideas you have and the love you have for other people.

Sometimes, when we step out and do something new or out of our comfort zone, it isn't easy, and sometimes it isn't even well received.

Just like the compassion God has shown for us, what you do isn't based on whether or not people appreciate or accept it.

Don't let the way others respond stop or discourage you from demonstrating compassion.

God sees your heart and He knows the motives behind your actions.

When you show compassion, you are a walking example of God's love for others, just like Jesus.

And in the end, that's all that really matters.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON DISCIPLINE

Bible: Matthew 6:34; Hebrews 5:8

Bottom Line: Discipline helps us grow in our relationship with God and others.

SUPPLIES

- Chairs (one per student)
- Slips of paper
- Bucket
- Marker

GAME PREP

Arrange chairs in a large circle, except for one chair that will be placed in the middle of the circle.

On each slip of paper, use a marker to write one of the following phrases:

- Name starts with “M”
- Birthday in June
- Has blue eyes
- Wearing a black shirt
- 15 years old
- Is a girl
- Has a sibling in this group
- Goes to _____ School (you fill it in)
- Brought their Bible
- Owns a pet cat
- Has flown in a plane
- Can speak two languages
- Made their bed today
- Is a boy
- Wearing socks

Next, fold each slip of paper in half, put the paper in the bucket, and put the bucket beside the chair in the middle.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Ask: How many of you have played the game, Musical Chairs?

This game is very similar, except there is no music and we aren't walking around the chairs.

Okay. It's entirely different, except we are using chairs.

I will choose one person to sit in the chair in the middle.

They will choose a slip of paper out of the bucket and read what is written out loud.

It will say something like, "Has brown hair."

If that phrase applies to you, then you will stand up and switch places with someone else who stood up.

The goal is for the person in the middle to take one of your seats before everyone else has found a different chair.

If you are left without a chair, you have to take a chair in the middle, pick a piece of paper from the bucket, and read it out loud.

The winners of the game are the people who never have to sit in a chair in the middle.

You can award a prize if you want to, but they will have so much fun playing the game, they probably won't be expecting a prize.

TEACH

Some of you really had to move around a lot in that game!

As players, you had no control over what would be called out; next, you just had to do what you were told to do.

Raise your hand if you like being told what to do.

Ask: How many of you enjoy being disciplined by your parents or teachers? Tell me what you think "being disciplined" means?

Allow a few responses from students.

Share a personal story of a time when you were punished as a child for doing something you should not have done.

None of us enjoy punishment for our actions.

Some of you may have even been punished unfairly when you didn't deserve it.

But when the Bible talks about God's discipline, it's always fair and is meant to help us grow in our relationship with God and into a better person.

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

Read Matthew 6:34.

People who accept discipline are on the pathway to life, but those who ignore correction will go astray.

Raise your hand if you have ever ridden a horse.

Have you ever ridden a horse wearing a bridle or a bit in its mouth?

A bridle helps direct a horse,

It includes both the headstall that holds a bit that goes in the mouth of a horse, and the reins that are attached to the bit.

Would you ever jump on a wild horse that isn't wearing a bridle and has never been ridden before?

That would be a little insane—you would have no control over the horse's actions and who knows what could happen.

The purpose of a rein is to control the direction the horse is going, and a bit puts enough pressure on the tongue so the horse will respond to what the rider is wanting them to do.

They are both essential when it comes to successfully riding a horse, and without them, it's more dangerous and unpredictable.

Ask: What are the "bits and reins" in your life that help control your actions? Why are they important?

Allow a few responses from students.

There will be times that you receive discipline from parents, and those in authority, and others when God is trying to teach you something.

Ask: How does being disciplined help you grow as a person and in your relationship with God? Is it necessary?

Allow a few responses from students.

If you've ever interacted with a toddler, you know discipline is necessary—they do whatever they want!

They destroy things, make messes, bite people, and if never told that it's wrong, they will continue in their destructive behavior.

We know that's true, because they grow into adults who don't clean up after themselves or take care of what they own.

Sometimes, people are left to teach themselves right and wrong because they don't have godly influences in their lives.

But if you ask Him, God will show you the right things to do, and when He does, don't fight it.

God's discipline comes in the form of letting us suffer the consequences of our bad choices, but He's with us through it all.

God also disciplines us when He wants to teach us something because He loves us.

Jesus was disciplined, and He never sinned, so it's not always a result of something we have done.

Hebrews 5:8 says, “[Jesus] learned obedience through what he suffered.”

We learn obedience when we do what God wants us to do, even though we're experiencing a difficult time.

He will allow us to suffer to make us closer to Him.

Ask: Do you think you can learn to trust God if you are never put in situations that test your faith?

Do you think it's fair for God to allow suffering to draw us closer to Him? Why or why not?

Allow a few responses from students.

There have been times that your parents have let you suffer a little because they loved you and knew that's how you would learn.

How many times have they reminded you to do your homework and you still don't do it?

So, they stop reminding you so that you will learn from your own choices.

Maybe you want to date someone who is not right for you, and they let you learn that on your own instead of telling you not to date them.

As a teenager, if you can learn the value of discipline and living a disciplined life, then you will save yourself some heartache and pain as you grow older.

It takes some people an entire lifetime to learn that there are consequences to their actions.

You can make the choice today to allow the people God has placed in your life to discipline you and teach you how to live for God.

And when God disciplines you, know that He loves you and is helping you become the person He wants you to be—the best version of you.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON EASTER

Bible: John 11:25-26 (NLT)

Bottom Line: Easter is an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made and to celebrate His resurrection.

SUPPLIES

- Two stopwatches
- Peeps marshmallow bunnies or chicks (one per student)
- Bowl
- Small table
- A piece of paper and pen

GAME PREP

Have two leaders with stopwatches stand at the front of the room.

Divide students into two teams of equal size.

Have each team form a straight line and sit down, facing the front of the room.

Open the packs of Peeps and place them in a bowl, on a small table, at the front of the room.

Have the pen and paper on hand to record each team's scores throughout the game.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: The game we are about to play is all about time.

I'm going to ask the first person in each team's line to come and stand in front of this table.

I've asked two leaders (one for each team) to hold stopwatches throughout the game. They have a super important job.

After each team has sent a representative to the front, I will call out a specific amount of time and say GO! For example, I will say "15 seconds!"

The leaders will begin timing on the stopwatches, and you will wait until you think that 15 seconds have passed, stick a Peep in your mouth, and say, "STOP!"

Your team's stopwatch will be stopped immediately.

After each person has made their time guess, we will see which team is the closest and award a point to that team.

Then, everyone on each team will take a turn, we will tally the scores, and declare a winner!

