

## **The Game of Life**

### **Ready:**

“No one should despise your youth; instead, you should be an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” -1 Timothy 4:12

**Set** In our house, it has become a family tradition to watch the Little League World Series. We start checking the calendar in early July to see when the games will start, and, by the end of August, we are on a virtual first-name basis with most of the kids we watch. Heck, we still talk about Kyle Carter, and that was six years ago! As a baseball family ourselves, it's heartwarming to see the camaraderie, sportsmanship and pure joy of 12-year-olds playing baseball. Even though they are playing in front of crowds of more than 40,000 and under the spotlight of ESPN coverage, these kids muster up the courage to play because they love the game! Occasionally, though, the big stage and the pressure to win becomes bigger than the love of the game. When calls aren't going their way and errors are being made, some of the players start to shrug their shoulders, throw their hands and hang their heads. As a viewer, I watch and think, “That is not a good illustration of how a Little League player should behave. Play to win, but win and lose with grace!” And that's where I am personally convicted in return. Here I sit judging 12-year-olds, and it hits me. How many times in life when things aren't going my way is my behavior less than what it should be as a Christian? If I'm being honest, way too often. It's easy to be joyful when things are running smoothly, but the real test of faith is when things are difficult and the calls are against you. When this happens, we have two choices: 1) argue with God, or 2) trust in Him knowing that He doesn't make mistakes! Just like the Little Leaguers, we as Christians are on a stage, and how we respond to life's calls provides either a good or a bad example regarding the character of Christ. So, those shrugging, hand-throwing, head-hanging Little Leaguers? Well, at the end of the game, they usually shake hands with the other team, shed a few tears and then stand on the field hugging each other. These lessons from young people are always so pure and honest. In the end, their humility wins out, and it reminds me even more of God's grace. Even in the depths of a struggle—and even more than any sports teammate—Jesus Christ and the body of believers will be there to support and embrace you, even when you fail. Today, do your best to respond to life's challenges with the character of Christ and set a true example of His peace and love. Win or lose on the field, doing so will guarantee an eternal victory that is far more valuable.

**Go** 1. How do you face life's struggles? With God or against Him? What is the difference? 2. Do you pray only when times are tough, or do you offer prayers of thanksgiving and praise, too? 3. Are you able to recognize your gifts and blessings? Take some time to journal your blessings and write down what you thank God for in your life. 4. What kind of an example are you providing to friends, family, classmates, co-workers and teammates? Does it reflect the true character of Christ?

**Workout** John 13:12-15 John 14:27 2 Corinthians 12:9 Philippians 4:6-8

### **Bible Reference:**

1 Timothy 4



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