

national youthsunday

Sunday 25th November 2018

Discussion Session Plan

“You are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he has meant you to live it.” (Ephesians 2:10)

This session is a 30-40-minute small group session that would work well as a way of breaking open the content of the #JustOneFilter assembly/presentation. The aim of this session is to facilitate a conversation between the young people on how different filters affect their lives and offers them the opportunity to explore what it would mean to live their lives looking through the one filter of God’s love.

Preparation

For this session you will need to use the set of cue cards from your resource pack.

There are two possible ways of running the session depending on whether you have a single small group of young people (no more than 10) or whether you will have multiple groups of young people (maximum six groups of 8-10 people). Please take a moment to read through the plan carefully and decide the best way for you to facilitate the session.

1. Single small group:

Think about the space you want to use and the dynamics of the group. Do you want to be around a table, on chairs in a circle, or on cushions on the floor? What conditions are going to be best to encourage the young people to share, be open and be honest? Do the young people already know each other or are you going to have to help them feel comfortable before they will talk and share?

2. Multiple small groups:

Ideally have six tables set up like a café with white paper tablecloths (caterers banqueting roll is an economic way of doing this as you will not be able to reuse the tablecloths again), drinks available, sweets or nibbles, napkins and pens on the tables. It would be good to be able to play background music as people arrive and get settled. You could also have empty table number holders or photo holders if you have them as each table will eventually have a cue card assigned to it.

Session Plan

Have some music playing as people come in and sit down.

Single small group:

It would be helpful to start with a game to help break the ice.

If the young people don't know each other then a name game can help them get to know each other, otherwise an active game to build some energy, or a speaking/shouting out game to get them talking could work well.

You could use the **opposites game** where you say a pair of opposites and the young people must go to the side of the room to indicate which one they prefer. You can then ask them why they chose to go there as a way of getting them to start talking and sharing.



Some pairs of opposites you could use are:

- **Night or day**
- **Quiet or loud**
- **Tea or coffee**
- **Starter or desert**
- **Awake or asleep**
- **Books or films**
- **Art or music**
- **iPhone or Android**

Allow a bit of chatter as people move around and choose which side they're going to stand on.

When you feel that the group has done enough to get them relaxed and talking, bring them back to the circle.

Multiple small groups:

If you have regular small groups then invite each group to find a table, if you don't have regular small groups then let the young people choose where to sit and make sure that your helpers/volunteers are spread out amongst them. Have a bit of time for the young people to chat, relax and enjoy a drink and some nibbles.

If you think that the young people need an active icebreaker, then try and think of a game that they can play around their tables. Then do a short exercise to get them used to answering questions.



“In this session we're going to have a discussion, but it might be a little different from what you're used to. You probably noticed that you've got pens on your tables and that our table cloths are made of paper. This is so you can write on them. So, let's try it...

I'm going to ask you a few questions and you can talk about your answers and write them down:

- **If you were a biscuit, what biscuit would you be?**
- **Which is better, books or films?**
- **If you could visit anywhere in the world, where would you go?**
- **If you could have a conversation with a famous person, alive or dead, who would it be?**

Now take a few moments to look at each other's answers on your table and ask each other about why you chose those things if you haven't already talked about them.”

Allow some chatter from the tables and when they begin to go off topic, bring them back to the next thing.

For single and multiple small groups:

*Now would be the ideal time to share the content of the **#JustOneFilter presentation** with the young people if it has not already been shown. If this is a follow-up session to the assembly/presentation, then you could simply refer to the content and build upon it.*



“When scrolling through your feed on Snapchat, Facebook or Instagram do you consider how many pictures have been adapted, cropped, photo-shopped, or had a filter applied? We probably don't think twice about altering our images before we post: it's just part of the process of attracting as many likes and comments as we can. But when we stop to think about it, we might realise that we do the same with our lives. We might look at ourselves, or want others to look at us, only through certain filters. We adapt, change or enhance aspects of our lives to feel like we belong and are good enough to make the grade.

So many of us are living their lives at a **survival level**, just trying to make it to the weekend or the next holiday. It might be because there is tough stuff going on at home, because school is a struggle, or we might feel isolated and lonely, like no one understands, making life is battle. Getting up and getting on takes all our energy but we're not thriving, just surviving. Often in this situation we present our lives to others as if everything is fine and we don't need any help. We don't want to rely on others or admit that we're struggling because showing signs of weakness makes us feel vulnerable.

Take a moment to talk to the person next to you – can you identify any problems with living just to survive?"

Give everyone a minute to chat and then bring them all back together.

"Is anyone willing to share with the wider group? What could be some of the issues we face when we are living just to survive?"

Answers to draw out could be:

- *It takes even more effort and energy to appear like everything is fine when it's not and so you get even more tired and feel stuck in the way things are.*
- *It can be depressing and so our mental and physical health can suffer.*
- *You might not feel able to ask for help when you need it as you're too caught up with trying to appear like everything is OK.*

"For some of us, life is a little easier. We feel like we're doing well. Things are going our way naturally, like having a good social life, doing well at school, being part of a team, having enough money to do what we want and buy what we want. We feel like we're succeeding at life and we might measure our lives through the filter of popularity or achievement and present it to others that we have a good life because we have all this stuff, even though we may still feel that it's not enough and we're not truly fulfilled.

Take another moment to talk to the person next to you. Have you ever wanted something for so long, and then when you got it, you were disappointed?

Give everyone a minute to chat and then bring them all back together.

Is anyone willing to share with the wider group? Anyone got a story to tell?