Note: You can choose any amount of time that you wish but try to keep it under a minute for each round, so the game is not too long.

TEACH

Say: You all have a great sense of time – that was awesome!

During this season, of every year, we recognize a specific holiday – Easter.

All around the world, Easter is celebrated with candy, hiding, and hunting eggs, and of course, the Easter bunny.

It is celebrated by Christians and non-believers alike.

But at its core, Easter is a Christian holiday that celebrates the belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It's a Day of Remembrance for the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross and a celebration of His resurrection from the dead.

Days of remembrance are important.

We remember birthdays because we are grateful for someone's life.

We celebrate graduations to recognize the academic accomplishments and achievements that someone has made.

Remembering a day or event helps us appreciate what has happened and take time to reflect on what it means to us.

That is the purpose of Easter – to reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made and the benefits we enjoy because of His resurrection.

Read John 11:25-26.

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life.

Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

Let's talk about this story...

Martha's encounter with Jesus took place after her brother, Lazarus, died.

Mary and Martha had sent for Jesus when Lazarus was ill.

They had asked Jesus to come and heal their brother, but He didn't.

Instead, Lazarus died.

Now, Jesus has arrived four days after Lazarus' death to visit Mary and Martha.

In our scripture passage, Jesus asked Martha if she believes that anyone who believes in Him will never die.

Martha responded and told Jesus that she does believe.

Several verses later, we read that Jesus had the stone of the tomb rolled away, He called to Lazarus who was dead inside of the tomb, and Lazarus was raised back to life.

This was an incredible miracle and word of what Jesus had done traveled quickly.

Ask: If someone you knew was raised from the dead, who would you tell?

Allow a few responses from students.

The story of Lazarus is important for several different reasons.

First, Lazarus and those who loved him experienced an incredible miracle.

But as the news of this miracle traveled throughout the land, a series of events came into play that resulted in Jesus' death on the cross.

The Pharisees and Jewish leaders were not thrilled when they heard what had happened.

John 11:53 says, *"So from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus' death."*

At this point, Jesus stopped his public ministry and went into the wilderness with His disciples to pray, followed by His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on a donkey when the crowds waved palm branches and celebrated Him as the "King."

If Jesus had healed Lazarus from his sickness the way He had healed many others that had called upon Him, the Jewish leaders would have most likely remained simply annoyed with Jesus for the time being.

But this miracle was different, and it had a significant impact on the community.

We also know from Jesus' encounter with Martha that He was predicting His death.

How could Jesus be the "Resurrection" if He was never resurrected?

Not only did Jesus ask Martha if she believed, but Martha's sister Mary was one of the women who saw Jesus first when He rose from the dead.

If Jesus had not come back to life, we would not have the assurance that He would also be able to bring us back to life.

Jesus' resurrection confirms everything He ever said about life in and through Him.

More than just eggs, candy, and the Easter bunny, Easter provides the opportunity for each of us to reflect on what we believe about Jesus' death and resurrection.

Do you believe?

Do you have assurance and peace in your life that Jesus is who He said He was and that includes giving you eternal life?

Take a moment this Easter to reflect on your relationship with God and to examine the areas of life where perhaps you don't believe.

Ask God to strengthen your faith and help you trust in Him like never before.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON FAITH

Bible: Hebrews 11:1; James 1:2-3

Bottom Line: Trials provide an opportunity for your faith to grow.

SUPPLIES

- 2 Poster boards
- Sharpie
- Copy of game questions for leaders (included in download)
- 4 copies of “Remember This” (included in download)
- Prize for the winner

GAME PREP

Students will begin this game in four teams of equal size, but then play the second part of the game as individuals.

Each team will need a captain; give them a copy of “Remember This.”

Cut the poster boards in half to make 4 pieces.

On each half piece of poster board, write one letter: A – B – C – D

Now that each poster board has a letter, have someone (preferably a leader) hold each letter and stand somewhere around the room.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Raise your hand if you enjoy taking tests.

Most of us don’t, especially if we don’t have much time to study—we call that cramming, and some of you are really good at it!

Each of you have been placed on a team with a captain who is holding a copy of “Remember This.”

When I say, “Go,” your team captain will read the paper out loud as many times as they can within 3 minutes.

During this time, you will pay close attention to the story and try to remember as many facts as you can.

You are not allowed to write anything down or type anything into your phone.

At the end of three minutes, I will collect all of the copies of “Remember This” and the second part of our game will begin.

You will now play as individuals answering the questions on your own.

At that point, I will begin to ask questions about what your captain read to you.

Each question will be multiple choice.

Take note of the people who are holding the letters A – B – C – D.

After I read the question, you will stand by the letter of the answer you choose.

I will eliminate one letter at a time.

If the answer is “A,” I will say, “Letter B is not the answer.”

At that point, all of the people at Letter B will be out and everyone else can stay at their letter or consider changing their answer—but you will have to do it quickly.

Then, I will say, “Letter C is not the answer,” and you will either be eliminated or you can take the opportunity to change your answer.

Then, I will eliminate Letter D.

Everyone who was on Letter A will remain in the game and continue to play.

When we have 4 or less players left in the game, you cannot share a letter with anyone else, so you will need to hurry to be the first one to arrive at the correct letter.

We will continue to play until there is only one person left and they will be declared the WINNER!

TEACH

Ask: If I asked you to tell me if you have a lot of faith, what would you say?

Allow a few responses.

You might be wondering if I have a lot of faith.

My response is, faith in what?

The definition of the word, “faith,” means, “complete trust or confidence in someone or something.”

So, do I have a lot of “complete trust in someone or something?”?

It depends on who or what you’re talking about.

I’m not trying to give confusing answers.

I just want us to spend some time digging deep into what faith means to us as followers of Jesus.

You see, the Bible defines *spiritual faith* as so much more than just *faith*.

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.”

The biblical definition of faith also includes the fact that we don’t have to see what we believe or who we believe in.

Ask: So, let me ask the question this way—how much faith do you have in God?

What’s the difference in the way you answered the question the first time?

Allow a few responses from students. Share a personal experience of how faith has impacted your life.

Now, let’s read James 1:2-3.

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.

In these verses, we learn that our faith can be “tested” when trouble comes our way.

Ask: How do trials and tough times “test” your faith?

Allow a few responses from students. Share a personal story of when your faith was tested.

Think about this—If your history teacher gives you a test at school, you will have the opportunity to show how well you’ve been learning and paying attention to what you were taught.

Now, for some people, tests are really hard.

Maybe, when the time comes, they get a brain freeze and can’t remember anything.

Or, they get really confused and can’t recall everything they have learned.

