

Playing the Game - Overview

A key part to playing a game (or at least playing well) is understanding the rules. In order to have a successful outing on the field or rink, you have to not only learn how to play, but then actually put what you have learned into practice. So, how do we do this with our faith? How do we take what we've learned throughout the year so far and apply it to our lives?

Throughout this module we will be looking at the ways God has gifted us, the people and support network he has placed around us, the fruits of our labours, and the obstacles we might encounter along the way. Overall we hope to impart an understanding that God has equipped us to serve, values our service, and has made us ready to serve from the moment we believe.

Lesson 1, **Equipment**, looks at how difficult a task can be when we don't have the right equipment, but how God has gifted us to serve in a specific role in his ministry. We will examine the idea of spiritual gifts and hopefully impart a deeper understanding of what each person's gift might be.

Lesson 2, **Part of a Team**, discusses the importance of church unity. We are all one body in Christ, each with our own gifts and our own role that is meant to be fulfilled in partnership with the rest of the body. So how do we accomplish that? And where do you fit?

Lesson 3, **Fruit**, looks at how the church is portrayed to the world at large. If our identity is in Christ, then our lives should reflect that. People will know us by our fruit, so what kind of fruit are we producing?

Lesson 4, **Obstacles**, takes a serious look at ways in which Satan can derail our ministry and our lives. What kind of distractions get in our way? What strongholds does the

enemy have in our lives? This lesson not only addresses these issues but talks about strategies to overcome them.

Breathe

Module: PLAYING THE GAME

Lesson 1: EQUIPMENT

Objectives:

- Students will be able to define what are spiritual gifts and God-given abilities.
- Students will see that spiritual gifts can be used to cultivate relationships with God and other people.

Materials Needed

- At least 2 baseball bats. (Potentially several depending on group size)
- 1 football
- 2 hockey nets
- A pad of post-it notes
- Pens
- Optional: Bible dictionaries

Minds On

Divide the group into two teams and select two items of sports equipment (e.g. a baseball bat and a foot ball). Try playing a game of baseball using the football instead of a baseball. After a few minutes, switch it up and try playing a game of soccer using the football and the hockey nets. After a few more minutes switch it up again and try playing hockey with all three items (you might need more baseball bats, but you could sub in a broom, or a dust pan, or whatever you can find around the church).

Action

Prompt: It's difficult to play a sport or accomplish a task when we don't have the right equipment. It gets even harder when we are using the right piece of equipment, but in a completely wrong way! This week we will be looking at how God has equipped us to serve him and each other, and how we develop our relationship with God and each other by putting to use what he has given us in the way he intends.

Think/Pair/Share: Have students think for 1 min. about the following questions: What are "Spiritual Gifts"? How would you define them? Have students pair up with someone and share their answer. They should be prepared to share their partner's answer. After 2 min., ask for 3-4 people to share their partner's answer.

Read Philippians 1:6.

Back in their pairs, with this verse in mind, have students come up with a shared definition of spiritual gifts. Once they have their answer, they can write it on a post-it note and post it to the wall. Then see which answers overlap each other.

Leader's note: The suggested answer is, "Spiritual gifts are tools God gives us to finish what he's started."

Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

Leader's Note: If you don't feel comfortable addressing spiritual gifts with this passage, you can also use Romans 12:3-8.

Have each pair of students combine with another pair (i.e. groups of 4). Have them list all the spiritual gifts in the passage (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues) and a specific example of how it might be used today. (Give them 15 min. to do this.)

Leader's Note: You may want either Bible dictionaries or allow students to use online tools to find definitions for some of these.

Gather everyone to the large group. Have one group state which spiritual gift they found and what would their example be. See if any of the other groups have a kind of scenario. Then have the second group state the next spiritual gift; again, check with the other groups about any distinct scenarios they have. Continue until all the spiritual gifts are listed.

Consolidate/Debrief

Prompt: When God created humans, his Spirit breathed life into us. That's the same Spirit that gives us our gifts and walks with us each day. God calls all of us to serve him right where we are, no matter the circumstances. It's important to remember that he has equipped us to handle anything the world throws at us.

