

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

Start off with story about gentleman who said he felt he was "playing a game and he was not able to win." He is on parole and was arrested for driving without a license, having a gun and some drugs.

Who taught him that this is how he should play the game of life? Why do you think he decided to play the game of life this way? Is there a possibility that he could have different results including even "winning" if he got some different guidance and changed his strategy? Maybe most importantly, what do you think that God, who loves him intently, thinks about how he is doing life?

He was talking about the game of life. We will be talking about the game of life today.

We're going to start with an analogy or illustration using a game and seeing what we can learn from this game in regards to the game of life.

Who wants to play a game – where you can win prizes? Choose a volunteer...

Give them 5 tennis balls. Tell them this a great game and they can now begin.

When they ask for rules, tell them to figure it out the same way they figure out life. Ask them how they know the rules of life? How would your parents or a model play the game? How would a movie star or athlete or musician play the game? What would your friends do? How would they play it? What other guidance can you access? What other sources of information would you use?

Go ahead and play the game! How are you doing? Do you think you will win?

If they ask for the rules, give them the sheet. Compliment them on asking the creator of the game for the rules and following them. Tell them they did something wise since you can't know how to play a game without knowing the rules and you can't get the rules unless they come from the Creator – just like in life.

If not, give them the candy bar and continue.

Who invented this game? I did. Wouldn't it be helpful to rely on the person who invented the game for the rules? What is someone really cool that you admire,

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

took the tennis balls and spelled words with them. Juggled with them? What is someone used them to massage their muscles so they would feel good? What if someone you admire threw them at people to scare or even hurt them? How would this affect how you play the game?

Here's the rules: for every tennis ball you gave to each different person with a smile on your face, you get a one dollar bill. How did you do? How do you like those rules? Why didn't you earn any money? Are my rules fair? How do you determine whether they are fair or not - it's my game. Want fair rules, create your own game.

"This is God's universe, and God does things His way. You may have a better way, but you don't have a universe!" - J. Vernon McGee

All analogies or illustrations quickly break down if you try and take them too far but this tennis ball game is like the game of life? Where do you get your instructions? How do you know how to play? How are you doing? Can you win the game of life if you don't have the rules from the Creator and you don't follow them? Can you have the rules and not follow them? Will you win?

<Let's take a few minutes and practically answer these questions – where did you get your strategy? Where did you get the rules you are following? Are these good sources that have worked out well or not? Is there someone that will go out of his way to make sure you lose the game? What determines how you do life? **Get people to comment.** Explain?>

Proverbs 14:12 (NLT2) ¹² There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

What does that Scripture verse mean? Where does your path lead? Why? Are you ok with that?

The Creator of everything loves you and wants you to win in life. He has gone to great lengths to give you the only real guide for this life on earth and for eternity. He has sent His Son to die to pay for your sins. If you believe that He died for your sins, He will come and live inside you to guide you if you take advantage of what He has to offer you through His great love for you.

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

Hold up the Bible and tell them “this is the rule book for life.”

By the way, this just doesn't have rules only. It tells us what happened in the past and what will happen in the future. It tells us about God. It tells us about us. It tells us what Jesus did. It tells us how we can have a relationship with God and much, much more. It is our guide for life.

Romans 12:2 (NLT2) ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

A paraphrase of this verse is “Don't play by the world's rules – play by God's rules.”

We're going to look at this by comparing what “The world teaches” and “the Bible teaches.”

If you had to summarize how the world wants you to play to game of life, what would you say? What are the rules of the world? What are your rules?

The world teaches: Focus on you and your needs and feelings. Look out for #1. Get the most you can as quickly as you can. It is all about you. Do what you feel like doing. Agree? Disagree?

Matthew 22:35-40 (NLT2) ³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” ³⁷ Jesus replied, ““You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

It's not about you – Love God and Love others!