Can any of you relate?

That experience can be really frustrating, but every once in a while, you might have a teacher who understands and will allow you to take a test again to see if you can do better.

Think of Jesus as that teacher.

He will allow us to be tested in areas of our faith, but He isn't waiting for us to fail.

Jesus gives us the opportunity to demonstrate how we have grown in our faith and He wants to see us succeed, even if we failed the first time.

If we don't get it right away, He is a loving teacher who will encourage us and let us try again.

Ask: So, how can we prepare for "tests" of faith?

Allow a few responses from students. Share how you personally prepare your heart and mind for tests.

We prepare by studying God's Word and reading examples of others who have experienced tests and learned from them.

Pray and ask God to give you wisdom and knowledge so that when your faith is tested, you know what to do.

And talk to family, friends, and pastors who can help guide you through tests of faith.

God does not want us to face trials on our own.

He has placed people in our lives who can help us when we need it the most.

Think back to the history test.

How do you feel when you get an A, or even when you just pass the test?

It feels awesome!

Compare that to what the Bible says about troubles that test our faith.

It gives us an "opportunity for great joy."

When you are faced with tough times and you don't allow them to destroy your faith, you can say you have passed the test!

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON FRIENDSHIP

Bible: Galatians 6:2-3; Matthew 22:37-40

Bottom Line: True friends share joy and pain.

SUPPLIES

- 2 Rolls of paper towels
- 2 Rolls of toilet paper
- 2 Pencils
- 2 Paper airplanes
- 2 Cups—any size
- 2 Plastic forks
- 2 Books
- 2 Styrofoam plates
- 2, 2-liter drinks
- 2 Plastic Bags

GAME PREP

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

Give each team a plastic bag containing the following items:

- Roll of paper towels
- Roll of toilet paper
- Pencil
- Paper airplane
- Cup
- Plastic fork
- Book
- Styrofoam plate
- A 2-liter drink

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Our game is not about how strong you are, but how well you can balance things.

The first person in your line will be given a plastic bag full of items.

They will take out the items and balance them in their hands/arms.

They can have assistance only from the person standing in line behind them.

When the first person on each team has successfully balanced all the items, the game will begin.

The first person will pass the balanced items to the person in line behind them.

If any items are dropped, then the person that dropped them will place all of the items on the floor and go to the back of their team's line.

The next person in line will pick up the items, with assistance from the person in line behind them, balance the items, and pass them to the person behind them.

The game will continue until all of the items make it to the last person in line, who will then take all the items to the front of the line.

If they drop any items while walking to the front of the line, they will have to go to the back of the line and try again.

When they make it to the front of the line, they will open the 2-liter drink and fill the cup they were carrying to the top and drink it.

The first team to successfully pass the items, run to the front, pour the drink and drink it, WINS!

TEACH

Say: That game was awesome!

You were great at balancing all of the ridiculous things we gave you to carry.

Imagine how much more difficult that game would have been if we would not have allowed the person behind you to help you out.

We really need each other!

Here's a random question.

Did you know that a horse can pull about 3 times it's weight?

Anyone want to guess how much that is?

It's about 2,500 pounds.

Horses are pretty strong—at least stronger than most of us.

But, listen to this.

In 1924, a pair of Shire draft horses pulled 50 tons—that's 100,000 pounds or 20,000 pounds *more* than the weight of a semi-truck.

That's absolutely incredible!

And it's a great example of what we're talking about today—sharing the load each of us carries.

Read Galatians 6:2 (NLT).

“Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.”

God desires us to live in community with each other, to have people that we share life with.

It's His plan.

If you live life all by yourself, you can't carry someone else's burdens.

So, let's agree we need friends in our lives.

And having friends is about more than what you can get out of a friendship—it's really about what you can give.

Sure, friends are great to hang out with, talk, laugh, and cry with, but it's more than that.

The verse we just read says that when we care for each other, we “obey the law of Christ.”

What is the law of Christ?

Allow a few responses from students.

The law of Christ is found in Matthew.

Read Matthew 22:37-40 (NLT).

Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: “Love your neighbor as yourself” The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Jesus actually said it's equally important to love each other as much as you love God.

That's pretty important!

So, what does it mean to share each other's burdens?

Allow a few responses from students.

True friends understand that you support each other through joy and trials.

But, sharing someone's burden isn't easy—it takes time, effort, and sacrifice.

That's why after Paul tells us to share each other's burden, he follows up with this...

Read Galatians 6:3.

If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

I want to share an example of extreme selflessness.

In 2009, Dave Hartstock, a skydiving instructor, was in the middle of a 13,000-foot-high tandem jump when he realized that neither of his two parachutes would open all the way.

He had jumped out of the plane with Shirley, a grandmother and first-time skydiver, and found himself having to make a really quick and hard decision.

Although his brain was racing and he was panicking, at the last minute, he was able to rotate his body so that he could cushion Shirley's fall when they hit the ground.

Dave's quick thinking saved Shirley's life, but he suffered lifelong consequences of his selfless action.

Shirley made a speedy recovery because of Dave's sacrifice.

But, Dave is now permanently paralyzed from the neck down and requires help to do everything in life.

When asked if he would still do the same thing after knowing what would happen to him, he said, "Absolutely. Better me than her."

Dave made that sacrifice, essentially, for a stranger.

Most of us will never have to make that kind of choice for even our closest friends.

What types of burdens do our friends carry that we could share with them?

Allow a few responses from students.

Here are a few reasons why sharing our burdens with each other is important:

1. Sharing our burdens reminds us of the example Jesus set for us as He lived His life on earth.

Jesus traveled from place to place responding to the needs of the people—He was empathetic and caring.

He even took on the sins of the entire world when He died on the cross—that is the ultimate example of sharing each other's burdens.

2. Sharing our burdens reminds us to rely on God's strength and not our own.

Occasionally, in the New Testament, we read that Jesus went away to spend time in prayer with God.

When we share other's burdens, it's important to rely on God's wisdom and strength so we can point our friends to Him and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

3. Sharing our burdens reminds us to look beyond ourselves and care for others.

It's easy to become self-absorbed and pre-occupied with our own problems—that's the norm in our culture.

When we focus on caring about the needs of others, we become less selfish and sometimes our own troubles don't seem as bad.

I want to challenge you to take a step in your friendships toward sharing each other's burdens.

And, remember that true friends share joy and pain.

YOUTH GROUP GAME – GOD IS WITH YOU

Bible: Psalm 121:8 (NLT)

Bottom Line: God is with you wherever you go.

SUPPLIES

- Backpacks (one per team)
- Juice boxes (one per student)
- Orange cones
- Garbage can

GAME PREP

This game requires a large amount of space and can be played in or outdoors.

