

“Gotta Love ‘em All”

(A lesson about the adventure of loving people like Jesus,
inspired by the Pokemon Go craze)

For The Episcopal Dioceses of Atlanta

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Key verses:

Numerous verses about the Great Commission

Objectives: To tap into the appeal of Pokemon Go, and let that same energy and thirst for adventure be focused towards something that provides REAL adventure-helping people see Jesus!

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- **Hook OPTIONS:** “Gotta Catch ‘em All!” (60-90 min) or “Pokemon Persona” (10-15 mins)
 - “Gotta Catch ‘em All”: The longer option is to start with a Pokemon Go hunt, and follow up with discussion questions
 - “Pokemon Persona”: The shorter option is to allow each kid to share about which pokemon they most relate to, and then follow up with the discussion questions.
- **Book:** “The Gospel of Pokemon” (10-15 mins)
 - Decoding Bible verses that have been made to read like something that was pulled from a Pokemon guide book.
- **Look:** “Gotta Love ‘em All!” (10 mins)
 - What are the specific, measurable, and achievable things we can do to be part of the adventure of the Great Commission?
- **Took:** “Now GO” (5 mins or less)
 - Praying for the boldness, awareness, and spirit to live fully into a REAL adventure!

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- Smart phones (you will need at least 1 for every 3 kids)
- Large sheets of paper or poster board to write verses on.
- Tape
- Candy or Coins to use as a reward for the PokeVerse game
- Paper and pens

Set up:

- write each of the “PokeVerses” from the book section on a large sheet of paper- something large enough that can be read from all areas of the room you will be teaching in.(verses at the end of the lesson)
- write the corresponding Bible verse on separate large sheets of paper.

(Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

“Gotta Catch ‘em All” (Hook OPTIONS, see below for times)

Option 1: Poke Hunt! (45 mins- 80 mins)

- If you have the time and manpower, break the kids into small groups (with an adult on each team) and make it a competition to see who can have the most successful poke hunt. Give them clear boundaries, time frames, and other guidelines... make sure they stick together, and be sure to take pictures!
- After the hunt, continue with the discussion questions. (Below)

OR

Option 2: Pokemon Identity (5 mins)

- If you are limited in time, start with a check in question. Ask the kids which Pokemon they most closely identify with and why. If they don’t know much about the different Pokemon, they can dream up their own! The idea is to name a character that has some qualities that you possess.
- After the hunt, continue with the discussion questions

****If you have several kids who are unfamiliar with Pokemon**, you may want to invite one of your kids to act as the **“PokeExpert”** and explain some of the basics before moving on to the discussion questions. Be sure that they share about how you go out to find pokemon, win them over, and then train them for battle. There are probably plenty of other cool things to share about, but I myself am not a PokeExpert!

Discussion question, used for either Hook option: (about 10 mins)

- What was the most exciting thing that happened on your Poke Hunt (if applicable)
- What is the most outrageous thing you have ever done to collect a pokemon?
- What is the most outrageous thing you have ever witnessed someone else do to collect a pokemon? *(I personally saw someone on my way home who had taken a taxi to the side of a road, sort of in the middle of no where, to collect a pokemon. A Taxi!!!! But here are a few stories if you need ideas: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/living/1421249/pokemon-go-fever-has-gripped-the-world-and-the-augmented-reality-game-is-causing-absolute-carnage/>)*
- What is the best Pokemon you have ever collected? (in the app)

- Can you remember the very first Pokemon that you ever collected? (in the app)
- What do you think is the appeal of hunting down invisible creatures? *(hopefully you will end up in a place where they realize that the appeal is that the app allows them to go on a “real life” adventure. There doesn’t seem to be any true reward in the actual possession of a pokemon, so it has got to have something to do with the collecting/adventure. Keep pressing them to explain- there are likely several good answers that promote further discussion)*

“The Gospel of Pokemon” (Book, 10-15 mins)

In this section, the youth will be working in pairs or trio to decode bible verses that have been slightly altered to read like they are from some kind of Pokemon Bible.

Pokemon Bible Decoder:

1. Have the kids break into pairs or trios. Each group should have access to ONE smart phone.
2. Explain that you are going to show them a series of messages that read like they could have come from a Bible about Pokemon (PokeVerses). In their groups, they are to use their Bibles and smart phones to try and find the Bible verses that correspond to the PokeVerse. Once they find it, they should have one member of their group run up to you with the answer (including the verse and reference) to check for accuracy. You will then allow them to share the verse, and award them with candy. Ask if they have questions.
3. For the game play:
 - a. Show one large “PokeVerse” at a time, and allow them to search for the reference. Once a team has the correct reference, allow them to read the original verse out loud. (verses are at the end of the lesson)
 - b. Tape the REAL Bible verse to the wall so everyone can see it.
 - c. Award the team that got the correct answer a Candy or “PokeCoins.”
 - d. Continue this process until all the verses have been identified.

Discussion Questions: (you can do these in small groups if you would like, simply print the questions ahead of time)

- Was it easy to identify the verses that were used? Why or why not?
- As we look at all these verses that are taped to the wall, what do you think they have in common? *(Hopefully they will be able to pinpoint that these verses are all connected to the Great Commission and that, as followers of Christ, we have been called to action... called to go on a real life adventure!)*
- What adventure do you think is more appealing- The adventure to collect and train invisible Pokemon?, Or the adventure of making Jesus known to the world and making disciples (Great Commission)? Why?
- What is it about the adventure of the Great Commission that could be off putting?
- What could be holding you back from participating in the adventure of the Great Commission? (they can maybe share in pairs if this is too sensitive to share with the entire group)

Mini-Lecture!

