



SMALL GROUP OUTLINES



SUMMER 2023

These Small Group Outlines are produced by the Youth and Children's Ministry Unit in collaboration with Kay Moorby (soulwithaview). They are available every month from our website.

For more information and other resources, visit salvationist.org.uk/resources/youth-ministry-resources

Regular routines are often disrupted during the summer months and so we have provided four flexible sessions for you to use as appropriate.

SESSION ONE:

LISTEN TO A SONG

Wretch 32's song '6 Words' provides an opportunity to explore the idea of treasure. Drawing on the words of Matthew 6:19-21, the group will consider what they treasure the most and give thanks for their blessings.

SESSION TWO:

LOOK AT A PICTURE

In today's session, we will use Rembrandt's painting 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' as a starting point for reflection on the well-known story found in Luke's Gospel. We will consider each character and discover how we can apply to our own lives the lessons of grace found in this story.

SESSION THREE:

EXPLORE NATURE

Today's session gives the group the opportunity to explore nature and spend time observing God's amazing creation. Whether it's a local park, beauty spot, or even a back garden, encourage the group to gather for a time of reflection in the great outdoors.

SESSION FOUR:

WATCH A FILM

For this week's session, you will need to get out the popcorn for a film night. Structured slightly differently from previous sessions, the group can watch the film *Soul Survivor* and then discuss the content together. This tale of triumph over adversity reminds us of God's faithfulness through all situations and circumstances.

Any text in italics represents notes for the leader. It gives more context around the Scripture/activity. You may choose to share verbatim, summarise or not share at all.

LISTEN TO A SONG

Wretch 32's song '6 Words' provides an opportunity to explore the idea of treasure. Drawing on the words of Matthew 6:19-21, the group will consider what they treasure the most and give thanks for their blessings.

WELCOME

Each session throughout summer is based on an activity we can do together.

The activities are as follows:

- * Listen to a song
- * Look at a picture
- * Explore nature
- * Watch a film

Today we are going to listen to a song, so let's start by discovering what kind of songs you like to listen to.

Encourage the group to discuss a range of sacred and secular songs.

Which is their favourite song? Why do they like it?


What song can't they stand? How do they react when they hear it?

Which songs bring back specific memories?

Think of a special event. What song would you choose to accompany it?

What song gets stuck in your head like an earworm?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

-  What is your favourite lyric in a song? Why is it so special to you?

WORD

Wretch 32 is an English rapper from London (real name Jermain Scott Sinclair). His mother was from Jamaica, where 'wretch' meant slim or skinny. She called him 'Wretch' as a child, and the name stuck. He says 32 is his 'lucky' number and he thought it would be fun to have as a surname. In 2011, Wretch 32 had three top-five charting songs from his debut album *Black and White* and amassed over a million record sales. In 2012 he was used by both Adidas and Coca-Cola as one of their main faces of the London 2012 Olympic campaigns. His career has continued to develop with awards and nominations at the Urban Music Awards and MOBOs. He is still producing music today!

Share the lyrics with the group for the song '6 Words' below.

Lyrics:

**I can't sing but I wrote you a song, yeah
Wrong notes but the melody's so clear
When I'm lost, I'm still close to gold 'cause I found my treasure in you
And that's priceless spending, now let me count my blessings
1 life, 2 children
3 times, 4 dreaming,
5 senses, 6 words
I found my treasure in you
And that's priceless spending, now let me count my blessings
Bronze, silver, gold ... no, it's you**

I found my treasure in you
Nothing less than that will do
'Cause I found my treasure in you

— Songwriters: Jermaine Scott / Olaniyi Akinkunmi / Varren Wade / Moses Samuels
'6 Words' lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Ltd, Razor And Tie Music Publishing, Songz Of
Frequency, Frequency Songz, Songs Of Peer Ltd, Beyond Our Environment Inc


Before we listen to the song, what do you think Wretch 32 is trying to say in these lyrics?

Listen to the song together.

 **Watch: Wretch 32 – '6 Words' (Official Video) (3:41)**


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGIYXuZIWBY>

Although this song is not explicitly written from a Christian perspective, it helps us to explore the theme of treasure found within Scripture.

 What comes to mind when you think of the word 'treasure'?