The world teaches: Don't let other people tell you what to do. You decide for yourself. You are smart. Go with your gut. You don't want anyone telling you what to do. Keep people out of your business. You know what to do. Let your feelings be your guide. You don't need advice. Agree? Disagree?

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

The Bible teaches: “**John 8:12 (NLT2)** ¹² Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” and “**Psalm 119:105 (NLT2)** ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.”

To live in the light or to the play the game well, follow Jesus/His Word. Otherwise, you will live in darkness or lose. Do you feel like you are living in darkness?

The world teaches: Don’t let anyone disrespect you. Whatever they do to you, do back to them worse. Fight hard or people will take advantage of you. Don’t show weakness or kindness to mean people. Agree? Disagree?

The Bible teaches: Matthew 5:38-39 (NLT2) ³⁸ “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also.

The world teaches: The Bible is ok. There’s some good stuff that you already know. As long as you know a little about it, that’s good enough. It’s not really practical for everyday life. From your past life, you got exposed to the Bible and you don’t need to spend time today. There are more important things to do right now. You know all about the Bible that you need to know.

The Bible teaches: Psalm 119:9-16 (NLT2) ⁹ How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. ¹⁰ I have tried hard to find you— don’t let me wander from your commands. ¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. ¹² I praise you, O LORD; teach me your decrees. ¹³ I have recited aloud all the regulations you have given us. ¹⁴ I have rejoiced in your laws as much as in riches. ¹⁵ I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways. ¹⁶ I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word.

The world teaches: Life is difficult and it is going to get you down. There’s just a lot that we can’t control and we have no choice but to worry about it and become anxious. You never know what is coming next and it’ll probably be bad. Everyone worries. Life often gets us down.

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

The Bible teaches: Philippians 4:4-7 (NLT2) ⁴ Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

The world teaches: If people hurt you, never forgive them. They don't deserve it. Make them suffer. Tell everyone what they did and how bad they are.

The Bible teaches: Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT2) ²¹ Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" ²² "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

The world teaches: I am an adult. Don't treat me like a child. I am mature and everyone needs to treat me with respect. No one can talk down to me. You must respect me. I never make mistakes that are really my fault. I am independent. I don't trust anyone and I am never wrong.

The Bible teaches: Matthew 18:3-4 (NLT2) ³ Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. ⁴ So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The world teaches: Avoid troubles and pain at all costs. Work hard to make bad things go away. If bad things happen, realize it is not my fault – it is someone or something else's fault.

The Bible teaches: James 1:2 (NLT2) ² Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.

The world teaches: It is all about me. I need to work toward what feels good. Whatever I feel, that is what I chase after. Don't try and change me – I am who I am. My feelings are what I follow.

The Bible teaches: Luke 9:23-25 (NLT2) ²³ Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁵ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?

The world teaches: Life is about things. Nice cars. Nice clothes. Big TV's. Cable TV. Music is my thing. When I get newer and better things, finally, I'll be happy. I can't wait!

The Bible teaches: Matthew 6:19-21 (NLT2) ¹⁹ "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

Do you notice a difference in how the world plays this game of life and how the real rules are which are given to us in Bible? Do you see the big contrast? These are only a few examples. There are many, many more.

What's your reaction to this? Thoughts? How can you learn the real rules of the game of life?

The Bible teaches: Psalm 1:1-3 (NLT2) ¹ Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. ² But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. ³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.

Others (there are many verses which teach these but this is just one):

- Obey authorities – even the bad ones – Romans 13:1-7
- Think eternally – This life is not all there is – Colossians 3:2
- Get together with others – Hebrew 10:25
- Pride is bad, humbleness is good – James 4:6
- Sex outside of marriage is wrong – 1 Thessalonians 4:3
- Lying is wrong – Proverbs 12:22
- Fame/wealth is not important – Matthew 16:26

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

- There is a spiritual battle going on – 1 Peter 5:8
- And many, many more...