Breathe In: Have the students reflect introspectively on the spiritual gifts, what theirs is/are/might be, and why God might have given it to them.

Leader's Note: If some students are keen to discover what their spiritual gifts are, use the file "sga.xls" (from the "The Light In You" module in the "Shine" curriculum series available at www.cboqyouth.ca/curriculum) with this module to help assess that.

Breathe Out: Have students write out encouragement notes to each other (you may want to assign encouragement partners beforehand so that no one is left out). Challenge students to also encourage five people who they think could really use it either by phone, in person, by text or social media.

Close in Prayer.

Breathe

Module: PLAYING THE GAME

Lesson 2: PART OF A TEAM

Objectives:

- Students learn that we are meant to use our gifts as part of a unit.
- Students understand the importance of working together cooperatively.

Materials Needed

- 2-3 musicians and their instruments OR 2-3 different mp3 players with songs
- Bibles
- Chart paper, markers

Minds On

Start with a game called “The Human Knot”. If your group is big enough, divide into smaller groups of around 10. Have each group stand in a circle and cross their right hands across the circle to grasp hands with someone on the other side. Do this again with the left hands. Each person’s arms should be making an “X” and grasping the hands of someone across the circle. Now try and untie the knot! The only rule is that you cannot let go of the person’s hands you are holding!

Leader’s Note: If you would prefer a game with less physical contact, you might want to consider a different type of team based activity like a trivia contest. Have a prize lined up for the team that works best together. The point you are trying to communicate is that the group has to work together for them to be successful.

Next, invite 2 or 3 musicians to the front with their instruments. Ask them each to play their favourite worship song simultaneously (instruct them beforehand to each play a different song). Stop them as soon as you see fit.

Leader’s Note: If your group is lacking in musicians you could have people play their favourite songs on their phones or other means. The point is to cause a cacophony of people trying to do their own thing instead of working together.

Action

Prompt: During the first game (i.e. human knot) we saw how effective it was to work as a unit towards a common goal. We each wanted to untie the knot (or be the most knowledgeable team), and so we worked together, sometimes taking the lead, sometimes taking the back seat, until our goal was completed. In the second activity, we heard how it sounds when each person just does whatever they want without thinking what the other people are doing.

Have a volunteer read 1 Corinthians 12:21-31a.

Think/Pair/Share: In pairs, have students summarize the passage in one sentence. (e.g. “As the church, we all have different roles that function and complement each other.”)

In each pair, assign each student #1 or #2. Have all the 1s gather and the 2s gather. (If the group is too big, you can split them down into groups of 4). Within 5 minutes, have the 1s write down on chart different strategies to help a team work together well, and the 2s write down all the obstacles that keep a team from working together well. After 5 min., have each group trade papers. Then each group will check off the ones they agree with (and place an X next to the ones they don’t agree with). After 1 min., post both papers on the wall and compare the answers.

Prompt: Knowing what we know from our chart, what are some of the ways we can work together within the church to better accomplish God’s mission?

Have someone record their answers.

Leader’s note: You may want to e-mail students with this list after your session or post in online in some way.

(Optional) **Prompt:** The scripture we read talks about how you should not hold one gift as being better or more valuable than the rest; but it also says that we should “desire the greater gifts”(NIV). What’s the difference between desire and jealousy? How can we desire other spiritual gifts without thinking less of our own?

(You may want to leave it as a rhetorical question or you may want to take answers.)

Consolidate/Debrief

Prompt: The strength of the church is in the unity of the body of Christ. We won't always agree, we won't always get along, but at the end of the day we can encourage one another and use our gifts together in unity.

Have a volunteer read Hebrews 3:13.

Breathe In: Challenge students to read Hebrews 3:13 at least three times this week.

Breathe Out: Have students gather in a circle and have each person say why the person to their left is an important member of the group.

Close in prayer.

Breathe

Module: PLAYING THE GAME

Lesson 3: CHECKING THE SCORE

Objectives:

- Students will learn that faith cannot remain stagnant and a true relationship with Christ requires action.
- Students will understand that the “fruit” of our actions shows the world what kind of people Christians are.