Divide students into two teams of equal size.

If you have more than twenty students, create teams of ten or less, and make as many as you can.

Give each team an empty backpack.

After determining the number of students on each team, place one juice box for each person on the team inside each backpack.

Use cones to designate a start and finish line.

From the start to the finish line should be twice the length of a team if they were laying on the floor, side-by-side, in plank position.

Place a garbage can at the finish line.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: It's time to go back to school... not right now, but we're going to play a game to get us ready.

A backpack is vital to your daily school life.

Without it, you become that person stumbling down the hallway dropping their books everywhere.

So, in this game, your team's backpack is essential.

When I say, GO, everyone on your team will lay down in plank position, side by side, except for the person at the end of your team's line.

The first person in line on each team should be laying on the start line.

There should be no space in between each person on your team – you have to squeeze next to each other.

The person at the end of your team's line will grab your team's backpack, run to the front of their team's line, open the backpack, and pull out a juice box.

They will drink the juice box as fast as they can, put their backpack on again, and dump the empty juice box in the garbage can at the finish line.

Then, they will run back to their team, lay down in plank position, take off the backpack and pass it from one person to the next down the line (while everyone remains in plank position).

When the last person in line receives the backpack, they will run to the front of the line and the relay race.

The first team to cross the finish line with their team's backpack – wins!

If a team finishes all of their juice boxes and still hasn't reached the finish line, have them continue the relay race with just the backpack.

TEACH

Say: During a typical school day, your backpack goes with you wherever you go.

If you lay it down and can't find it for even just a few minutes, it's instant panic – there goes your phone, books, homework, lunch... everything.

When you find it again – instant relief!

Maybe you have never thought about how important your backpack is, but it is the carrier of everything you need to be successful in school.

Your relationship with God and His presence in your life is a million times more vital to your daily life than your backpack, but sometimes we forget that God is with us... all the time, everywhere we go.

Read Psalm 121:8.

The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.

This chapter in the Book of Psalms is known as "the traveler's psalm."

In your Bible, there might be a title above this chapter that says "a song of ascents" which means "a song for a journey to a higher place."

Most travel in Bible times was on foot, and people would often walk up to 20 miles a day while on a journey.

The roads were dangerous - you could have been robbed, beaten, or even killed while traveling alone or with your family.

How comforting it would be during those times to know that God is watching over you now and forever.

Life is a journey.

From the time you enter Kindergarten until you graduate, you will spend at least 2,340 days in school.

So, right now, a large part of your "journey" is happening at school, but you are not on the journey alone because God is with you.

God isn't up in Heaven, withdrawn from your life. He is right there with you.

So, knowing God is with you should take away your fears and give you faith to be strong and courageous in how you represent God to those around you.

You might lose your backpack throughout the day, but you never have to wonder where God is because He is with you.

As you walk through your school's doors every day, remember that you're never alone.

When you pick up your backpack, let that remind you that you carry God with you everywhere you go.

And as you journey throughout your school day, you can be bold and have faith because God is watching out for you.

God is with you wherever you go.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON GOD'S GUIDANCE

Bible: Proverbs 16:9; Psalm 119:105

Bottom Line: God guides us in our everyday life, one step at a time, as we follow Him.

SUPPLIES

- Three "Connect 4" Game Sets
- Three extra sets of checkers that are a different color from the two colors in the Connect 4 sets
 - Most checkers come in black and red
 - Some new game sets for Connect 4 include a yellow set
 - If you need a different color for the third set, you can search Amazon, collect old checkers, or purchase some new ones and use paint to make them whatever color you want
- One, 6 or 8-foot Table
- Six Chairs
- Background Music
- For the lesson portion, you will need pre-printed copies of Proverbs 16:9 and Psalm 119:105.

GAME PREP

Set up a 6 or 8-foot table with three "Connect 4" stands sitting side-by-side.

On each long side of the table, place three chairs - each facing one of the stands.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Divide your group into three teams and have them line-up in three single-file lines.

Let each group know which color checker represents their team.

For this game, the first two people in each line will have a seat at the table.

They cannot sit side-by-side or across from someone on the same team.

The purpose of the game is to connect as many checkers as they can, in a row horizontally, vertically, or diagonally of their color.

Defensively, their goal is to block as many connections from the other two teams as possible.

Players can only use checkers of the color assigned to their team.

When the music starts, they will take turns putting in one checker at a time.

You can only play one checker at a time.

You have to wait for your opponent to drop in a checker before you can add another one.

This all sounds pretty familiar, but, of course, we are spicing things up a bit.

When the music stops, everyone must move one seat to the right.

If you are in the farthest seat on the right, you will go to the end of your team's line and a new person from your team will take the empty seat on the far left.

When the music begins, play resumes.

At the end of the game, the team that has the most connections of four or more checkers of their color, in a row, will win.

If there is a tie, the one with the longest connection(s) in the tie will be the champion.

Say: Ready? Go!

Have someone play upbeat music in the background.

Randomly stop the music at intervals of 10-30 seconds.

At the end of the game, congratulate your champion!

Remember to look at all three boards.

Whichever color has the most connections of four or more in a row will be your winner.

If there is a tie, then see which one has the longest connection in a row.

TEACH

Say: Many of you have probably played Connect 4 before.

But, I doubt any of you have played it like that!

The easiest round of that game was when you were the first one to play and you could drop your checker anywhere.

A new beginning feels good - the beginning of the year, and the beginning of a new school year are always filled with hope because you have a fresh start.

But, today, we're going to take this opportunity to check-in and see if the steps you are taking in your everyday life lead you towards God's best for your life.

Hand out the pre-printed copies of Proverbs 16:9 and Psalm 119:105 to the students and ask for a volunteer to read each of the verses when they are to be read during the lesson.

Read Proverbs 16:9.

If I was to summarize this verse I would say, "We can make all the plans we want, but God shows us each step along the way."

So, that makes me wonder: If I want to follow God's lead in my life, how do I know which steps he wants me to take?

Allow a few responses from students.

Let's think about the game for a minute.

It would have been awesome if before the game started, I had given you a picture of how the completed stand full of checkers was going to look and you could just drop in your checkers where they needed to go.

And what if I had even shown you where to drop the checkers for each individual round... that would have been more like me helping you one step at a time.

Check out this next verse where we find out exactly how God does this for us.

Have a student read the verse.

Read Psalm 119:105.

The author of this Psalm, or song, in the Bible says that "God's Word," or the Bible, guides us.

In this passage, the "lamp" or "light," is like a modern-day flashlight.