Most people think of treasure as items that have high value, such as precious jewels and gold. Treasures are items that we value and want to have. Much of the treasure we find in the world has only short-term benefits and can often bring more problems than benefits. Spiritual treasure, though, is of eternal value and comes from knowing and serving God. The Bible tells us clearly to focus on treasure in Heaven, rather than devote our lives to something that will soon be gone.

 What sort of things do we, as Christians, consider to be treasure?

 How is this different from the way the world views treasure?

Treasure is a word that is used in the Bible in many ways.

Give each member of the group a 'Treasures' handout. Explore the references on the handout (full Scriptures shown below) and discuss how treasure is represented in Scripture.

The following Scripture verses are from the *New International Version*.

⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

— (1 TIMOTHY 6:9-10)

**¹ My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
² turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding –
³ indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
⁴ and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.**

— (PROVERBS 2:1-5)

⁶ For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.


— (DEUTERONOMY 7:6)

³¹ will give you hidden treasures,
riches stored in secret places,
so that you may know that I am the Lord,
the God of Israel, who summons you by name.
— (ISAIAH 45:3)

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God
and not from us.
— (2 CORINTHIANS 4:7)

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it
again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.
⁴⁵ ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found
one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.
— (MATTHEW 13:44-46)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 How does *The Voice* translation give a fresh understanding of the words of Matthew 6:19-21?



¹⁹ Some people store up treasures in their homes here on earth. *This is a shortsighted practice*
– don’t undertake it. Moths and rust will eat up any treasure you may store here. Thieves
may break *into your homes* and steal *your precious trinkets*. ²⁰ Instead, put up your treasures in
heaven where moths do not attack, where rust does not corrode, and where thieves are barred
at the door. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
— (MATTHEW 6:19-21 VOICE)

WITNESS

One of the key phrases in the song ‘6 Words’ is ‘Now let me count my blessings’. We’re going to take the
opportunity to do that now.

*Wretch 32 represented his blessings in the words of a rap, but this activity should give the group an opportunity
to express their blessings in their own way. They could create artwork, poetry, music, or even a simple list of
the many blessings God has given them. You know your group, so can provide the resources they need for their
preferred ways to express themselves. When they have had time to count their blessings, encourage them to
share with the rest of the group.*

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

-  Do you spend most of your time counting your blessings or counting your troubles?
-  Which do you think brings more joy in life?

WORSHIP

*The group will now have an opportunity to listen to ‘6 Words’ again. As they do, encourage them to reflect on the
discussions from today and think about where they place their treasure. Give each member of the group a piece of
paper to write a prayer or reflection as they listen to the music. When the track has finished, the group can share
their prayers together.*

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Prior to the session, set up a playlist of the following songs and share it with the group. Encourage them to listen to a track each day and reflect on Matthew 6:19-21.

'Treasure' – Worship Mob

'You are my All in All' – Hillsong

'Lifeline' – Hillsong Young and Free

'You are my Vision' – Rend Collective

'Treasure' – Separation Band

'Jesus, my Treasure' – Canyon Hills Worship

'Treasure' – Madison Street Worship

TREASURES




LOOK AT A PICTURE

In today's session we will use Rembrandt's painting 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' as a starting point for reflection on the well-known story found in Luke's Gospel. We will consider each character and discover how we can apply to our own lives the lessons of grace found in this story.

WELCOME

Today's session is all about art and we're focusing on Rembrandt's depiction of a famous biblical scene. To get us in an artistic mood, we're going to play a game of guess the painting.

The clip sets out rules at the start if you would like to play the game individually. You may want to play as a group instead, as some of them are quite tricky. The picture is shown, a ten-second timer ticks down, and then the answer is revealed. It's quite a long clip, so just play the game for as long as you think your group will be interested.

 Which piece of artwork stood out for you and why did you like it?

 **Watch: General Knowledge Quiz II Guess the Painting (8:08)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uG8IXFPd2JI>

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 **Watch: Amsterdam – Rembrandt Flashmob – The Night Watch -HD (1:05)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiC2CXtCFxY>

WORD


The story of the prodigal son was the inspiration behind our piece of artwork for today. Although this story will be familiar to many of us, that familiarity may mean that we miss the message God has for us. Hopefully, Rembrandt's creation will give you a fresh perspective on the story.