Materials Needed

- Printed copies of Appendix A-E (or displayed via an overhead projector or LCD projector)
- Bibles
- Optional: copies of Appendix F
- Recipe cards
- Chart paper, markers
- A deck of playing cards in order (i.e. 2s, 3s, 4s, etc.)

Minds On

As an ice breaker game you could play “Fruit Basket”. Have everyone grab a chair and sit in a circle. There should be one less chair than there are players. Each person is assigned the name of a fruit (apple, orange, banana, pineapple, Guava, Dragon Fruit, etc.; feel free to be creative with the types of fruit). The player without a chair stands in the middle and calls out the name of a fruit. Everyone with that fruit name stands up and runs to a new seat. Whoever is left without a seat is the new caller. If the caller yells “FRUIT BASKET!” everyone needs to get up and switch seats. When switching seats, you are not allowed to take the seat directly on either side.

Action

Start the lesson by passing out copies of Appendix A-E. If you have access to a projector, you may just want to use that rather than printing copies. Take some time to allow students to laugh and talk about them a little bit.

Prompt: These memes show us that our perception, whether true or false, is a powerful tool in terms of shaping our view of the world. This sort of thinking can be applied to anything, including following God or being a Christian. What are some ways that people view Christianity or Christians, both positive and negative?

Have the students shout out some ideas as you write them down on the chart paper. Ask how the students feel Christian youth in particular are viewed. If helpful, have different columns drawn up on a different piece of paper with the following headings:
How society sees us | How our friends see us | How our Non-Christian relatives see us |
How our Christian Relatives see us | How the church sees us | How we see ourselves |
How we should be seen

In the last column, after the students have finished shouting out ideas, draw a cross at the very bottom and remind them that we should be seen by all as the representatives of Christ.

Give each student a playing card. Have them group together by suits (i.e. diamonds, clubs, hearts, spades). Assign Matthew 7:15-20 to the diamonds and hearts, Mark 11:11-25 to the clubs and spades (if you feel this passage is too long for them to handle, use Appendix F). Have them come up with a 1-sentence summary of the passage (i.e. the main idea of the passage). Each person should be prepared to share that answer with the next group.

Have students group based on their card number (i.e. all 2s, 3s, etc.). Students will share what answer had from their “suit” groups. Based on those answers, have them answer this question:

What are the common ties between the two passages?

Do think there is a relation between Jesus cursing the fig tree in Mark, and saying that trees that don't bear good fruit should be cut down and burned?

Who was not bearing good fruit?

How we can bear good fruit, and how that fruit will be evident?

After 10 min., gather everyone together and compare each number group’s answers.

(Optional if students have questions about the significance of the fig tree.) **Prompt:** This section can be confusing because of the whole fig tree thing. But we need to understand Jesus as being not only the Messiah, but also a teacher and a prophet. The verse opens with a trip to the temple. Jesus would have seen all the things that made him angry, but it was late so he decided to come back later. Then he sees the fig tree and curses it. Jesus was acting as a prophet and prophesying against the temple. The tree had no fruit, and likewise the temple was not producing any fruit. So Jesus curses it and declares it will never bear fruit again. The next day the tree was withered, about 40 years later the temple was destroyed.

Consolidate/Debrief

Prompt: Good fruit doesn't just happen. Like real fruit, it takes time to grow and have the proper nutrients produced in it. We should not be frustrated when our lives don't turn around instantly. Old habits die hard; but we should also not be satisfied staying where we are. We need to actively strive for the goal of producing good fruit. This is a good verse to remember: Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" The way we treat others is the way we are treating Jesus. Our fruit should be evident even to the least of these people, whoever that is. A homeless person, someone at school you don't like who picks on you, or who you pick on, your brothers or sisters, your mom or dad. Whoever it is, that's Jesus, treat them like a King.

Breathe In: Have students reflect on ways that they can produce good fruit.

Breathe Out: Notify students that you will be sending them three different challenges in how they can bear fruit (whether it's by phone, text, social media, a blog or website). The following week, the group will debrief on their week's experience.

