

A central soccer ball with black and white panels is the focal point. It is surrounded by various sports equipment: a basketball (orange with black lines) at the bottom right, a tennis ball (yellow-green) at the top left, a baseball (white with red stitching) at the top right, and a wooden baseball bat (brown) at the bottom left. Other smaller items like a purple ball and a red ball are also visible. The background is a light, textured grey.

Life vs.

Week 1

BIBLE STORY

Let's Forgive

Matthew 18:21-35 NLT

TODAY'S TAKEAWAY

We all sin, but God forgives.

WEEKLY VERSE

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23-24 NIV



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Skit Information

OVERVIEW

The skits will require two people who can commit to being the main characters for the entire series. You will also need 3-5 “extra” actors to be a part of the team. Older kids or teenagers would be great choices for these parts. They do not need to be the same kids/teenagers each week. An all-boy team works best for these skits.

CHARACTER BIO

The main characters are Coach (the straight character) and Adam. Coach should be someone who is a coach in real life or at least looks the part. He can be dressed in an athletic shirt/polo with khaki shorts. A hat, whistle, and clipboard will make great accessories. Adam should be an older boy or teenager who is good at playing basketball, but can act like they are really bad, awkward, and somewhat nerdy. Adam should be dressed in a basketball jersey/tank or a plain t-shirt and basketball shorts. Feel free to add glasses and a sweat band to make him look extra nerdy. The extra actors playing the team should be dressed similar to Adam in matching shirts and basketball shorts.

SUPPLIES

- 3-4 basketballs
- Optional: slide of a gym on your main screen
- Optional: sports sound effects
- Portable basketball hoops

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SKIT

Skit begins with the team running in excited about basketball practice. They are gathered together and hyped for a new season. Adam is a part of the team, but he is late to practice.

Coach: **Enters blowing whistle at the team.** All right, all right. Let's calm down. I know you are excited to get the season going again. So am I! Listen up now. When I call your name please say "whoot whoot!" Let me see now... **Call out 3-5 names that identify with the kids you have acting. The last name called, Adam, should be the one who has not yet showed up.** Where is Adam? Has anyone seen Adam? **Other players are shaking their heads no, a few give sarcastic answers.**

Player 1: Adam? No way! He's on our team? Boy are we going to need prayer!

Player 2: Not, Adam! Where did we go wrong? We are being punished for the sins of our ancestors!

Coach: Pipe down now. Check those bad attitudes at the door. It can't be all that bad.

Player 3: Coach, yes it can be all that bad! Adam is the kid that trips over his own feet!

Player 4: Not only that, but he smells funny, like beef and cheese. **All the players laugh.** There is no way this guy will be able to play some serious basketball! **All players move aside and begin to bounce the basketballs and throw them to each other.**

Adam: **Enters looking scared**

Coach: Hello there. Would you happen to be Adam?

Adam: **Nervously** Um, yyyyyeeessss maaaaam. I mean ssssiirrrrr. I'm Adam, Adam Collingsworth. Yep. That's me!

Coach: Ok. Well, Adam Collingsworth, could you tell me why you are so

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late to practice?

Adam: I'm sorry Sir, Coach, Sir, Mr., Coach, Sir, Coach, Sir, Mr., Coach...

Coach: Just call me Coach, Adam, ok?

Adam: Yes sir... Coach Adam. Hey we got the same name! **Coach turns towards audience with a frazzled look on his face.** Well, I really don't have an excuse, I was here and all, just standing outside the door there. **Other players giggle.**

Coach: My name is not Adam, Adam: It's Coach. Well just know that if you are going to play on my team then I need you here on time. That goes for everyone. Got it? **They all, yell out "Yes Coach!" except for Adam.**

Adam: **Replying a bit late** Yes sir, Coach Adam! **the other players laugh**

Coach: Adam, my name is not Adam. Just call me coach. You got that?