Read or watch the story of the prodigal son with the group. Both Scriptures are taken from the English Standard Version.

Read:

 **The Parable of the Prodigal Son – (Luke 15:11-32 ESV)**
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15%3A11-32+%26version=ESV>

 **Watch: Lumo Project Gospel of Luke 15:11-32 (3:47)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNUEdx6jYCo>

 What aspect of the story particularly stood out for you?

 Share anything new that you noticed in the story.

Share the image of 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' with the group. A range of postcards and posters of the painting are available online.

The Return of the Prodigal Son is an oil painting by the Dutch artist Rembrandt. The painting depicts the moment that the prodigal son, from the parable of Jesus, returns home and is welcomed by his father. This moment encapsulates all that we know about grace and forgiveness. Some people claim this is the greatest picture that Rembrandt ever painted, likely completed within two years of his death.

Begin your group discussion by describing the picture together and discussing the people that you can see. Who do the group members think each person represents?

Ask each person to consider silently which person in the picture they feel most represents them.

Discuss Rembrandt's representation of the different characters. Which choices do you agree/disagree with?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If the group would like to discover more about Rembrandt and his depiction of the story of the prodigal son, then watch and discuss the clip together.

Leaders please note there is an image of painted nudity at 1:20.

▶ Watch: The Tragic Real Life Story of Rembrandt (3:59)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fs4uHfZh3S4&t=105s>

WITNESS

The group will now have the opportunity to reflect and apply the story. Each member of the group will need to be able to view the text below which includes extracts from Henri Nouwen's book 'The Return of the Prodigal Son'. There are three activities that can be used in several ways depending on your group. You could allocate a character to smaller groups and ask them to feed back to everyone, or discuss each character as a whole group. If there is insufficient time to complete all the characters in the session, then you could send the group the link the small group material page so they can carry on their reflection at home.

THE RETURNING SON

The son is resting against the father. Notice he is dressed in rags, rags that betray the great misery that lies behind him. The son had left home with much pride and money, determined to live his own life far away from his father and his community. He returns with nothing: his money, his health, his honour, his self-respect, his reputation ... everything has been squandered. Even his head has been shaven like that of a common prisoner whose name has been replaced by a number. He has no red cloak like the elder son to give him status and dignity.

The soles of his feet tell the story of a long and humiliating journey. The left foot slipped out of its worn sandal, is scarred. The right foot, only partially covered by a broken sandal, also speaks of suffering and misery. This is a man disposed of everything except for one thing, his sword on his right hip, the only remaining sign of dignity, the badge of his nobility. The sword is the symbol of his sonship.

The sword is there to show us that, although he came back speaking as a beggar and an outcast, he had not forgotten that he still was the son of his father. It was this remembered and valued sonship that finally persuaded him to turn back.

The son is oblivious to the stares of the bystanders, only aware of the presence of the father and the heartbeat of this elderly man who holds him.

— THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON – HENRI NOUWEN

In what ways do you 'run away' from God?

What is your greatest experience of grace? How did that feel?

Have you ever felt unconditional love? How does it feel?

Put yourself in the son's place. How does it feel to have the heavenly Father hugging you, enclosing you in his loving arms, even when you don't deserve it?

THE ELDER SON

Standing in the background is the elder son. Less confident, and suspicious of such prodigal love displayed by his ageing father, he hesitates on the verge of the action. He hovers on the edge of the light that surrounds his father and his younger brother and yet absorbs it almost involuntarily. His face betrays feelings of puzzlement mixed with bitterness and contempt. He cannot bring himself to step over his anger and allow his father's love to heal him as well. Pride holds him back, and yet

deep down he desires his father's love. The inner battle being waged within is not only portrayed on his face but also in the wringing of his tightly gripped hands. We can all empathise with the older brother's feelings. In our minds, we may find it totally unacceptable that the father would not only receive the younger son back, but would do so with such celebration. Does this mean that disloyalty, shameless immoral living and wastefulness get rewarded, while loyalty and obedience go unrecognised?

It is understandable that, in principle, we would commiserate with the elder brother. He had done nothing wrong. He had lived by the rules. He had not left home. He had not broken his father's heart.