Leader's note: Here are the challenges to send out (the day listed is counted after this lesson date):

- **Day 2:** Keep someone going this week. It's easy to get down or discouraged. Find someone in need of comfort and encouragement and let them know that you are thinking of them and that you believe in them (and help them out if you can!)
- **Day 4:** Remind someone of their value! Too many people feel worthless. Find someone who needs a good reminder of how much God loves them, and by extension how much you love them.
- **Day 6:** Take a load off someone! See someone struggling with their books? Their bag? Their groceries? Or maybe they are dealing with an emotional burden? Whatever it is, take it for them, help them get to where they are going.

Appendix A

YOUTH MINISTER



What society thinks I do



What parents think I do



What the Chairman of Deacons thinks I do



What I think I do



What I will never do



What I really do

Appendix B

ONLINE GAMER



What Society Thinks I do...



What My Friends Think I do...



What My Cat Thinks I do...



What My Pizza Place Thinks I do...



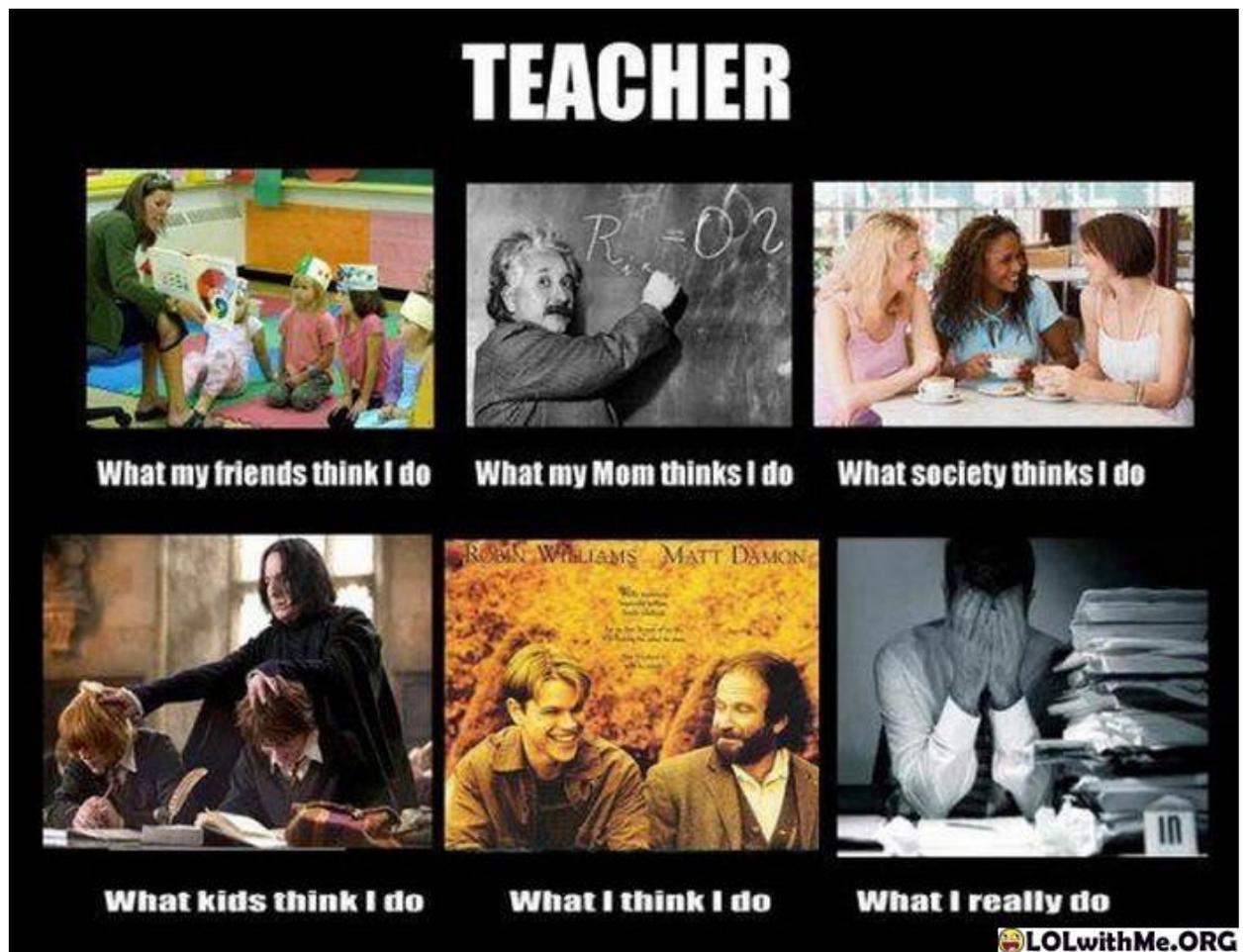
What I Think I do...