Adam: Yes sir. Got it! Coach! You are Coach! I am Adam.

Coach: **Blows whistle** Line up team. I need to see your passing and catching skills.

Player 1: Oh come on coach... this is baby stuff.

Player 2: Right? I mean we know how to catch and pass. It's the basics!

Coach: Exactly! Without going through the basics we fail to maintain our skills. Zip it up and get in line! **Blows whistle again**

Players line up, back to back as Coach passes the ball to each one and they pass it back. There needs to be a lot of enthusiasm here. The other players should cheer each other on and give high fives after each play, but Adam keeps getting

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pushed to the back of the line. Each player catches, throws, and then runs to the back of line. Adam is excited, but can't seem to follow the other players in their clap and high five routine. When Adam finally gets a turn he puts his hands out to catch, but turns his head away from the ball in fear.

Coach: Adam! You have to look at me and keep your eyes on the ball.

Adam: Ok Coach! **He looks at coach. When the ball is passed to him he screams and ducks out of the way. The other players erupt in laughter.**

Coach: **Blows whistle.** Alright, alright! Any more of that and you will be running laps until you are 90 years old! **Laughter immediately stops.** Adam, come here: **Adam goes to coach and they walk to the side. Other players continue passing the ball around.** Adam, why are you here? I mean it's evident that you have never stepped foot on the court before today. Is someone making you play?

Adam: Oh no sir! This is my decision. I know I am the odd one out here sir, but I really want to learn to play this game. It is important to me that I do this.

Coach: Ok Adam. Well, don't let these other guys get to you. Believe me, they are not NBA ready! Not by a long shot. We all have work to do and I am sure that as long as you give it your all you will be just fine.

Adam: That's the plan sir. You see, I am a Christian. Jesus gave His all for me, so I am trying my best to give my all for Him.

Coach: This is not church Adam, it's basketball.

Adam: Yes sir, I know. But I just know I am supposed to be here. I just know I am. I'm scared and nervous but I am ready to learn.

Coach: Well, ok then. Let the learning begin!

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Game: Sports Drink Relay

SUPPLIES

- Small cups (5-10 per team)
- 2 bottles of sports drinks
- 2 buckets
- Paper towels (for clean-up)

SETUP

- No setup is required.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Choose 5-10 kids to play on each team. We recommend two teams, but you can choose to have more if you want to get more kids involved.
2. Have the teams line up. Hand each kid a small cup and put a bucket at the end of each team's line.
3. Teams will have 2 minutes to pass the sports drink using only the cups down the line of team members to pour into their bucket. Leaders will pour the sports drink in the first kids' cups. Each kid, in turn, will pour the drink into the next kid's cup.
4. At the end of the 2 minutes, the team with the most sports drink in their bucket wins.

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Message

SUPPLIES

- A Bible in your preferred version (This week uses NLT)
- Crown
- Fake money
- Fake handcuffs
- 2 name tags (write Servant 1 and Servant 2 on the name tags)
- Football
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Small pieces of paper
- Pens
- Small trash can(s)

SUPPLIES

- No setup is required

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INTRODUCTION

Who is ready to kick off a brand-new series? **Allow kids to respond.** Life Vs. is all about learning incredible verses each week that will help us share our faith with the people around us. Each of our weekly life verses is a part of the "Romans Road." We can memorize these life verses to help us share what we believe as Christians. Today's life verses are found in Romans 3:23-24. It says, "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ." Those verses teach us that all of us have sinned or messed up, but God chooses to forgive us even though we don't deserve it. In today's Bible Story we will learn that God not only forgives us when we sin, but He also expects us to forgive others. Let's turn to Matthew 18:21-35 to hear about a parable, or story, Jesus told to help us understand forgiveness.

Allow kids time to find Matthew 18:21-35 in their Bibles.