But Grace isn't fair; people get what they don't deserve. Parties are thrown for younger brothers who act inappropriately, who waste their inheritance, bring shame on their family. The father gave his son the gift of grace, of kindness, even though it was undeserved. He had every right to be angry and hurt, but he put those feelings aside.

— THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON – HENRI NOUWEN

If you were the older brother, what do you think the father should have done to your brother?

What situations cause you to feel 'on the edge' or isolated?

What sorts of things make you jealous?

How quick are you to forgive others?

What things are happening in the world today that require forgiveness?

THE LOVING FATHER

This is a painting of a man in a great red cloak, tenderly touching the shoulders of a dishevelled boy kneeling before him. We see a half-blind old man with a moustache and a parted beard, dressed in a gold embroidered garment and a deep red cloak, laying his large stiffened hands on the shoulders of his returning son. This great red cloak, with its warm colour and its arch-like shape, offers a welcome place where it is good to be.

Rembrandt portrays a very still father who recognises his son, not with the eyes of the body alone, but with the inner eye of his heart. It seems that the hands that touch the back of the returning son are the instruments of the father's inner eye. We are drawn by the intimacy between the two figures, the warm red of the man's cloak, the golden yellow of the boy's tunic, and the mysterious light engulfing the two. But most of all, it is the hands, the old man's hands, as they touch the boy's shoulders – they symbolise compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, unconditional love and inner healing.

Focus now on the Father's hands

The true centre of Rembrandt's painting is the hands of the father. The two hands are quite different. The father's left hand, touching the son's shoulder, is strong and muscular. The fingers are spread out and cover a large part of the prodigal's shoulder and back. We can see a certain pressure, especially the thumb. That hand seems not only to touch, but with its strength, also to hold. Even though there is a gentleness in the way the father's left hand touches the son, it is not without a firm grip.

How different is the father's right hand? This hand does not hold or grasp. It is refined, soft, and very tender. The fingers are close to each other and they have an elegant quality. This hand lies gently on the son's shoulder. It wants to caress, to stroke, and to offer consolation and comfort. It is a mother's hand.

On them, all the light is concentrated; in them, mercy becomes flesh; upon them, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing come together. Through them, not only the tired son but the worn-out father find their rest.

— THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON – HENRI NOUWEN

What words would you use to describe the father's welcoming home of the son, eg forgiveness, mercy, grace?

In what ways have you experienced any of the above words in your life?

Is there any part of you that needs to return to the father's loving embrace?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

 What is your response to the following quote?

“ ‘The difference between mercy and grace? Mercy gave the prodigal son a second chance. Grace gave him a feast.’

— MAX LUCADO

WORSHIP

Use the hymn 'Amazing Grace' in a time of worship and prayer. There are lots of different versions on YouTube. You may prefer a traditional version or a more modern one (try Chris Tomlin or Hillsong). As you listen to the words, look again at Rembrandt's painting.

Encourage the group to thank God that he will always love us and welcome us into his arms any time you turn to him.

If it's helpful, you could tell the group the story behind the hymn. 'Amazing Grace' was written by John Newton in 1779. In his early life John Newton spent many years involved in the slave trade, and even became the captain of a slave ship. He was known for his rebellious behaviour, bad attitude, foul language and drunkenness. One day the ship John Newton was on ran into a violent storm. The crew faced certain death. In this moment of deep despair, John cried out to God and began to repent of all his wrong living. This marked the turning point of his life and he began to live for God. He later became a church pastor and it is said that he wrote a new hymn for his church every week! He also became a prominent supporter of the campaign to abolish the slave trade.

'Amazing Grace' Lyrics

¹ Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

² 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

³ Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me Home.

⁴ When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

— JOHN NEWTON (1725-1807) (VERSES 1-3), JOHN P REES (1828-1900) (VERSE 4)

'Amazing Grace' – Options

'Amazing Grace' – Chris Tomlin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-4NFvI5U9w>

(This video references the movie Amazing Grace telling the story of William Wilberforce and his campaign against the slave trade.)

'Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)' – Pentatonix

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Obp-9BEZe1c>

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

The original words of 'Amazing Grace' are shown on your handout. Use them as a starting point to write your own prayer of thanks for the grace God has shown to you. Share your prayer with the rest of the group.

