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# How Gaming can open doors for Spiritual Conversations during the WORLD CUP

## The World Cup [of Opportunities]

By Jonathan Ober

Every four years, the World Cup captures the world's attention. For a few short weeks, conversations about goals, teams, and national pride are everywhere — at work, at school, in group texts, and around kitchen tables.

Millions of people don't just watch the World Cup. They play it. Soccer video games like EA Sports FC 26 (formerly FIFA) see a spike in activity during major tournaments. Friends compete as their favorite national teams. Students organize dorm tournaments. Neighbors play late into the night after watching a live match.

When a global sports moment meets a global gaming culture, the opportunity for connection multiplies.

So how can gaming be used effectively to engage gamers spiritually during the World Cup?

The answer is simple: use gaming as a bridge for relationships.

### Gaming is today's "front porch"

There was a time when neighbors gathered on front porches. Later, it was coffee shops. Today, for many people — especially teens and young adults — connection happens through a headset and a controller.

Gaming isn't just entertainment. It's a community.

Players talk about life while waiting for a match to load. They celebrate wins together. They process losses together. Over time, trust builds.



If we want to reach people, we have to be willing to step into the spaces where they already feel comfortable. During the World Cup, gaming becomes one of those spaces.

## Connecting with players

Gamers can quickly sense when someone sees them as a project. If people feel they're being targeted rather than valued, walls go up.

Instead, focus on genuine connection.

Invite friends over for a World Cup gaming night. Host a small tournament in your home. Join your teenager and their friends for a few matches. Celebrate great plays. Lose graciously. And if conversation happens, let it happen naturally. Often, the most meaningful spiritual discussions don't begin with a Bible verse. They begin with shared experiences.

## Conversations on the pitch

The World Cup is filled with themes that matter: identity, teamwork, pressure, hope, and belonging. Gaming reflects those same themes.

After a match — virtual or real — simple questions can open deeper conversations:

- "Why do you think people care so much about representing their country?"
- "What makes a team successful?"
- "How do you handle pressure in high-stakes situations?"

These aren't "church" questions. They're life questions.

From there, it's natural to talk about where we find our identity, how we define success, and what gives us lasting hope. Spiritual conversations don't have to feel forced. They often grow out of everyday moments.

The Apostle Paul gives us practical guidance in Colossians 4:5–6 (NIV):

"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt..."

The World Cup is an opportunity. Gaming is an opportunity.

Paul doesn't tell us to pressure people. He tells us to be wise. He tells us to make the most of the moment. And he reminds us that our conversations should be full of grace.



That matters in gaming culture.

Online spaces can sometimes be filled with sarcasm, anger, and trash talk. When a Christian responds with patience, encouragement, and humility, it stands out.

When you win, show humility.

When you lose, keep perspective.

When others get frustrated, respond calmly.

Being “seasoned with salt” means being thoughtful and engaging. It means listening well. Asking good questions. Sharing honestly when the moment is right.

Over time, people begin to notice something different — and they may ask why.

## Building friendships on and off the field

One practical way to use gaming during the World Cup is to combine it with live match gatherings.

Here’s a simple approach:

1. Host a World Cup watch party.
2. Before or after the match, run a short soccer video game tournament.
3. Create space for conversation and connection.
4. Share a brief reflection on teamwork, unity, or hope.

The gaming element lowers barriers. Someone who might hesitate to attend a church event will often gladly attend a tournament.

The World Cup will come and go. The headlines will fade. The champions will celebrate and move on.

But the relationships you build can last.

Gaming is not a distraction from ministry. For many people, it’s where community already exists. When you step into that space with wisdom and grace, you are simply meeting people where they are.

So grab a controller. Open your home. Put on a headset. Show up with kindness.

And trust that God can use even a virtual soccer match to spark very real spiritual conversations.



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*Jonathan serves as a production manager on the FamilyLife Web Content team. His work includes maintaining the site design and development for the FamilyLife.com suite of websites including the Store, Learn Resources, Weekend to Remember and more. Jonathan also serves on the video game outreach team hosting online events in the Torn Veil Tower Discord and in-person events at local colleges and schools, and streaming online on Twitch.*

