

I have a confession to make. It might be a bit of a surprise. So I want you to brace yourself for the shock. Hi my name is Tommy and I'm a gamer. A problem family and friends have been helping me with for years. The first step is admitting right? Wikipedia says: "A "gamer" is someone who [partakes in interactive gaming](#), such as (predominantly) [video games](#) or [board games](#) *The term nominally includes those who do not necessarily consider themselves to be gamers.*"

The problem is I became a Gamer long before I knew what that was. I didn't realize that my affinity and *skill* -if I can be honest- for gaming was encouraging things in me like my competitiveness. Games, especially online games, love to let you know how you stack up. They have leaderboards (that show you what % you are in every category), ranking systems, and any way you can think to show you where you stand). It was an avenue to measure myself up against others (Check the scoreboard so to speak). Gaming gives me an outlet to see continual success, to acquire achievements, to get trophies and awards. It doesn't really matter what type of game it could be Candy Crush, Xbox, board games as long as I can earn achievements... I'm in (my poor c group has gotten to see this first hand)! No One knew what they were getting into. I was actually looking at one of my favorite games this week "Halo". I would say I have a slight addiction because my hours played is no longer translated into hours more like days and weeks (so when I read that number it scared me a little). Halo 2 the best Xbox game made by far "yup I said it"!! Best Xbox game ever made, also remastered for Xbox one, HD video, and just rereleased! Oh sorry I got off topic.

(1 addicted pic) Anyways I'm just mildly into this game. When it first came out I wouldn't give up till I had gotten every single achievement, award, and top rank which was a level 50 but took the form of a Ring(you know my precious oh' sorry different story) which was the sign of top Halo multiplayer perfection!!!! Which only 10% of 5 million Halo players worldwide held.... It was a select group by far. So when I made it I knew I had arrived as close as I could to Halo perfection.

Now I know some of you might not be obsessed or have that special game like Halo. Some of you might not even own a game console. I am sure all of you can relate to or have dabbled in something that has gotten you addicted. I'm sure I have some Candy Crush rivals, some serious Clash of Clans trophy scores, some epic Farms on Farmville? I know, I know, don't act innocent I keep getting requests and invites on Facebook. I have enough addictions don't feed me more!

We are addicted to achievement and it's not just games anymore. These days even apps that have nothing to do with games have badges and achievements. Think about it. Apps like yelp, shopkick, Netflix, Hulu? (2 apps pic) In fact, companies made their apps this way because they know we love achievement so much, they know that we'll use the app more. So every app we own becomes a competition, a challenge, and a silent contest to show our friends how awesome we are...what? checking in at Fuzzy's. If you haven't caught on let me fill you in.... Companies have been transforming their apps, advertising and approach to a gaming format. The research that game and app designers have done confirm that achievements, badges, and awards release the same endorphins in our minds that a real life achievement does! (Like when I check in on Yelp and get a badge, or when I eat at Fuzzy tacos 4xs and Yelp celebrates it by calling me the Taco King) Yelp knows if they celebrate this I will use the app more.

They have added trophies and badges. The craziness is its working. Because we love to achieve in real life or not. We are addicted to achievement as a culture we are obsessed with performancism. Performancism is defining ourselves by what we do, achieve, or earn. I mean how many of us would want to know where we stand. To see our names on the scoreboard see what we need so we can move

up the ranks. How many of us would like to see where we stand with our coworkers, vs. all the candidates for that new job interview. How about a scoreboard on dating, marriage (I know I could use one), maybe a scoreboard on parenting, or friendship. How about a scoreboard on where we stand in this world or a scoreboard where we stand with God.

Wouldn't it be nice if God worked that way? If every time we came to Church, or read our Bibles or prayed or served or went to C-Group, we got a badge? In fact, you're all here today, so here you go! [Then BOOM, badge and chime]

(3 attendance pic) **"How'd that feel?"**

What if every time we came to church or a church event we could count on getting that achievement? How'd that feel? It felt good right? The endorphins are kicking in. Because we have a habit of getting our worth or value from what we achieve. The problem is, we can't see our spiritual achievements. If God has a leaderboard we can't see it. We don't say it that way, but we sort of assume God is keeping score too. My church attendance, my random acts of kindness, my giving. The thing that scares us with God is we can't see the scoreboard. We have anxiety maybe even fear over it. Am I doing enough? Am I getting enough? Am I getting in? Is God pleased with me? Am I good enough? All we want is for some way to see the scoreboard. For God to tell us where we are. Where we stand and what we need to do to make sure we are in!