You can follow all these rules we listed and life may be better but you won't win the game. No matter what, life will be difficult. Winning the game means spending eternity in heaven and following all the above rules won't get you there. How do we know that? How do we know what it takes to go to heaven?

Who decides what you need to do to go to heaven? You? A preacher? A friend? A TV show? How you feel? (Do you see a pattern here?)

The world teaches: Have a little God in your life but not too much. Don't be one of those fanatics. You need to fit in. Life is about fun and doing what you want but make sure you do some good so God will consider you ok if you do a little good – He will send you to heaven. If you feel good enough to deserve to go to heaven, God will send you to heaven. Nobody's perfect. Agree? Disagree?

What will happen if you believe this? Where will you spend eternity? These aren't God rules.

The Bible teaches: Romans 3:23 (NLT2) ²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

The Bible teaches: Romans 6:23 (NLT2) ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Bible teaches: John 3:16 (NLT2) ¹⁶ "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

The Bible teaches: Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT2) ⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Quote: "The Gospel isn't about you putting together a righteousness and giving it to God. It is about Him putting together a righteousness and giving it to you."

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

The Bible Teaches: Romans 10:9 (NLT2) ⁹ If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

What does it mean to believe? These are some of the things you need to believe: you are a sinner, you deserve punishment forever because you can't come anywhere close to God's standard of performance with anything good you do, that Jesus paid the price for your sins that you owed – He was perfect and you get credit for His performance - and He did it not because you are good but because He loves you. You believe and accept this amazing gift and then you repent (change from following your ways or rules to following Jesus and His rules). Then you will change from an enemy of God to His son. The Spirit of Jesus will come and live inside you and guide you and help you become more like Jesus. He will help you want to learn and follow His rules. This relationship can begin when you make this decision to believe and repent and it will last forever. It may seem too good to be true but it is not. That is why it is called the Good News!

Very simply, whose rules do you want to follow? Your rules? The world's rules? How can you "win" if you aren't following the rules of the Creator of the game?

If you follow all the basic rules in the Bible, your life here on earth with most likely be better. But if follow these rules but don't believe you are a sinner and that Jesus died for your sins and accept that amazing gift, you will spend eternity in hell. The way God set it up for you, because He loves you, is for you to repent, believe and follow Him and spend starting now and through eternity in a close relationship with Him. It is all or nothing – there is no in between. You can't be lukewarm.

You may be surprised but I didn't grow up with God's rules. I decided years ago to no longer follow my rules and to follow God's rules. My rules were a little Jesus in my life and lots of what I thought would make me comfortable. This is the smartest thing and the hardest thing I have done and continue to do but I do it because it is right and true and the Creator of everything loves me and wants a loving relationship with me. I'm all in. How about you?

The Bible – THE Guide For Life

Faith Based Mentoring Ministries

I will say a prayer but first I will give you some time to talk to God. You can think about what rules you are playing the game of life by and how that is working out. You can ask God to help you play by His rules. There is a spiritual battle and you can tell by the resistance you will feel to not play by God's rules. Don't let that feeling rule your life – let your mind determine what is best and follow that. You can only do that with God's help. You will need help fighting this battle.

I'll give you some time to talk to God, I'll pray and then I have some closing remarks.

If you want to pursue this, here are some ideas:

1. A recording of this and my notes will be on the website – www.faithbasedmentoring.org
2. I will also include an overview of the Bible and more about the Good News of Jesus.
3. My phone number is 260-433-3049. We have mentors here who would love to talk to you about this. I will ask them to stand right now. See them and set something up with them.
4. I have a simple plan to grow in relationship with Christ. Only three things:
 - a. Have a plan to read the Bible regularly. It may be difficult at the beginning but you will get better.
 - b. Spend regular, consistent and focused time talking to God.
 - c. Spend regular, consistent time meeting with someone who also has goals to grow in their relationship with Christ and is farther along than you are.

Questions? Comments?