He emphasizes this by saying the same thing a little differently – It's a "lamp to guide my feet" and it's a "light for my path."

Some of us wish God gave us a big spotlight.

Maybe you've started thinking about what you will do someday after you graduate high school.

It would be amazing if God gave us specifics about our future - like telling us what career we should choose, who we should marry, where we should live, etc.

But, here's what God does... He shows you how to live your everyday life, one day at a time.

And as you follow Him every step of the way, He leads you.

Following God's guidance and making wise choices in our everyday lives is like making connections in the game we played - getting our checkers lined up in a row.

How do you get a long streak of connecting what God wants you to do multiple days in a row?

You spend time in the Bible so that you will be able to see how God is guiding you, one step at a time.

So, remember - God shows us in the Bible how to live our lives one day at a time so that no matter what our big plans are, we'll live in such a way that we honor God and help others get to know Him.

Let's commit to spending more time reading the Bible so we can live more days the way God wants us to.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON GOD'S LOVE

Bible: Ephesians 3:16-17

Bottom Line: As you are rooted in your faith, you will experience the fullness of God's love.

SUPPLIES

- 2 Packs of 10-inch flour tortillas
- 2 Bags of whole carrots
- 2 Large plates
- Painter's tape

GAME PREP

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

Use painter's tape to create a line for each team to line up behind. This will be the "start line."

Then, use the painter's tape to make a line about 5 feet in front of the line you already created. This will be the "goal line."

Give each team a pack of tortillas, a bag of carrots, and a large plate.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: How many of you enjoy a good ol' carrot burrito every once in a while?

Okay, I know it's not really a thing, but it is for the game we're about to play.

Each of your teams have been given a bag of tortillas, a bag of carrots, and a large plate.

Go ahead and place your team's plate on the start line in front of your team.

The goal of this game is to create five "carrot burritos."

Here's how you will do that:

The first person in line will toss a tortilla, like a frisbee, past the goal line.

If you don't make it that far, then you will fetch it and bring it back to the next teammate who will try to throw it past the goal line.

Once your team has landed a tortilla over the goal line, the next person will grab a carrot and either toss, roll, or toss it and hope it rolls on top of your team's tortilla.

If you are successful in landing your team's carrot somewhere onto your team's tortilla, you will run down, create a carrot burrito, and place it on your team's plate.

You will take turns in line tossing tortillas and carrots.

The first team to successfully create 5 carrot burritos wins!

TEACH

Say: I don't know about you, but I really love a good burrito.

Ask: Does anyone have a favorite kind of burrito or Mexican food that you really love?

Allow a few responses from students.

The "World's Largest Burrito" was created in 2010 and is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records.

It was made of one single tortilla and was filled with fish, onions, chile peppers, and refried beans.

And it took over 3,000 volunteers to make it.

Ask: Does anyone want to guess how much it weighed?

Allow a few guesses from students.

Believe it or not, it weighed 12,785 pounds!

When I hear interesting things that people have achieved, I always think, *why would anyone take the time to do that?*

Why would someone set out to create the world's largest burrito?

Maybe it comes down to how much they really love whatever that thing is and are willing to go to great lengths to show the world.

That's what we're talking about today—love.

Specifically, God's love.

Throughout time, people have written songs, poems, books, and stories proclaiming God's love for us and trying to express their own love for God.

As humans, it's difficult to understand the great and unending love that God has for us, which He has gone to great lengths to show.

But, let's take a look at what the Bible has to say about experiencing this love.

Read Ephesians 3:16-17.

I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.

Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

These verses tell us that, as we are rooted in our faith, we will experience the fullness of God's love.

So, let's break these verses down a little bit.

At the beginning of verse 16, we read that God has unlimited resources that can provide us with His strength and power.

He's never going to run out or get tired of giving us His strength.

Next, the apostle Paul, author of Ephesians, writes that "Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in Him."

Ask: What does that mean that "Christ will make His home" in our hearts?

Allow a few responses from students.

Well, think about this: what makes being at home so much different than being any other place?

At home, we are comfortable, we feel welcomed and like people want us there, and we can be ourselves, with people who understand us and love us.

Christ can only make Himself at home in a heart that truly wants Him there.

Ask: How do we demonstrate that we want Christ to dwell in our hearts?

Allow a few responses from students.

We invite Him in and welcome Him in the form of asking Him to be the center of what we say and do.

If we don't ask Him in, He won't be there.

Then, we talk to Him, include Him in everything, and ask Him to help us live the way He desires us to live.

The verse says He will make His home in our hearts as we “trust in Him.”

Ask: How do we learn to trust in Jesus?

Allow a few responses from students. Share how you have come to trust God in your own life.

Have you ever told your parents you would do something and then you either forget or just choose not to do it?

Like your homework or cleaning your room?

God never does that. Ever.

When we read God’s promises in the Bible, we can know that He will do exactly what He said He will do.

So, as we live our lives for God and see His faithfulness to us, we can trust Him more because He will never let us down.

When God answers prayer, gives us strength, or comforts us during tough times, we know He’s with us.

Next, the verse says, “Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong.”

Ask: How can you become rooted in God’s love?

Allow a few responses from students.

We become rooted in God’s love by talking with and praying to God, reading the Bible, and asking God to lead you so you do what He wants and not just what you want to do.

Then, we can fully experience God’s love.

Have you ever tried to love someone who won’t love you back?

Or maybe someone tried to show love to you, but you rejected them?

People experience genuine love in neither of those situations because it must come from both people.

God loves us no matter what. He loves everyone, even when we don’t love Him.

But when we welcome God's love into our lives because He dwells in our heart and we are living according to His will and not our own, then we can experience the fullness of His love.

I want to encourage you to take a look at your heart and see if you are welcoming God's love in your life.

God's love is always there.

Accept it and welcome Him into your life today.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON HUMILITY

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.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON IDENTITY

Bible: Colossians 3:1-3 (NLT)

Bottom Line: You discover your true identity by understanding who God is and by becoming who He made you to be.

Supplies:

- Index cards
- Pen
- Bucket

GAME PREP

Write each students' name down on an index card—one name per card.

Place all of the cards in a bucket.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Today, we're talking about identity—who we really are.

This game is going to give us the opportunity to get to know each other a little better, and see how well we already know each other.

In this bucket, I have each person's name written down on an index card.

I am going to pull out two index cards with names on them.

Next, I will turn my back to all of you and ask that each of you come up to me, one at a time, so I can show you the name on a card.

I will show some of you one name, and some of you the other name.

Do not tell anyone whose name you saw written down, or you will be out of the game.

When I say, "Go," you will have 3 minutes to ask each other questions about the name they were shown.