What if I told you God doesn't have a scoreboard? That when it comes to religion, God is better than yelp, better than farmvilles, better even better than Halo! What if, what if we knew that our worth could come not from what we can do for God, but what God has done for us? What if our value is not based on our efforts, but God's love? That sounds like good news!

[Scripture Slide] Sounds too good to be true, but that's exactly what Paul tells the church in the first century. If you have your bible, bible app, or another way to view turn to: 1 Corinthians 1. If you grabbed one of our free bibles on the way in, you can find 1 Corinthians on page XXX. And if you don't own a bible, keep that as a gift from us. Now, as you're turning to 1 Corinthians 1 I want to tell you a little about Corinth.

Corinth was a city that couldn't quite get anything right. They celebrated just backwards thinking of all kinds from suing each other, deceiving each other, worshiping many gods and more. You name it, it was going on in Corinth and the church was just following the world around them. If God had a scoreboard and if this were "Halo" you would definitely want these guys on the other team. They are the players that are so bad they get wiped out by the other team like 50-0. Which is good because I'm sure the internet in Corinth was horrible and it would just slow the game down anyway. Well the point is they were the worst. So let's look at what Paul the guy who founded the church had to say to them in response after he received a letter. Look at how he responds to this messed up church full of losers and newbies (that's game talk for amateurs)

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— God thus confirming our

testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. -- 1 Corinthians 1:2-9

Paul knows the Corinthians. He knows what is going on, but doesn't call them losers or newbies. Because that's not who they are. They are not ranked by how and what they have done. They are ranked by what God has done. Did you notice how Paul addresses them? Paul called them the Church of God who is sanctified in Christ called to be his holy people. **(Pause let it sink in count to 3)**

Is anyone else confused? He goes on to say God has already given them everything they need, that God has even enriched them and they lack nothing. That God is doing the work to keep them blameless. How can Paul pretend people who are clearly losing at the God game are so high on the scoreboard?

Because, let's call it like it is: if there's a scoreboard, Corinth loses..... Do I need to remind you what was going on we could even say "Viva La Corinth" because Corinthians was pretty much Sin City of Paul's day. And the church wasn't any better. If you read the rest of Corinthians and come back to our passage you're going to go, "how in the world can you say this Paul?"

Paul knows God isn't keeping track of how many good things you do. God doesn't have a secret ranking system. Paul knows there's is no scoreboard **(pause)** and that's actually very good news!! Because no one can Rank number 1. We feel like when we are ranking ourselves we find purpose and fulfillment, but that never fulfills us. We always feel like we don't measure up. Well the fact is you're right. There is a thought and belief out there that we can earn our way. I'm guilty of this myself thinking it's about my actions and my rank on the scoreboard and as long as I am in the top % I'm good to go. Read my bible, say my prayers, attend church, acts of kindness, and give to the needy. This thinking is what leads to how our culture interacts with Christianity and this is what that looks like.

(4 scoreboard pic) I mean who can compete with the creator of In and Out??? Let alone the others? Do we really want to be ranked against them? Of course not! If there's a ranking, we're ALL losers. That's why its Good news that according to Paul, there is no scoreboard. Jesus blew it up! There's is no scoreboard. Game over, mission accomplished. Boom! Done! Now that's good news!!! You don't have to try to earn or work or achieve anything. God loves you and is with you and that's just the end of it. That's Good news!!!!

Now that does raise some pretty interesting questions doesn't it? If I don't have to do anything..... then what do I do? Nothing I just sit around. Of course not! That's is the Good news here that Paul reveals to the Corinthians and to us. Because there is no scoreboard and because we don't have to do anything. No scoreboard means Freedom we are free to respond... our response, our good work, is an overflow of our thankfulness and appreciation.

When someone gives you an amazing Christmas gift like let's say an XBOX one with 5 games one of them being Halo Master Chief Collection, and an extra controller. For me the gift doesn't get any better than that. Maybe you have something different in mind, but imagine that gift whether it be a cell phone, TV, iPod, new car, whatever. Imagine you just received your ideal gift. We don't have to *try* to be thankful. We just *are* and we *respond* to that. If that's not how we feel we missed something.

