

Hang'n Tight with Jesus

MOVIE:
REMEMBER THE TITANS



Lesson Objective:

To show how an eternal perspective and a sense of togetherness are both needed in order to honor our commitment to follow Jesus over a lifetime.

Intro to the Movie:

The setting is 1971 at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia. It is the first school year for the newly desegregated high school. Herman Boone replaces Bill Yoast as the head football coach. Faced with what would seem to be insurmountable challenges of racism and prejudice that deeply divided both the community and the team, Coach Boone must find a way to unify his troops. This daunting task he accomplishes through rigorous practice sessions and intentional integration of all players, black and white. Their gut-wrenching workouts and early morning runs serve to bond them one to another. Through thick and thin, trial and hardship, the players grow to become one unit. That internal harmony gives way to success on the field. Not even All-American Gerry Bertier's career-ending accident soils the team's perfect season. In the end, the selfless dedication of all the coaches and players serves as a small snapshot of heaven, where diversity and unity join together for a common cause.

This movie has all sorts of application points, but the two that will be the focus for this lesson are Boone's visionary leadership and the sense of unity, or togetherness, he cultivated among his players. Despite countless obstacles, he led his team to an unblemished season and a state championship.

(The 3D lenses) As you introduce the movie, invite the teens to pay close attention to the key ingredients of T.C. Williams' success. See if they can identify at least six key leadership lessons. For those that have seen the movie multiple times, challenge

them to learn something new that they had not noticed yet, like the two military brats who join the team and how their racial attitudes play out.

Discussion Group Questions:

1. Which scene in this movie did you enjoy the most? Why?
2. Is there a character in the movie that you identify with better than others? If so who and why?
3. What did Herman Boone do right as head coach?
4. With the previous question in mind, read the following passages from Scripture (leaders may want to give a little context for each passage):
 - “So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above.” (Philippians 3:14).
 - “Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

These passages convey what Coach Boone demonstrated to his team: overcoming adversity on the journey toward victory. What qualities are reflected in these two Scripture passages that indicate hope toward eternal life?

Group Input:

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions.

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective: *If we are to hang tight with Jesus for the duration of our lives – that is to honor our commitment to align ourselves with him – we must maintain an eternal perspective (vision) and a sense of togetherness with other brothers and sisters in Christ.*

Bullet Objective:

Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:

Consider for a moment the sigh of relief this team breathed as the seconds ticked off the clock in the State Championship game. Can you imagine their sense of satisfaction and accomplishment? Do you think it made all the hard work, pain, and sacrifice worth it to hold the winner's trophy? You bet it did! Because when you're standing in the winner's circle, nothing else matters.

But, friends, check this out. The Christian race is not unlike the '71 Titans season. We have trials and hardship to overcome. This race is going to require sacrifice, discipline, hard work and focus. Following Jesus may cost us popularity points with friends at school. It might mean that we stand against the current and not do what everyone else is doing. It will mean that we constantly, persistently, relentlessly battle sin rather than caving into it. It will require death to self in order to live for Christ. And, folks, *that* hurts! It's hard work! Oh, it's good, but it is not easy. Seriously, nothing ever *worth* giving your life for is ever easy.

But get this: our struggle is not for a trophy that is here today and gone tomorrow. Our ultimate goal of the Christian race is Jesus Christ; he himself is the prize. Imagine looking into the eyes of your Creator, the one who *spoke* the universe into existence, and hearing him say with heartfelt gratitude, "Well done, you good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23). On that day, we'll look back on those trials – just as the '71 Titans did – and say to ourselves, "It was all worth it! I'd do it all over again." How many of you would love to hear Jesus commend you on a life well lived? That is the goal shared by all your youth leaders for each and every one of you. Your leaders are here to cheer you on and encourage you because they believe a life lived tight with Jesus, despite all the challenges that await us, is still the best possible existence.

So what do you have to do to get the prize? This movie can teach us two things: 1) perspective and 2) teamwork. Listen to this verse in Colossians 3:1-2:

¹You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne at the right side of God. ²Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth.

Where is Paul's heart focused? Heaven. What's in heaven? Christ. Where is Christ? On a throne right next to God. Where is Paul's mind fixed? Same place as his heart.

This isn't the only time Paul writes of maintaining an eternal perspective. Look at these verses in Philippians 3:12-14:

¹²I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to himself. ¹³Of course, my friends, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. ¹⁴So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above.

Does Paul admit that he has struggles? You bet! Yet does he allow them to deter him? No way. Where is Paul running? Straight toward Jesus. Isn't that remarkable? Do you know where Paul is when he penned these inspiring words? In prison, probably in Rome where he was under house arrest! Yet not even prison clouded his vision of eternity. If you want to finish well, you've got to maintain an eternal perspective.

There's a second thing you need to do: get together with other Christians who can encourage you. Notice, the '71 Titans spent a ton of time together on and off the field. They supported one another. Were they a perfect family? No, and neither do Christians make a perfect family; nevertheless, we still need one another. Listen to this piece of advice in Hebrews 10:24-25:

²⁴Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good. ²⁵Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.

What should Christians do? They should meet together regularly to encourage one another. Why would they need to encourage one another? For the same reason we need encouragement now because discouragement is always right around the corner. Here's the thing, gang, if you want to run this race well, you can't do it alone. We were not created to be this Lone Ranger who rides off into the sunset defeating villains and conquering bad guys single-handedly. No. We need to run together. It's been acknowledged that one of the most ridiculous slogans the Army ever came up with was "Army of one!" No way. Thankfully the more recent slogan has become "Army strong," which suggests a strength through unity! That's more like what Paul was talking about and what we see in the movie!

One slight word of caution: this is not to suggest we gather in a huddle and migrate as a group to chapel or church, then school, then small group, then to Club Beyond,

then back to family, and to church again. NO! That's called Holy Huddles. That's taking this idea of togetherness to an unhealthy extreme. The Titans still went home each night and spent time with other friends and family members. All we're saying is that throughout your life you need to make camaraderie with other Christians an intentional priority.

Challenge:

1. We challenge you to evaluate where your heart and mind are focused right now. Are you mostly concerned with temporal things? Or do you sincerely have your heart set on pleasing Jesus in all that you say and do? Ask God to help you understand where you stand with him right now.
2. We challenge you to get involved in a small group and to begin making Mass or chapel/church services a regular practice. See if you can attend a chapel service for at least eight times over the next three months.

Pray that God will give each student an eternal vision and desire to partner with other Christians.