The goal of this game is to separate yourselves into two groups—one group for each name.

Oh, and throughout this game, you cannot talk.

If you talk, then you are out of the game.

That means if the person you are trying to figure out wears glasses, then you will hold your hands up to your eyes to demonstrate that they wear glasses.

If they sing, then maybe you would pretend to hold a microphone—anything you can think of to identify the person whose name you saw **without pointing to them**.

Just do your best to impersonate the person whose name was on the card and form a group with the people who had the same person.

You will have 3 minutes to form your groups.

If you have not joined a group by the end of the 3 minutes, you are out.

I will then count to 3 and ask everyone in your group to say the name of the person whose name was on the card.

I will do this for both groups.

If you were not in the correct group, you are out—you need to be honest.

After we have eliminated the people who are out, I will draw 2 more cards and we will continue to play.

Continue to play as long as you would like, or until there are only a few people left, then declare a winning team.

You are assuming that the majority of people in one group will have seen the same name.

If you have a round where you can't tell which group was which, then just do that round over again.

If many people are not being eliminated in each round, then lower the time allowance to 2 minutes per round, or one minute per round, etc. . . .

TEACH

Ask: Was it easy or hard to guess who everyone was trying to impersonate in each round?

Allow a few responses from students.

It was interesting to see how you described each other without using words.

I'm going to tell you something today that you might already realize—You're at the age that people are starting to ask, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

And they expect a *real* answer.

At your age, you can no longer say you want to be a "butterfly/cheerleader/doctor."

When you were younger, that was cute—but now, your grandparents and teachers want to hear something more profound that lets them know you don't plan on laying on a couch in your parent's basement forever.

Ask: How do you feel when people ask about your plans for the future?

Do you have something to say, or do you just give them a blank stare?

Allow a few responses from students. Share your personal experiences of how you felt during that time in your life—did you know what you wanted to "be"?

Here's the thing, people are going to ask you questions about your future plans for the rest of your life:

- Are you dating anyone?
- When are you getting married?
- Are you going to have kids? And then, when are you going to have more kids?
- When will you retire from your job?

It never ends!

But, there's something important you need to remember throughout every stage of life—who *you are* has nothing to do with what your career is, who you are married to, or how many kids you have.

Your identity, or how you view who you *really* are, should be wrapped up in who you are in Christ.

Read Colossians 3:1-3. (NLT)

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.

Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.

Ask: Have you ever known someone who has gone through an "identity crisis?"

That typically means at some point, they took a look at their life and thought, “I have no idea who I am anymore.”

Even at your age, you might already feel like that.

Maybe you’ve gone through some changes in your personal life, your family, at school, or in your friendships that have made you question what you’re all about.

It’s okay!

Everyone works through some form of those feelings in their lifetime.

It’s actually very normal.

That might be why Paul (and possibly Timothy) addresses this topic to the Church in Colossae.

He’s reminding these believers that they have died to this life and now, their real life is hidden with Christ in God.

Ask: So, what do you think this verse means by, “hidden with Christ in God”?

Allow a few responses from students. Share how your own life changed when you made a commitment to Christ.

Our identity, our very own life, is no longer ours, but is found in who Christ is and what He has done—it’s an amazing gift to us.

No longer should we struggle to discover who we are, because our character and whole self is wrapped up in who Jesus is.

That is, unless you want to struggle—and some people choose to do so.

Ask: Why do you think someone would continue to struggle with identity, even after they have given their life to the Lord? How is that possible?

Allow a few responses from students. Share your own personal struggle with allowing God to help you with your identity in Him.

Answer: Because we are human, and throughout our lives we will continually have to **make the choice** to be who God wants us to be, and not just follow our own path.

The whole world is telling you who you should be.

We hear it on social media, and at times, it can seem to bombard us every time we turn around.

Your friends and loved ones have opinions about what decisions you should make, what career path you should take, and on and on.

And while we need their godly guidance, it really comes down to a choice you will make for your own life.

So, take some of the pressure off of yourself by remembering the only way to figure out who you really are is by understanding who God is and by becoming who He made you to be.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON LOVING OTHERS

Bible: Romans 13:8

Bottom Line: When we love others, God's love is shown through us.

SUPPLIES

- Paper (one per person)
- Pen (one per person)
- 4 containers (one per team)

GAME PREP

Divide students into four teams of equal size.

Choose a leader from each team to stand at the front of his or her team.

Before beginning the game, have each student (not a team leader) write down one of his or her favorite things (food, activity, place, or movie).

Collect all the papers and place them into the corresponding team's container.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Let's talk about some things that you love.

Each person on your team has been given a piece of paper and asked to write down one favorite thing.

It can be a food, or movie, place, or activity.

Next, collect the from each student and put into their team's container (bowl, hat, bucket, etc.)

For each round, without looking, I will draw one piece of paper from each of the team's containers.

I will read each of the four objects, one from each team.

Then, I will ask each team leader, which of those four objects he/she LOVES more than the other three items.

If the team leader chooses an answer that came from his or her own team, then that team receives three points.

If one of the other three team leaders chooses the correct answer from another team, his or her team will receive one point.

If the team leader chooses an answer from the incorrect team, that team receives no points.

The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

The key to winning is for students to write down things that their team leader would like, so that their team leader will choose their answers.

For instance, if the team leader loves Star Wars, the team member might write down "Darth Vader."

TEACH

Say: Let's admit it right now. It's a lot easier to love "things" than it is to love people.

Loving other people can be hard.

It's pretty easy to love our family, our friends, and people at church.

But what about loving people that we don't know?

First of all, why would we even want to do that?

And second, why does it even matter?

Believe it or not, people had a hard time loving other people even back in the Apostle Paul's day.

Let's read what the Apostle Paul wrote about to the church in Rome:

Read Romans 13:8.

Owe nothing to anyone—except for your obligation to love one another. If you love your neighbor, you will fulfill the requirements of God's law.

Ask: How many of you have ever borrowed something from one of the people in here?

Did you return it or pay it back?

Allow a few responses from students after each question.

Paul says here that we are obligated, as Christians, to love one another.

He didn't say we *should* love one another or that it would be a *good idea* to love one another.

He said we are *obligated* to love one another.

And he didn't say to just *tolerate* one another.

Loving others is a different story.

In Luke chapter 10, Jesus tells a religious lawyer that he should not only love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind, but also that he should love his neighbor.

The man, being a lawyer, wanted clarification.

He asked Jesus directly, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied by relating the story of The Good Samaritan.

Samaritans were considered outcasts in Jewish society, and to associate with them, much less "love" them, would have been unheard of.