(5 dinner pic) So one time when I was out eating with some friends. It was late in my senior year in High School. I can't even remember where we were going somewhere we always had some big plans. We were so oblivious to the world and what was going on around us. As our group got louder and louder I noticed a couple in the corner. It seemed as though we were interrupting their meal with our high school drama. As we continued about our way I'm not sure when the couple left, but I won't forget when our group got up to pay. We went to the register and the lady smiled and said our group had been paid for. I didn't understand. I asked the waitress who paid? Why did they pay? How can I pay it back. I'm not okay with this. She said there's nothing I can do. The couple we had not only inconvenienced and made leave paid for our meal even though we ruined their night out. I owed them I had to pay it back. If someone has to talk you into being excited about what we have been given we've missed something. The person trying to earn or bargain has missed the opportunity to revel in the gift and enjoy it and live life. We need to reexamine ourselves and the gift of Freedom that was given and make sure we aren't taking for granted or trying to earn what's been given, or forget to cherish it and show our thankfulness. You see Paul is calling out to them and to us "you guys are awesome....God has given you so much worth, gifts, and knowledge.

You see this doesn't compute.....No scoreboard.....No awards..... NO trophies..... your world might be shaking and falling apart. You might not know how to take part in this world it can be confusing. How do you become a level 50 in Christianity? How do you become part of the top 10%? How can you get better? How can you earn with God? Maybe you can't see where the end game is if you don't have the scoreboard, the timer, the rules, the trophies. Maybe you have never seen a scoreboard. Maybe you don't know how to get started. Paul never brings up a rank or earning anything because it's not about the scoreboard. It's about what God has done, is doing, and will do. **Cause earning is about what will happen. Responding is about what has happened. (Repeat)**

That's what it really comes down to: We're waiting on God to move, to show up. That's what the Season of Advent is all about- waiting? Preparing. We honestly don't like this. It doesn't fit into our world of badges and achievements and earning and leaderboards. We come back to the same question every time: It still feels like I'm not earning, not achieving, it still feels like I don't do anything. Is that right? The answer is simply no... Picture Christmas we all wait on Christmas some of us start waiting December 26th, but does that mean our waiting is passive? That we don't do anything? Of course not! Can you imagine Christmas morning without a Christmas tree, no presents, no lights, no elf on a shelf, and no food. I know we can't imagine that or maybe some wish that was the case.

(6 active pic) Our waiting for Christmas is active. Waiting for Christmas is shopping, wrapping presents, and picking menus, picking venues, telling stories about Santa. Even as much as making a little elf move around every room in the house and create scenes of chaos. All this waiting requires action, planning, effort, and preparation. We don't just sit around waiting for things to happen we make a way, we prepare, and we put things in order.

In the same way, our waiting for God Jesus to return, and make the world right isn't passive. It's active! We prepare for what God will do then by responding to what God has already done - which was eliminate the scoreboard. So for many of us up to this point, some of us have we lived life on a scoreboard. Especially when it comes to our walk with God our religion this life. A way of life that never fulfills, a scoreboard that never gives assurance. A religion that's just about achievements and trophies? Are we going to miss out on what God is doing in the world stay away from God or Jesus because of the scoreboard? Are we going to miss out on God's Way being made known to the world avoid God or Jesus because of the rules? Or, or are we going to follow Jesus's call to "life" that Paul Echoes in Corinthians,

and Respond to with God's love and Freedom, by bringing that life to the world in which we live. Are we going to live like Jesus called us to.....? See, we serve a God who calls us to live outside of the scoreboards and achievements, and reminds us that the games over, that we don't have to earn anything. This is how we actively wait on God?

How do we put this into practice? I don't know exactly what that looks like for you, but we have to look for ways to bring God's way into the here and now. It can start with prayer and reflection, to remind ourselves that it's not about performancism or any kind of earning. Maybe we practice It can start by being thankful, I mean truly thankful, for what has been done in us, and for what he wants to do through us. Maybe we prepare ourselves and those around us. Maybe we put effort into Eventually, we will need to put actions to our words, by loving and bringing life to those that our lifeless around us this world while This is what it means to we actively wait.

Let's take a moment just pause and think to yourself I want you to ask yourselves a few questions.....

1. When is the last week did I tried to earn God's love?
2. When in the last week did I live into God's love and outside the scoreboard?
3. Where in next week will I be tempted to try to earn God's love?
4. How can I freely respond to God's love this week?