What I Actually Do...

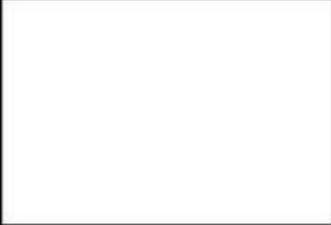
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Appendix C



Appendix D

ADHD KIDS

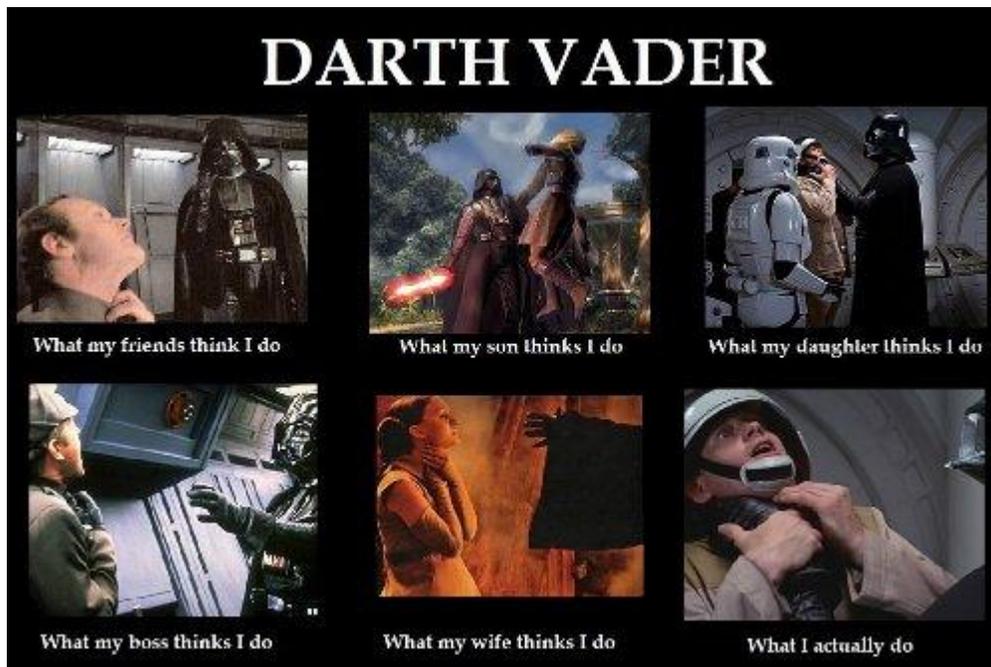


What teachers think we do.

What society th

 LOLwithMe.ORG

Appendix E



APPENDIX F

In Mark chapter 11 Jesus and his disciples were going to Jerusalem. The Bible says Jesus entered the temple and took a look around and then left. On his way out he saw a fig tree that didn't have any figs on it. The weird thing is that even though figs were out of season Jesus gets mad and curses the fig tree and says "May no one eat fruit from you again!" The next day Jesus goes back to the temple and he is angry and starts turning over tables and kicking out all these people who are exchanging currency and selling sacrificial doves and stuff; and he says "My house is a house of prayer for all nations, but you have turned it into a den of robbers!" When they left the temple that day the disciples saw the fig tree that Jesus cursed the day before and it was withered up from its roots, and they were amazed. Jesus then tells them that we can do a lot of amazing things by having faith in God.

