



BEYOND THE RIVER AND PERSONAL STORYTELLING

RESOURCE FOR CHURCH YOUTH GROUPS

An initiative of

HEARTLINES



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DVD MENU

Lesson 1

Beyond the River Trailer

Clip 1: Getting to the Dam on Time

Clip2: Language Barriers

Clip 3: Do you know my story?

Clip 4: Dealing with Prejudice

Clip 5: Ask. Listen. Tell

Lesson 3

Yanelisa & Brandon's story

Extra

What's Your Story promo video

NOTE TO LEADERS

This resource is part of *What's your Story?*, a Heartlines initiative to build understanding, trust and greater cohesion in South Africa. There are two lessons for church youth groups:

Lesson 1:

Scenes from the film, *Beyond the River* to build greater understanding amongst youth.

Lesson 2:

Practical ways for youth to engage in sharing their stories with each other.

These lessons are designed to help your youth realise the importance of building deep and meaningful relationships, and to create trust and understanding through personal storytelling.

Some guidelines

- Leaders are strongly encouraged to access the equipment beforehand (TV & DVD player) to be able to show the video clips.
- Each lesson is designed to last one hour but can be adapted to be shorter.
- It is important that leaders prepare well.
- For personal storytelling to be effective, we need to re-emphasise the importance of respect, trust and empathy.

All the best as you join us on the storytelling revolution!

The Heartlines Team



LESSON ONE: BEYOND THE RIVER

Leader's note

The DVD of the whole film is available from Heartlines or your local DVD store. While it is not essential for the youth to have seen the film before having done the lesson, we encourage the leader to make every effort to get a copy of the film.

If the youth have not seen the film *Beyond the River*, read out the following synopsis and then show the film trailer.

Beyond the River synopsis

Duma is a talented young man who feels trapped by his surroundings and finds himself on the wrong side of the law. After a near miss with the cops, he finds an escape in the world of canoeing, an old passion of his. Steve is a nine-time Dusi gold medallist whose marriage is on the verge of collapse. His passion for the sport is fueled by his wanting to escape from something in his past that continues to haunt him.

Through a series of unexpected events, the two men find themselves attempting the three-day Dusi Canoe Marathon as a doubles pair. But there are a few things they must overcome, not least of which are the completely different worlds they come from. They realise that the dream they both desperately desire requires them to work together, both in the boat and beyond the river. The film is inspired by the true story of Siseko Ntondini and Piers Cruickshanks, who defied odds to compete in the 2014 Dusi.

Leader's notes:

- You will need about 8 to 10 min to show each clip, followed by some discussion.
- Break the youth into groups of 4 or 5 and discuss the questions below.
- If you do not have enough time to do all the questions leave out video clips 1 & 4 plus the discussion questions.

VIDEO CLIPS & DISCUSSION

Show *Beyond the River* film trailer (on DVD at back of resource)

(If the group has not seen the film skip the first 2 questions).

- 1 What did you enjoy about the film and why?
- 2 In your opinion, what are the main messages of the film?

Show video clip 1: Getting to the dam on time

Read: *In this video clip we see the experiences that Steve and Duma have in order to get to the Dam to practise. Steve jumps in his car while Duma has long walks and has to catch several taxis.*

- 3 How much do you know about where some of your friends live, and how they get to school or church?

Show video clip 2: Language barriers

Read: *Duma shares with Steve the problems he has with speaking and listening in English, which is not his home language.*

- 4 In what ways does language create problems in getting to know someone?
- 5 Do you try to speak other languages? Why or why not?
- 6 What are some creative ways we could use to break down language barriers?

Show video clip 3: Do you know my story?

Read: *Duma challenges Steve regarding the fact that they really do not know each other's stories.*

- 7 What are some of the things that prevent you from getting to know your friends better?
- 8 What practical things could you do to find out more about your friends?

Show video clip 4: Dealing with prejudice

Read: *Steve challenges some of his canoe club colleagues about their racial attitudes.*

- 9 How prevalent are racist attitudes where you live?
- 10 What can we do to challenge them?

Show video clip 5: Ask. Listen. Tell

Read: Having been challenged by Duma, Steve goes to visit Duma at his home, which is in an informal settlement. He finds out more about Duma's life.

- 11 If you could ask your friend one question to find out more about them, what would it be?
- 12 What's one question you wish your friend would ask you about your life or culture?

QUESTIONS FROM THE WORD

When Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, there were huge inequalities in society. There was racial tension between the Jews and Gentiles. Slaves and slave owners, as well as men and women, were unequal in status. Paul is reminding them that as Christians these inequalities and divisions should not exist, and that we need to find ways to live as equals.

