

Use “The Scene” to introduce “The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for July 24, 2016. The lesson is found on page 49 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.



We crave stories of dramatic change. Just look at the headlines in any given week: they are filled with stories of excessive weight loss, celebrity haircuts, political upheavals, and amazing recoveries. Not all of the stories are about happy endings, but sometimes change not only turns out to be good—it turns out to be life changing. For Ralphie Koppelman, the source of such a change is Pokemon Go.

Ralphie is a 6-year-old from Queens and normally has trouble talking with people—even other kids. He often doesn’t make eye contact, panics when his routine changes, and struggles to play with other children. Ralphie is on the autism spectrum and has hyperlexia—a condition that means he can read very well, but has trouble processing verbal interactions. So, where most kids have little to no trouble going to the park, striking up conversations, and playing games with others—for Ralphie every one of those actions is hard work and brings on anxiety.

But ever since his mom, Lenore, downloaded (somewhat reluctantly) the extremely popular app, Ralphie has been playing it with other kids, making eye contact, and talking to people with relative ease about the characters in the game. Recently Ralphie asked to go to the park—something he would not normally do. His mom ended up hiding behind a slide in tears as Ralphie ran off happily to play with a crowd of kids. She was overwhelmed by the fact that her son was “suddenly part of this group that was all catching Pokemon together” (from Lisa Flam, Today online, <http://www.today.com/parents/how-pokemon-go-sparked-miracle-transformation-boy-autism-t100928>). She was amazed at how they included him. “It was this beautiful moment” she said, a moment when her son who struggled so much to do everyday things was suddenly “like every other kid.”

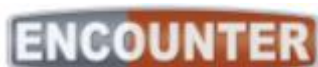
As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above article to read. Then discuss it in this way:

What do you think about this story? Have you ever known someone like Ralphie—someone who had a hard time fitting in?

Why do you think people like stories about change so much? How does the idea of change make you feel?

For Ralphie and his family, the use of the Pokemon Go game created a dramatic and immediate change for the better in their lives. Have you ever experienced a sudden change in your life that had either immediate good or bad effects? What happened and how did you handle it? If you haven’t experienced such a change, how do you think you would handle it? Would it be better for changes to happen gradually? Explain your reasons.

Sometimes the path to change and growth in a person can happen very suddenly. But in most cases, people experience a lot of obstacles along the way. We may experience obstacles in our spiritual lives when we try to grow and change. Let’s look at three obstacles to change that Jesus talked about in one of His parables.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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