BIBLE STORY

I need three volunteers to help me by acting out Jesus' story while we read it from the Bible. **Choose three volunteers and make one the king by putting a crown on his head and make the other two Servants 1 and 2 by putting the name tags on them. Encourage them to act out the story and prompt them when necessary.**

Jesus told this story because one of His closest disciples, Peter, came to Him with a question. He asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" Jesus responded to him, "No, not seven times...but seventy times seven!" Then He told this story to help drive home His point about forgiveness. Let's read it together in verses 23-35. "Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in

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who owed him millions of dollars. **Hold up a lot of fake money and give it to the king. Have Servant 1 come up to the king and search in his/her pockets.** He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. But the man fell down before his master and begged him, **have the servant fall on his knees and pretend to beg** 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. **Have the king throw his money down and hug the servant. Have Servant 1 walk over to Servant 2 now.** But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. **Hold up much less money than before and hand it to Servant 1.** He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. **Have Servant 1 gently grab Servant 2 by the shoulders, not by the neck.** His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. **Have Servant 2 fall on his/her knees and pretend to beg.** 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. **Have Servant 1 put fake handcuffs on Servant 2.** When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, have Servant 1 walk back over to the king who should now look angry. 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.'"

Let's give a hand for our three incredible volunteers. **Have the volunteers hand back all of their props and have a seat.** Jesus told this story to prove a very important point to Peter and all of us. The king in the story represents God and the servants are all of us. Just like the king forgave such a huge debt of a million dollars the servant

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owed him, God forgives all of us no matter how small or big our sins are or how many times we have sinned. However, God expects us to do the same thing for others. He doesn't want us to be like Servant 1 who refused to forgive Servant 2. He expects us to forgive and love others the way He forgives and loves us.

LIFE APPLICATION/OBJECT LESSON

Remember what our life verses say, "all have sinned." Another way of saying that is we've all dropped the ball. **Pull out the football.** In football, what is it called when someone drops the ball? **Allow kids to respond.** It's a fumble. **Pull out the baseball.** In baseball, a player might have a dropped catch. **Throw the baseball in the air and fail to catch it. Pull out the basketball.** In basketball, a player might attempt to shoot the ball and miss the basket entirely. **Hold the basketball like you are going to shoot it.** We all fumble, drop a catch, and miss the basket in life sometimes, but God doesn't take us out of the game. We all sin and mess up, but the good news is that God will always forgive us. All we have to do is confess our sins and ask Him to forgive us. We are going to take some time to do that today in just a moment. Let's pray and thank God for always being willing to forgive us when we sin and ask for His help in showing the same forgiveness to others.

Optional: Offer a prayer of salvation for any kids who have not accepted Jesus into their lives.

PRAYER ACTIVITY

Have the leaders pass out a small piece of paper and pen to each kid. Allow time for kids to write down a sin or area they are struggling with. Have them pray and ask God to forgive them. When they are done praying, they can take the piece of paper, crumple it up and throw it away in the small trash can(s) at the front of the room as a symbol of the fact that God has forgiven them.

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Review Questions

1. What is our new series called?

Answer: Life Vs.

2. What is our Life Vs. series about?

Answer: Learning life vs. from the "Romans Road" that will help us share our faith with others.

3. We have all sinned, but what is the good news?

Answer: God forgives.

4. What did Jesus' parable about the king and the two servants teach us?

Answer: We should forgive others just as God forgives us.

5. What is Today's Takeaway?

Answer: We all sin, but God forgives.

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Discussion Questions/ Share Your Faith Scenarios

For the Life Vs. Series we are tackling some of the tough questions kids have about their faith. We recommend discussing them as a group and allowing kids to give their own answers before giving them the answers provided. You may want to allow more time than usual for small groups for this series. If the kids bring up questions you as a leader do not know how to answer, it is ok to say "I don't know, but I will look into that for you." We recommend writing down questions the kids ask and following up with them.

It is important to emphasize to the kids the importance of having a relationship with God and sharing their own testimony, as well as learning how to answer tough questions. No one will have all of the right answers to every question, but that shouldn't stop us from sharing our faith with others. We can depend on the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us wisdom.