According to Jesus, loving other people is one of the most important things that sets Jesus' followers apart from those that don't know Him.

Think about that student you know who is always picked on and made fun of because they act differently or maybe don't like the things that you do.

Just like the church in Rome that Paul was writing to, it is our obligation to love others in the same way that Jesus Christ loved us.

Paul also famously said, "...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

What greater love is there than that?

When we love others, the love that God showed us in sending Jesus to Earth is shown through our lives.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON MATERIALISM

Bible: 1 John 2:16 (NLT)

Bottom Line: We should crave the things of God more than material possessions.

SUPPLIES

- Timer

GAME PREP

Students will play this elimination game as individuals.

There are no needed supplies for the game besides a timer that the leader will use throughout the game.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: I think we're a pretty observant group of people, but we're about to test ourselves to see if that's true or not!

You will play this game as individuals; there are no teams.

When the game begins, I will put 20 seconds on this timer, which is not a very long amount of time.

I have a list of things that you will have to look for, find, and place your hand on before time is up. For example, I might say, "a red shoelace."

Only one person can touch each item, so you will want to be the first person to get to that item.

For example, there might only be two red shoelaces in this room.

You want to be the first person to put your hand on it.

If you are touching the item I called out at the end of the 20 seconds, you stay in the game.

I will need to take a look at each thing you're touching, so stand still until I can verify that you are touching a legitimate item.

If you are still running around, trying to find something, or are the second person to reach for an item, then you are out of the game.

The last person left in the game is the winner!

LIST OF ITEMS

- Something shiny
- Something that can be tied
- Something with the letter “E”
- Something that makes noise (other than people)
- Something you can eat
- Something you can stand on
- Something expensive
- Something that costs less than a dollar
- Something you can carry
- Something you can plug into the wall
- Something blue
- Something made of metal

TEACH

Say: Until we started playing that game, some of us might not have realized how many “things” are in this room.

But, when we started to look around, it became evident that there is a lot in here!

Say: Raise your hand if you have ever heard of the tv show, “Hoarders.”

There have been over 100 episodes of this reality show that features people who have accumulated so many things that they are no longer able to function in their own homes.

Typically, each episode begins with an intervention from a family member or friend who is concerned for the “hoarder’s” well-being.

Unfortunately, as the show follows-up with people a few months or years down the road, many times, these people have fallen back into the same life patterns.

Hoarding is a disorder in which someone cannot control the desire to collect “things.”

The problem of “hoarding” is relatively new as we have become a society where even those who are not financially wealthy can still collect so much stuff that their lives are negatively impacted.

Studies have shown that 6% of the American population can be considered hoarders.

That is over 19 million people!

If we are honest, most of us own more than we will ever need and use—even people your age.

Think about how many clothes you own or how many toys your siblings have.

The truth is that we have a lot of stuff!

So, how did we get to this point, and how does it become a problem for so many people?

Ask: Are you able to decide the difference between things that are a necessity and things that aren't? How do you choose?

Allow a few responses from students.

Share how we can prioritize what we need and want in our own lives.

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

Read 1 John 2:16.

For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions.

These are not from the Father but are from this world.

It takes a lot of self-control to say, "I have enough" of anything.

To "crave" something means that we have a strong desire that consumes our mind until we obtain whatever it is.

Ask: What are some things that people "crave"?

Allow a few responses from students.

Those were great answers!

So, things like money, food, relationships... none of those are wrong until you crave them more than anything else, including God.

You might be thinking, "I would never want a new pair of jeans more than my relationship with God."

And maybe you won't, but when obtaining something or being with someone becomes the most important thing in our lives, then we have allowed whatever it is to become greater than our desire for the things of God.

That's why the Bible verse we read is so important.

John writes this letter to Christians because it was a real issue in 100 AD. It is still an issue today.

Why? Because we were born with a need to fill a void in our hearts and lives.

What we don't understand is that this void can only be filled by having a relationship with God.

Many people try to fill the void with anything they can get their hands on—money, cars, clothes—but God wants us to turn to Him to fulfill our earthly and spiritual desires.

Then, He will give us what we need.

When we have what we need, and we realize that those things have come from God, we can't take the credit for what we possess.

Everything belongs to God.

When we realize that, it's easier to give things away (give them back to God) or share them with others.

Materialism will consume our thoughts and actions if not kept in check.

Don't misunderstand.

Things themselves aren't bad, but when your life is focused on getting, loving, or buying things that are temporary, rather than gaining more wisdom or growing your walk with God, then you are focused on material things.

It is the focus that causes problems.

Challenge yourself to consider why you want things.

What's your motive?

What will having that thing do for you?

What void in your life are you trying to fill?

The more you seek after the things of God, the less you care about how much money you have or how many clothes, shoes, or cars you own.

Instead, your focus becomes, “What can I give to others?”

How can I help other people?

What do I have to offer the world through my relationship with God?”

So... what is your focus?

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON PRAYER

Bible: Psalm 145:18

Bottom Line: When we talk to God, He hears our prayers.

SUPPLIES

- Bucket
- Pieces of paper with words/phrases (listed below)
- Prize for the winning team

GAME PREP

Divide students into two teams of equal size and have them sit down with their team.

Have a leader on hand to keep time for each round and keep score.

Write down each of the following words/phrases on pieces of paper and place in a bucket:

- Artist
- Mom
- Ironing a shirt
- Bicycle
- Washing a dog
- Riding a motorcycle
- Ice skating
- Scuba diving
- Baking cookies
- Flying a kite
- Fishing in a boat
- Mowing a yard

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: Today, we have a fun twist on the game of charades.

Call one person from each team to stand with you in front of the students.

In this bucket, I have words and phrases that you will be acting out—just like in charades.

But, we're going to do a couple of things differently.

First of all, both of you will be acting out the same word or phrase at the same time, so you could actually be helping the other team guess the word.

As both of you are acting it out, both of your teams will be able to guess what the word or phrase is.

Here's how scoring will go:

If your team guesses correctly in under one minute, you get 5 points.

If you guess correctly in under 2 minutes, you get 3 points.

If you guess correctly in under 3 minutes, you get 2 points.

In 5 minutes or less, you get 1 point.

At the five-minute mark, if no one has guessed correctly, that round is over and no one gets a point.

Here's a twist: Whatever amount of points your team wins for that round will be deducted from the other team.

If you don't have points to take away, you will have a negative score.

Oh! And here's the last twist.

Each of our charades actors will not be facing you.

They will have their backs to the audience!

So, I suggest that both of you use very large motions and your whole body to act out each of these words.

The team with the most points at the end of the game wins!