Wanting to do well at school, to have nice things and have lots of friends are not bad things in and of themselves. We just must be careful that we don't place all of our worth in those things. Our worth comes from who we are, not what we do or what we have.

There is **ONE filter** that helps us stay true to ourselves, that helps us all to measure our lives in the right ways, and to present ourselves to others as we truly are. When we look at our lives through **the filter of God's love** we see ourselves and others as God does, as truly loved, valued, and significant, no matter what is going on in our lives. We are works of art, masterpieces, lovingly created by a God who wants to be close to us. We are made for so much more than we can imagine. God desires us to have meaning and purpose in our lives,

and to feel like we are making a difference in the lives of others, and to the world around us.”

It would be great if you could include some of your own personal story here, or the story of one of the other helpers/volunteers. Share part of your own journey in understanding what it means to look at your life through the filter of God’s love, finding purpose and meaning or feeling like your life is significant.

“How do we live a life of significance? By living with just one filter.”

With multiple small groups you can ask them to move around from table to table every 4-5 minutes to get through all the questions. They will start at different points but will get through all the questions eventually. If you only have 5 groups, then you could get everyone to discuss the first question and then move around the tables to talk about the rest. Tell them that they can write on the tablecloths to help them think about their answers to the question or any notes from what they’ve talked about as a group.

With a single small group, we suggest that you start with the first question, but after that you could put the rest of the cue cards face down in the centre of the group and invite people to pick the next question to talk about.

Below are some suggestions of answers that the young people may give, some rephrased questions if the young people are struggling to answer, and some follow up questions to draw more out of them. It is a good idea for all your helpers/volunteers to have seen the questions beforehand and thought about how they would answer them, so that they are able to share and journey with the young people.

1. What filters have you seen?

Young people may say things such as:

Popularity/status, sporting or academic achievements, fashion, image/beauty/make up, money, being in a gang, etc.

Rephrased/follow up questions to help the young people if they are struggling to answer or to draw more out of them might be:

What filters do people see their own lives through? What filters do people want others to see their lives through? How do people measure their lives? How do people want to be seen by others? What things might people hide behind for the sake of image?

2. What filters do people use to survive?

Young people may say things such as:

Strong, independent, got it all together, don’t rely on anyone else as they might let you down etc.

Rephrased/follow up questions to help the young people if they are struggling to answer or to draw more out of them might be:

If someone were living their life at survival level, how would they want others to view them? How might they feel about their situation? How would they feel about other people? What would they want to hide from other people about their situation?

3. What filters do people use to succeed?

Young people may say things such as:

Money, achievements, arrogance, popularity, using others for their own gain etc.

Rephrased/follow up questions to help the young people if they are struggling to answer or to draw more out of them might be:

If someone were living their life at success level, how would they want others to view them?

How might they feel about their situation? How would they feel about other people? What would they want to emphasise to other people about their situation?

4. On what level are you living?

Rephrased/follow up questions to help the young people if they are struggling to answer or to draw more out of them might be:

Does it feel like you're living at survival level, just getting by?

What needs to change for you to feel like you're succeeding?

Does it already feel like life is good and you're succeeding?

Do you feel like you've managed to reach living at significance level yet?

What would it take to get there?

What do you think it would feel like to be living at significance level?

What difference could it make to you and to others?

5. I feel like a fake when...

Rephrased/follow up questions to help the young people if they are struggling to answer or to draw more out of them might be:

Are there times when you don't say or do what you believe because of the way others will view you?

Do you ever feel like you are wearing a mask or behaving like a different person?

Is there ever a time when you don't feel good enough or like you need to present yourself a certain way to fit in and match up to others?

6. What helps me to be true to myself?

Young people may say things such as:

My faith, my family, being honest, my values, knowing right from wrong, doing what I love and what I'm good at, having friends that I can be real with etc.

Rephrased/follow up questions to help the young people if they are struggling to answer or to draw more out of them might be:

When or where do you feel most yourself and most alive? What or who gives you life and energy rather than being draining and difficult? What values do you believe are important to live by? How do you decide what is right and wrong?

With the multiple small groups, when everyone is back at their original table invite them to look at all the things written on the tablecloth by the other groups. With the single small group just invite them to think back over all that has been discussed and shared.



“We’ve talked about a lot in this session, just take a moment to think about the one idea, question or point that you’re going to take away with you. It might be something that stood out to you in the discussion, something that challenged you, or something you need to think about a bit more when you leave here. Or maybe ask yourself what point God would like you to take away from this session.”

Leave about a minute of silence. It could be a good idea to have pads of post-it notes on the tables for people to write down their ‘take away’ point, particularly if this will help some young people to engage with the moment of reflection.

“Would anyone like to share with the whole group what they’re taking away from the session?”

Allow 3 or 4 people to briefly share if they are willing.

Now would be the ideal time to lead into the #JustOneFilter prayer session as a way of responding to what they have heard and allowing God’s words of truth to speak to them about their lives. If you are not able to lead into the prayer session or will be doing the prayer session later, feel free to finish with the short prayer below.

“Let’s finish by offering all that we’ve shared and talked about to God by saying a short prayer.

Jesus, we thank You for all the good things in our lives, the people who love us and encourage us, and the gifts and talents that we have. We give You all the times when we are made to feel not good enough, and the times when life seems too much, and we are struggling to survive. We ask You to reveal the Father’s love to us so that we may always remember that we are created for so much more than we can imagine, seeing and living our lives as beloved children of God.

And we say together:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.”