Optional Resources to have available for leaders/parents to help answer tough questions:

- **The Awesome Book of Bible Answers for Kids! by Josh McDowell and Kevin Johnson**
- **Case For Faith For Kids by Lee Strobel**

Discussion Questions

- Should people who already believe in God ask for answers?
Yes! It is always ok to ask questions and want to know the why behind what you believe. Questions about faith are too important to ignore. Faith is like a muscle that gets stronger as you continue to exercise it. Matthew 7:7-8 tells us to Ask, Search, and Knock. "Everyone who asks will receive. He who searches will find. The door will be opened to the one who knocks." When we ask questions about God, it's a way of finding Him.
- Can you have doubts and still have faith in God?

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Yes! Faith isn't always easy. It's not a "sure thing," we can see. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is believing in something we can't see. That's hard to do. Even one of Jesus' closest disciples, Thomas, doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead until he saw Him with his own eyes. Doubt actually makes us work on our faith, like a faith workout, which is a good thing.

- How do we know something is a sin?
God makes perfect rules for everyone to follow, and He makes them clear in His Word, the Bible. You may not be able to memorize the entire Bible, so God planned for you to think about the way you feel when you have done something wrong. You usually know when you have sinned or messed up because it makes you feel sad and far away from God and/or the people you hurt. That feeling you get when you do something wrong is one of the ways you know you need to admit and confess your sins to God and ask for forgiveness.
- Who decides what is right and wrong?
The short answer is, God does. If there were no God, everyone's idea of what is right and wrong would just be an opinion. When we decide that certain things are always right and certain things are always wrong, we are saying those are the rules for the universe. Rules don't write themselves. Someone had to write them. Without rules and laws everything would be chaos.
- Will God always love and forgive me?
Jesus was known in the Bible for hanging out with a tough crowd, forgiving those others wouldn't even be seen with, and even making tax collectors His own disciples. In Mark 2:17, Jesus says that His goal is to save people who know they need His help. That's everyone! God always forgives us the first time we ask. He doesn't hold it against us or stop loving us. The Bible tells us that when He forgives us, He forgets our sins.
- Do you have any questions about sin or forgiveness?
Allow kids to ask questions. If they have questions you are unable to answer, you can follow up with them and/or use the provided resources to help answer their questions.
- Optional: Have kids look up these verses and discuss them as a group.

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1 John 1:9, Matthew 6:14-15, and Psalm 103:10-12

SHARE YOUR FAITH SCENARIOS

Supplies

- Index cards
- Pens
- Optional: phones or devices to take video

Setup

- Write the discussion questions for this week on individual index cards. Depending on the size of your small groups you may need to make multiples of some questions. You will want at least one index card for every two kids in each small group.

Steps

- Have the kids pair up and give each pair of kids an index card with a question on it. If you have an odd number of kids in a group, have one group include three kids.
- Have the kids take turns asking each other questions from the index cards and have them respond by sharing their answer to the question. Remind the kids that it is ok if they don't have all the answers or need help. We are "practicing" sharing our faith.
- Optional: allow kids to record their "scenarios" to watch later on their own phones/devices or on devices you provide.

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Game: Don't Drop the Ball!

SUPPLIES

- Small balls (1 for every 2 kids in each small group)

SETUP

- No setup is required.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Have kids pair up, and give each pair a ball.
2. Have each of the pairs stand the same distance from each other, starting off close together.
3. For each round, have them pass the ball back and forth, then step back one step.
4. If a pair drops their ball, they are out.
5. The game is over when you are down to the last pair who hasn't dropped their ball.
6. Optional: Make the game harder for preteens by adding different ways to pass the ball back and forth. For example: throw it overhand, throw it underhand, throw it under your legs, throw it over your shoulder, throw it with your eyes closed, etc.