EXPLORE NATURE

Today's session gives the group the opportunity to explore nature and spend time observing and enjoying God's amazing creation. Whether it's a local park, beauty spot, or even a back garden, encourage the group to gather for a time of reflection in the great outdoors.

WELCOME

Ask the group to share their favourite aspects of creation.

Discuss the following questions:

- 🗨️ Where would you take someone to show them the wonder of God's creation?
- 🗨️ What is your favourite season? Explain why.
- 🗨️ What's the most amazing example of God's creation that you've ever witnessed?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

Discuss the following quote.

“ I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting station, through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune in.”

— GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

- 🗨️ What do you think George Washington Carver means?

WORD/WITNESS

God speaking through creation or the natural world means that when we look up at the stars or gaze at a meadow covered with wildflowers, we see the fingerprints of God. The more we fix our eyes on the wonder of creation, the more we must conclude that these things could not make themselves. God speaks through the order and design we find in creation, but also through the jaw-dropping beauty that surrounds us. When we turn our hearts and minds to nature and God's amazing creation, our hearts will be filled with love and praise for the creator.

For this group session it would be ideal if you could get the group outside into nature. Anywhere will do – your local park, a woodland/forest, beach, cliff top, sunrise, sunset, flower meadow, farm, nature reserve, river bank, community garden, hilltop, moorland, or even some star-gazing.

The idea is that you take your group out somewhere to look for God's creative nature at work and to connect with him in a new and fresh way. Go out in an attitude of prayer and worship and with eyes open to discover God in different surroundings.

Give each member of the group a 'Nature Grid' handout. Talk through the activities on the grid and explain that they will have time to reflect individually during this session using a range of activities. If the group would like to work in pairs, then they can use one grid as a noughts and crosses board completing the appropriate activity listed in the box. Alternatively, they can reflect individually, using the activities as a starting point. When the group have been given sufficient time, bring them back together to share the activities they have completed.

WORSHIP

Read Psalm 148 together.

A separate handout is provided for Psalm 138, but this could be copied on to the back of the 'Nature Grid'.

Psalm 148


- ¹ Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens!
Praise him from the skies!
- ² Praise him, all his angels!
Praise him, all the armies of heaven!
- ³ Praise him, sun and moon!
Praise him, all you twinkling stars!
- ⁴ Praise him, skies above!
Praise him, vapours high above the clouds!
- ⁵ Let every created thing give praise to the Lord,
for he issued his command, and they came into being.
- ⁶ He set them in place for ever and ever.
His decree will never be revoked.
- ⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth,
you creatures of the ocean depths,
- ⁸ fire and hail, snow and clouds,
wind and weather that obey him,
- ⁹ mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,
- ¹⁰ wild animals and all livestock,
small scurrying animals and birds,
- ¹¹ kings of the earth and all people,
rulers and judges of the earth,
- ¹² young men and young women,
old men and children.
- ¹³ Let them all praise the name of the Lord.
For his name is very great;
his glory towers over the earth and heaven!
- ¹⁴ He has made his people strong,
honouring his faithful ones –
the people of Israel who are close to him.
- Praise the Lord!

— (PSALM 148 MSG)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

The song 'How Great Thou Art' demonstrates the many awesome aspects of God's creation.

If the setting is appropriate, then listen to the song together and read through the extract from 'How Great Thou Art' to bring the session to a close.

 Listen: Shane & Shane: 'How Great Thou Art' (5:06)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EueRjHaGbS4>

Verse two reads:

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountains grandeur,
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!*
*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!*