Breathe

Module: PLAYING THE GAME

Lesson 4: OBSTACLES

Objectives:

- Students understand that to effectively serve Christ, we need to actively remove the obstacles stopping us from doing the work of the kingdom.

Materials Needed

- Items, like tables and chairs, for an obstacle course
- Bibles
- 1 piece of scrap paper and pen for each person
- 1 envelope for each person
- Garbage can or recycling bin
- Optional: small treat for the winning team in “Minds On”
- Chart paper and markers

Minds On

Build an obstacle course out of items you can find around the church (e.g. tables, chairs, rugs, couches, music stands, etc.) Have students do over/unders, zig zags, tasks, whatever you like! Get creative. If your group is big enough, make 2 obstacle courses and divide into teams.

Action

Separate students into 3 groups. Each group will create a “human sculpture” demonstrating the emotion they believe the character has in their given passage. Assign Mark 10:20 to group 1, v22 to group 2 and v26 to group 3. They have 3 min. to create this and will display their “sculpture” when the passage will be read as a large group.

Have a volunteer read Mark 10:17-27. At those specific verses, have the group display their “human sculpture”.

Staying within their groups (if there are more than 4 per group, split the groups accordingly), have the students discuss the following questions:

What must someone do to inherit eternal life?

Is it wrong to have money?

Can rich people go to heaven?

Gather the large group and compare each group’s answers.

Leader’s Note: There is a popular story about a gate in the outer wall of Jerusalem that was so tiny and narrow that people called it “The Eye of the Needle”. In order to get your camel through this gate, you needed to blind fold it and make it follow you on its knees. In the same way, the rich must be humbled and trust Jesus. However, there is no confirmation this gate exists. Jesus is talking about a literal camel and a literal eye of a

needle. He was thinking of getting the biggest animal around to go through the smallest conceivable opening.

Prompt: The Rich young man’s problem was that his money was an obstacle to him (as it is for many people). Jesus was standing right in front of him and asking something from him, and the man couldn’t bear to part with it. Will everyone be asked to give all their possessions away? Probably not, but all of us have obstacles in our lives that block or hinder our walk with God. We need to get rid of our obstacles so that we can fully follow Jesus.

Have the students write down an obstacle or two that they are stumbling over on a piece of the scrap paper and then put the paper in an envelope and seal it. On the outside of the envelope have them write “2 COR. 10:3-5” in big letters. Ask all the students to read that passage together.

Have the students take their envelopes and tear them in half, saying “We will tear down every stronghold!” as they do it. Have them toss the pieces in the garbage/recycling bin and then take it to a safe place so that items listed remain confidential (you can also have a shredder in place to ensure confidentiality).

Prompt: The obstacles we stumble over are strongholds that the enemy has placed before us. Thankfully, we are equipped with weapons from God! To do this by ourselves would be impossible, but nothing is impossible with God.

As a large group, have the students list what they think the weapons are that are referenced in the verse. Possible answers may include things like, prayer, grace, salvation, accountability, authority of Christ. Spend 1-2 min. compiling that list. Then have them come up with examples of each one. (e.g. Prayer can be used specifically when I don’t understand a situation well and ask God to help me make sense of it.)

Consolidate/Debrief

Prompt: To walk with God is to trust him. To follow God is to get rid of your strongholds. Focus on the grace that God has extended to you, and rest in the knowledge that he has a plan for you.

Have students spread out across the room where they have space from one another. For 1 min. they will inhale and exhale according to your direction, reflecting on the work God is doing in their lives. Say, “breathe in the healing power of God’s spirit” and “breathe out all of the strongholds and negativity that Satan has put in their way.” Repeat this for 1 min.

Breathe In: Have students write down on a paper “2 Cor. 10:3-5” and keep it in their wallet. Whenever they face an obstacle, encourage them to look at that verse and ask God to help them proceed.

Breathe Out: Suggest students connect with a mentor or an adult they trust to discuss how best to handle the item they wrote down earlier.

Leader’s Note: You may want to follow up and make yourself or your leadership team available for people who want follow up or encourage students to connect with accountability partners for help with what they wrote in the envelope.