(Say something like)

No one is arguing about whether or not the Pokemon Go game is fun- within 48 hours of the game's release, pretty much everyone in the entire world was aware of the game and playing it- that's the only defense you need! The thing that is interesting and worth considering is WHY this brand of fun is it so popular? It can't possibly be because you get any sort of physical reward, so it has to be something else. I think it may have something to do with the fact that the game invites us to get out into the world, see things, and go on an adventure, even if it's the smallest of adventures. Yes, you can stay at home to play, but it doesn't take long before you feel the draw to leave your house and look for new Pokemon.

When God created us, he breathed into us the need to part of something bigger than ourselves. He instilled in each of us the need for adventure. I'm not sure what God thinks of Pokemon Go, but I am certain that he didn't give us that desire for adventure so that we could spend our summer days searching for invisible, fictional creatures. No, God made us that way because he wanted us to answer the generous call he presents to each of us- The invitation to help redeem the world to God and to make disciples. We call this the Great Commission, and it is a BIG adventure if you fully answer the call!

Perhaps the obsession with Pokemon Go is connected to a deep desire God put in each of us- a desire to go out, find people who are unclaimed, tell them about our hope in Christ, and train them in how to follow him so that they can evolve into a better form of themselves.

"Gotta Love 'em All!", (Look, 10 mins)

In this section we are using the verses from earlier and looking for specific and intentional ways that we can love on people who are hurting.

The PLAN to Love 'em All:

1. Explain that you are going to take another stab at changing up the verses that you just decoded, but this time, you are making it a SPECIFIC call to action for your own life.
2. Direct them to look at the verses that are taped to the walls, and think about how they could change it fit their lives. Just like with the PokeVerses, they will change just a few words to make the verse specifically fit their life. They should think of WHAT specifically they can do to HELP someone who may be in NEED of hope. For example, from Mark 16:15, *"Go into dance class this coming Thursday and tell the girl that dances behind me that she is appreciated and loved."* Or even something on a bigger scale- can they participate in a peaceful protest? Can they collect money for a ministry?
(Obviously these won't fit the verses exactly, but they are looking to recreate the spirit of the verse for their own life. If they are really struggling to fit their action into one of the verses, it is fine to scrap the verse and have them write their own call to action. What is key is that the come up with something that is SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, and ACHIEVABLE... something that is a call to ACTION!)
be sure that each person writes something down on paper
3. Allow them to ask questions, pass out paper and pens, and then give them about 2 mins to complete the activity

4. They can then share their statements with the larger group. If they didn't name something specific, measurable, and achievable, press them to make some edits!

"Now GO" (Took, 5 mins or less)

The youth (and adults!), will gather in a circle and commission each other to go and do the work that they have committed to do from the previous section.

The Commissioning:

- Have everyone stand in a circle, and give their rewritten verse/call to action to the person standing to their left.
- Explain that you will open in prayer, and then each person will go around the circle, and commission the person to their right with the call to action that they wrote on their sheet of paper. For example, the person that is just before me would say, "We commission you, Katie, to ... *Go into dance class this coming Thursday and tell the girl that dances behind you that she is appreciated and loved.*" Then, I would turn to the person on my other side and say, "We commission you, Joe, to.... *Whatever Joe wrote on his sheet of paper.*"
- After each person is commissioned, the group can say "amen" if they would like.
- Continue this way until everyone has been commissioned and you get back to who opened in prayer
- End with a closing blessing/ prayer
 - Possible opening prayer: "Brothers and Sisters, we are all baptized by the Spirit into one Body, and given the gifts for a variety of ministries for the common good. Our purpose is to commission these people in the Name of God to a special ministry in which they feel called."
 - Possible closing prayer: "Father, please hear our requests and confirm your blessing of these commissioning. It is with sincere devotion of mind and body that we offer ourselves do you to participate in your amazing adventure. Amen"

PokeVerses and Corresponding Bible Verses

(when you present the PokeVerses to the kids, do not underline any words.
I have only put them there for your convenience.)

1. **PokeVerse:** And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the Pokedex to the whole PokeUniverse.

Mark 16:15: And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

2. **PokeVerse:** And I heard the voice of the Professor Willow saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will train for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

Isaiah 6:8: And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”

3. **PokeVerse:** And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you trainers of Pokemon.”

Matthew 4:19: And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

4. **PokeVerse:** Professor Willow came and said to them, “All combat power in Pokeworld and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and find Pokemon of all nations, catching them in the name of the Pickachu, Charmander, and Squirtle.

Matthew 28:18-19: And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

5. **PokeVerse:** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Pokedex?” And he said to him, “You shall love Professor Willow with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your Pokemon as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Pokedex.”

Matthew 22:36-40: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” And he said to them, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ [All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

6. **PokeVerse:** After this the Master appointed seventy-two trainers and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every PokeStop and gym where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, “The pokemon harvest is plentiful, but the trainers are few. Therefore ask earnestly of Professor Willow to send out trainers into his harvest.

Luke 10: 1-2: After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

7. **PokeVerse:** And Professor Willow said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Wild Pokemon.’”

Acts 22:21: And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

8. **PokeVerse:** “Peace be with you. As the Professor Willow has sent me, I am sending you.”

John 20:21 “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

8. **PokeVerse:** And how are they to train unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who train in the Pokedex!”

Romans 10:15: And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

9. **PokeVerse:** But you will receive Combat power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in the PokeUniverse, and in all the PokeStops and Gyms, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 8:1: But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

10. **PokeVerse:** Do your best to present yourself to Professor Willow as one approved, a trainer who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Pokedex.

Timothy 2:15: Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.