— STUART WESLEY KEENE HINE

NATURE GRID

<p>Explore the following Bible verses.</p> <p>What do they have to say about God's creation?</p> <p>Colossians 1:16</p> <p>Genesis 1:1-2</p> <p>Revelation 4:11</p> <p>Jeremiah 32:17</p> <p>Psalms 19:1</p>	<p>Take a moment to plug in your earphones and listen to the following piece of music as you sit peacefully in your surroundings.</p> <p>'So Will I (100 Billion X)'</p> <p>Hillsong Worship</p>	<p>Think of a tune that you know well. Write new lyrics that show the wonder of God's creation.</p>
<p>Create a photo reel of the examples of nature you see around you.</p> <p>Choose an appropriate Bible verse that complements your pictures of nature.</p>	<p>Write a prayer of thanksgiving for an aspect of nature that you see around you.</p>	<p>As you sit and listen to your surroundings, what sounds can you hear?</p> <p>Jot them down on a list or create images representing each sound.</p> <p>What aspects of God's creation do these sounds demonstrate?</p>
<p>Imagine the scene in front of you as it progresses through the seasons.</p> <p>How is God at work in nature as the seasons change?</p>	<p>Free Choice</p> <p>As you notice the aspects of God's creation around you, respond in your own way.</p>	<p>Focus on one aspect of God's creation.</p> <p>What do you notice?</p> <p>Create a sketch of the aspect of nature you have noticed.</p>

WATCH A FILM

For this week's session you will need to get out the popcorn for a film night. Structured slightly differently from previous sessions, the group can watch the film *Soul Surfer* and then discuss the content together. This tale of triumph over adversity reminds us of God's faithfulness through all situations and circumstances.

WELCOME

See how many biographical films the group can name.

Here are some ideas:

- * *The Greatest Showman*
- * *Sully*
- * *The Blind Side*
- * *Elvis*
- * *Hidden Figures*
- * *The King's Speech*
- * *The Imitation Game*
- * *Bohemian Rhapsody*

Discuss with the group who they would cast in a film about their life. Who would play their different family members and friends? What time and place would the film be set?

In today's session we're going to watch a film that tells the story of Bethany Hamilton and her unfortunate encounter with a shark at the age of 15.

WORD/WITNESS

For this session, you will need access to the film 'Soul Surfer'. The film is available to watch, rent or buy on a range of streaming platforms. You may wish to watch the film and follow it immediately with a discussion. Alternatively, you could run two separate sessions where you watch the film first and then gather together at a separate time to use some of the discussion notes.

This film is based on the true story of Bethany Hamilton and her autobiography *Soul Surfer*. This is worth a read if you have time over the summer!

Here are a few themes that you could discuss with your group after watching the movie.

Discuss what it means to have a big passion (or hobby) for something in your life, like Bethany has for surfing. Is it important to have a passion for something? How is having a passion a good thing? Can it ever be a bad thing? How can you involve God in your passion?

Ask group members to identify what activities make them feel happy, feel good, feel fulfilled. Ask them to describe this feeling if they can. Discuss how important it is that we have times to feel happy and fulfilled in our lives.

Discuss how we can react to difficult situations in our lives. What attributes did Bethany display after the attack? Did you sense any anger, bitterness, jealousy? What happened to her faith in God? Who around her gave her support?

How did this become real in Bethany's life? Can any group members share about a time when this was true for them? Are there any situations that any group members are facing where they need strength and support and encouragement?


In the film it was mentioned that it can be difficult to make sense of things when you are really close to a tough situation. Discuss the concept of getting a different perspective on our problems. How did Bethany achieve this? How can helping others achieve this?

There is no specific Scripture verse for this session. Which Scripture would the group choose to align with Bethany's story?

Talk about events that may have happened to your group members that significantly changed their lives in some way. What happened? How did they cope? Do they still feel the effects of that event now? Would they change what happened if they could? Can they now see God at work in and through the event?

(Of course, this theme may be difficult for any young person who has experienced a large trauma such as a bereavement, and so you may feel that this is not appropriate for a group discussion, but perhaps could be followed up on an individual basis.)

WORSHIP

 What is the key message you have taken away from the film *Soul Surfer*?

After you have shared your thoughts together, listen to and reflect on the lyrics of one of the songs from the film.

 **Listen: Francesca Battistelli – 'It's Your Life' (2:52)**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4vm_NHWjEM

or the acoustic version (2:38):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j7Bs-d1Fto>

Share the lyrics of the chorus with the group.

How could they change or impact our lives if we lived them out every day?

It's your life – what you gonna do?
The world is watching you
Every day the choices you make
Say what you are and who your heart beats for
It's an open door
To live the way that you believe
This is your opportunity
To let your life be one that lights the way

— SONGWRITERS: FRANCESCA BATTISTELLI / IAN ESKELIN