



Session Plan Handlebars (Flobots)

Song: Handlebars (UK radio edit version)
Artist: Flobots
Album: Fight with tools (Beware – explicit lyrics)
Duration: 3:13
Theme: The little things

You will need:

- 1 copy of this sheet for each leader of the music session
- 1 copy for each group member of the lyrics sheet
- 1 CD player, or MP3 player / laptop with speakers
- 1 copy of 'Handlebars' – either an MP3 or on CD
- 1 game – either 'Jenga' (brick tower-building game) or 'Kerplunk' (an old test-of-nerves game) will work best. Otherwise, improvise with games like Buckaroo or others you might know of. You could try building a house of cards with playing cards, but this is quite fragile and tricky to do.
- 1 set of St Therese quotes printed out for groups to discuss
- 1 candle or something to focus prayer
- 1 basket or cloth to lay out the bricks / straws for prayer

Optional:

If you want to show the video to the song, you will need to bring a laptop with speakers. It might also be worth trying to obtain a data projector, particularly if you have a large group who won't all be able to see a computer screen.

Activity:

Sit your group around a game of either Jenga or Kerplunk (it's a good idea to have it on a table or somewhere everybody's got a good view). Ask each person in turn to approach the game and remove either a brick (Jenga) or a straw (Kerplunk). If you're playing Jenga, they should also lay the brick back on top of the tower. Play then passes to the next person in the circle.

Eventually, the chips will tumble! Either the stack of bricks will fall down, or all the marbles will crash to the bottom of the tube. If you like, you can play a couple of times, so that everybody has had a go.

Discussion Starter:

Ask your group what they felt as they were removing each little brick/straw:
Were they confident the tower would retain its strength?
Were they confident in their own abilities to choose the right straw or brick?
How did they feel as they watched the tower crash down?
Whose fault was it that the tower didn't hold its strength?
Was it just because of the last brick, or was it a culmination of them all?

Listen:

Play the song once through, and ask the group to close their eyes and/or focus on what the song is saying. Some of them may know the song already, and if so, you can ask what they like or don't like about it.

Now hand out the lyrics sheets for the song, and play the song once through again. You might like to ask if there are words that any group members don't understand or that puzzle them:

- Do-si-do = a country & western dance move
- Leif Ericson = Norse explorer, probably the first European to land in mainland North America
- De Colores = originally Spanish folk song which has been translated into English and is popular in some Christian movements
- I'm Proud to be an American = well-known American patriotic song
- Metronome = ticking clock that keeps time when playing instruments etc
- Thrift Store = US equivalent to English charity shops

Questions to discuss:

What is the message of the song?

What does the song say about choices and decision-making?

Does the song offer any explanation for how war and injustice comes about?

Note: The video for the song really helps to visualize the story that it is telling, but (depending on the age-range of your group) you may not find it appropriate to share with your young people. It will probably help either way for you to have seen it, to be able to grasp some of the concepts behind the song. You can watch it on www.youtube.com - either by searching for 'Flobots Handlebars' or by visiting <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=AuK2A1ZqoWs> (also linked from our website) You can purchase the video from iTunes for £1.29 if you want to show it to your group on a laptop computer.

Starting off:

How do our choices affect our everyday lives?

Like in the game, is it always the last choice that tips us over the edge, or do you think it is a culmination of choices?

Do you think there is a chance to turn back once you have gone down a particular road?

Going deeper:

Is one wrong choice any worse than another? How do we measure bad decisions?

Does choosing peace mean that we will always avoid conflict?

Are we free to make our own choices?

Does power always corrupt?

The Saints bit:

Once you've brought the questions to a close, tell your group that before finishing with a prayer, you'll look briefly at the life of one particular Saint who says a lot about choices and how she changed the world...

St Therese of Lisieux was a young French girl who lived in the late 19th century, whose mother died when she was only 4. She always wanted to be a nun, even asking the Pope himself if she could enter a convent when she was aged 15, which she did. Dying of tuberculosis when she was only 24, Therese wrote her memoirs while suffering pain and discomfort, but it's this simple story of her love for God that has made her one of the great theologians of prayer for the church.

Essentially, her prayer and life can be summed up in the phrase 'The Little Way'. She believed (and lived) that by honouring God and others in every little choice that she made, she would be able to transform the world around her. No matter how small the decision, how unnoticed she was, she vowed to choose the loving way at every stage. Her 'Little Way' reminds us of the simple call to follow Jesus in our everyday lives – it makes being a saint a lot more of a practical process – it doesn't matter who you are, what your background is, or what you can do, as long as every decision you make chooses to glorify God.

You might like to print and cut out some of these quotes, and discuss them either in a large group, or in small groups – particularly focusing on what the quote might mean for us in our every day lives.

The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least actions for love.

I see that it is enough to realize one's nothingness, and give oneself wholly, like a child, into the arms of the good God.

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward Heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy; in a word, something noble, supernatural, which enlarges my soul and unites it to God.

I have not the courage to look through books for beautiful prayers.... I do as a child who has not learned to read, I just tell our Lord all that I want and He understands.

Even though Therese never travelled the world, her message has been adopted by millions of Catholics over the last 100 years. Her desire to change the world around her, beginning with her sisters in the convent, has surprisingly made her the patron saint of missionaries, as she affirms that true mission begins wherever we are.

Closing Prayer:

Put some quiet music on, and see if you can dim the lights. With a candle in the middle of the room, ask each person to take a brick or a straw from the game that you have played earlier (don't have them set up as a tower, perhaps put them in a basket or on a cloth)

Ask them to hold their block or straw in their hands, and to reflect on what they've heard during the session. Ask them to consider the choices they make in their everyday lives – those that seem easy, and those that seem more tricky. Pause for some time of silent reflection.

Finally, you might like to read (or choose a group member to read) from Deuteronomy 30:19-20. It is best if you do this from a Bible, but the text is as follows:

"Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the LORD, you will live long in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Conclude your prayer with the sign of peace.