TEACH

Say: I'm not sure we could have made it more difficult to communicate to each other.

That was really tough!

Especially since you were really trying to get your message through to your team.

Ask: Have you ever had something exciting happen and you are dying to tell your friend, except they won't text you back or answer their phone?

Allow a few responses from students.

That has happened to me quite a few times and it can be frustrating!

Why?

Because when you want to talk to someone, you expect them to be ready to talk to you in an instant—even if that isn't a realistic expectation.

But, what we can't reasonably expect from each other is an actual promise that God gives us.

Read Psalm 145:18.

"The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth."

Our minds can't fully grasp the fact that the Creator of everything is close to us.

Why?

One reason is because we can't see Him.

Also, people rarely hear the audible voice of God.

And we can't physically touch God.

So, it's not difficult to understand why people question if God can hear their prayers.

Ask: What would you say to someone who questions whether or not God hears us when we pray?

Allow a few responses from students. Share a personal story about a time when God answered a specific prayer that you prayed.

Let's talk about the second part of that verse, *"to all who call on him in truth."*

Have you ever done something nice for your siblings or parents and their response is, "What do you want?"

Your family knows you—the *real* you.

And when they question your motives, that might mean you have been insincere in the past, so they are expecting that behavior again.

In our prayer life, God wants our sincerity and the truth.

He *really* knows the real you—your motives and desires.

He just wants you to be sincere.

That means when you pray, don't try to be someone you aren't, or use fancy words and showy prayers.

Just talk to God because He wants to talk to you.

Ask: Do you think people try to impress God?

How would it benefit someone to be dishonest in their relationship with God?

Allow a few responses from students.

If we can't come to God in truth, then we most likely aren't being truthful in other areas of our lives.

Because there is nothing we can hide from God, we are only deceiving ourselves when we are dishonest with God.

Prayer is an opportunity for us to become the best version of ourselves as we become more like God, and that begins with being authentic when we talk to God.

You see, the act of praying is as simple as just talking to God.

But what it does in us, and how it builds our relationship with God, is deep and has profound results in our lives.

We can develop a closeness with God as we spend time with Him in prayer.

We gain confidence in our faith knowing that God hears and answers us.

So, today, I want to encourage you to remember, when we talk to God, He hears our prayers.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON TEMPTATION

Bible: Hebrews 3:12 (The Passion Translation)

Bottom Line: We can encourage each other in the faith as we fight against temptation.

SUPPLIES

- Pool noodle
- Vegetable oil
- Pack of baby wipes
- Bandana
- Painter's tape
- 3 orange cones

GAME PREP

This game uses vegetable oil, which can leave stains on the carpet.

You can either place a tarp on the floor before the game begins, play the game outdoors, or risk it and clean up after the game is over.

Use two orange cones to mark a starting point for each team.

Use the painter's tape to create a long line on the floor about 10-feet in front of the cones.

Place the remaining orange cone in the middle of the tape line.

Tie the bandana around the middle of the pool noodle – leave it dangling from the pool noodle.

Cover the entire pool noodle with vegetable oil – this will make it slippery to hold.

Divide students into two teams of equal size and have them form lines behind their team's cone.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

Say: This game is a fun twist on the traditional game, "tug-of-war."

You have played it before, but I promise you have never played it this way.

Our “rope” will be this pool noodle – it’s a little bit easier on your hands than a rope, but we don’t want to make it too easy for our game.

So, we have covered the pool noodle in vegetable oil to make it a little difficult to handle.

Our group has been divided into two teams.

When I say GO, the first person in each team’s line will run down to the cone and grab one end of the pool noodle.

If you reach the pool noodle before the other team, you can grab it, pull it to your team's side, and that round is over.

The winner of that round will run back to their team and get in line again.

The person from the other team who didn’t reach the pool noodle in time is out of the game and they will go sit down.

If both players run down and grab the pool noodle at the same time, then tug-of-war will begin.

The first person to pull the bandana on the pool noodle over the cone and to their team’s side – wins that round.

The winning team member will go back to their team, and the losing team member will go sit down.

The game is over when there are no players left on one team.

The team with remaining players wins the game.

For each round, I will say GO, so both teams have the same gameplay advantage.

After the game, allow students a minute to clean their oily hands with baby wipes.

TEACH

Say: Tug-of-war is a game that’s been around for hundreds of years.

From 1900-1920, tug-of-war was part of the Olympic Games.

Believe it or not, it was at the center of controversy at the 1908 Olympics.

Great Britain found a way to give their team an advantage – their team wore enormous, heavy shoes.

In fact, their shoes weighed so much that they could hardly lift their feet from the ground.

In this particular match, they were competing against the United States who protested the unfair advantage.

When the Olympic Committee allowed Great Britain's team to compete anyway, the United States team withdrew from the competition.

They recognized that it would have been too difficult to win, so they didn't even try.

The game of tug-of-war is an excellent example of what temptation looks like in our lives.

This struggle exists for every person that has ever walked on planet earth.

Temptation is the desire to do something, especially something that is wrong.

As a follower of Jesus, you have the desire to do what God wants you to do, but the desire to do wrong never entirely goes away.

So, that's what produces the tug-of-war in our hearts.

Read Hebrews 3:12.

So search your hearts every day, my brothers and sisters, and make sure that none of you has evil or unbelief hiding within you.

For it will lead you astray, and make you unresponsive to the living God.

This verse encourages us to be aware of the tug-of-war that happens in our soul.

And not only to be aware that it's there but to ask God to reveal these struggles to you.

If not dealt with, your sinful nature will lead you away from God.

Ask: So, how are you aware of what is happening in your heart?

How do you know if you are close to God or close to giving in to temptation?

Allow a few responses from students.

One of the keys to being aware of what's going on in your heart is to know what to do when you are tempted, and even what to do when you give into temptation.

That's when one of the greatest gifts God has given to help us in our faith comes into play – each other.

Not only do we need others, but we need others to encourage us every day.

Why? Because temptation is tough and it's even tougher if you try to face it alone – without God's help and without each other.

The Christian life is not a quick walk in the park.

It is a long-distance marathon, and we need each other to go the distance.

So, we are called to encourage one another daily so that when we are tempted to sin, we aren't struggling alone.

Think back to the story of Great Britain... in their game of tug-of-war, they came up with a plan that gave them an advantage – heavy shoes.

In the tug-of-war in your soul, your "heavy shoes" are God and the encouragement of others.

With this advantage, when you are tempted, you will be able to overcome and win.

Temptation will never go away, but it is awesome to know that when we are tempted, God will never leave you and neither should those who love and encourage you in the faith.

YOUTH GROUP GAME ON WORRY

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.