In chapter 3 verse 28 Paul writes that "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one (or equal) in Christ Jesus."

- 13 What do you think this verse says about the importance of getting to know the people around you?
- 14 What do you think it means to be "one in Christ"?
- 15 What would it mean for us to really live this out? What would change? What would we be doing that we are not doing now?

WRAP UP

We are often guilty of prejudging people and writing them off before we have made an effort to get to know their stories. In South Africa we are still struggling to be the rainbow nation.

We need to ask God to help us deal with our own prejudices and to replace them with love and understanding. We need to find ways to engage people that we meet every day in a way that will allow us to find out more about their stories.

Then we need to be committed to building the 'Rainbow Kingdom' that the Bible talks about.



LESSON 2: ASK. LISTEN. TELL

Icebreaker: Two truths and a lie

(You may want to do this exercise in smaller groups. No material resources are needed for this activity.)

Each person thinks of two statements that are true about themselves and one lie. One person at a time says three statements and everyone else tries to guess which one is the lie. (It's more interesting if you try and think of outrageous or unbelievable things that happened to you rather than everyday things such as "I had a dog growing up.")

Introduction

Getting to know each other's stories - through asking and listening to stories and then telling our own - is a powerful tool to create understanding and trust.

Every one of us has a personal story. We choose to allow some people to know only tiny bits of our story while others, (usually close friends or family), are allowed to know more intimate details of our lives. There is something powerful in listening to other people's stories and sharing our own.

We are going to break into small groups and spend some time sharing something of our own personal stories. We will give you some questions to guide you.

It is important to listen carefully and respectfully. Each of us has gone through different life experiences. Do not judge someone but listen with an open mind. Don't interrupt and don't try to give advice. Just listen.

When it is your turn to answer a question be truthful in how you answer. We encourage you to be open and courageous. But there may be experiences that you have had that you are not yet ready to share. That is okay.

Most important: everything that is said in your group stays in your group. Do not share anything that is said outside your group, without asking permission from that person.

STORY SHARING IN GROUPS OF 3

Get the youth to break up into groups of three. Tell them that they will be sharing a bit of their own personal story so they may want to find two other people that they are comfortable in sharing with (but this is not essential). Give each member a set of the questions (make copies).

Get them to share the answers to the following questions. Encourage the youth to listen carefully to each other.

- 1 Share a little about your early life: Where you were born; what life was like as a child; where you went to school?
- 2 When you were growing up, which person or people shaped your life and values? Why and how?
- 3 Share one or two highlights or successes in your life so far.
- 4 Share one or two challenges or difficulties you have faced. Only share what you are comfortable sharing.
- 5 What are your dreams for South Africa?

**REMEMBER, WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD IN YOUR GROUP, STAYS IN YOUR GROUP.
DON'T SHARE INFORMATION WITH ANYONE WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION.**



WRAP UP

You have done an exercise of asking each other to share something of your own personal stories. I hope you listened carefully and learned some new things about each other. Asking, listening and telling are great ways to get to know people and to build relationships. It also helps us to become more caring people.

You are encouraged to make asking, listening and telling an important part of your life. Jesus told us to love one another. Taking an interest in other people and their stories is one way we can show this love.

In 1 Thessalonians 15:11, Paul says, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." When we enquire about people's stories we are doing that.

During the next week take the set of questions that you were given and use them to ask two people about their lives. The first person can be someone you know quite well, for example a family member or a friend.

The second person can be someone that you are getting to know or want to know better. This could also be someone who is different from you, for example in terms of their language, culture, country of origin or age.

This person should be the same gender as you.

Pray and ask God to help you do this.

Leader's note:

Provide time in the next week or two for the young people to report back on their experiences. Some questions to ask as part of the report back:

- 1 How easy or difficult was it to ask these questions?
- 2 What kind of response did you get from the person you asked?
- 3 Did this story sharing change the way you saw this person?
- 4 Did this story sharing change the way you see people or life?

Encourage your young people to make getting to know people through asking and listening a way of life.

LESSON 2: ASK. LISTEN. TELL

Option B

ALTERNATIVE LESSON – USE INSTEAD OF LESSON 2A. DO NOT USE BOTH LESSONS

Leader's notes:

Sometimes when people share their personal stories using the River of Life, it reminds them of some personal (and even painful things) that have happened in their lives. The lesson encourages them to find someone with whom they can talk through these issues. We encourage you to think this through ahead of time. Who in your youth leadership or church would be suitable counsellors? Also emphasise the importance for people in each group to keep what they have heard confidential.

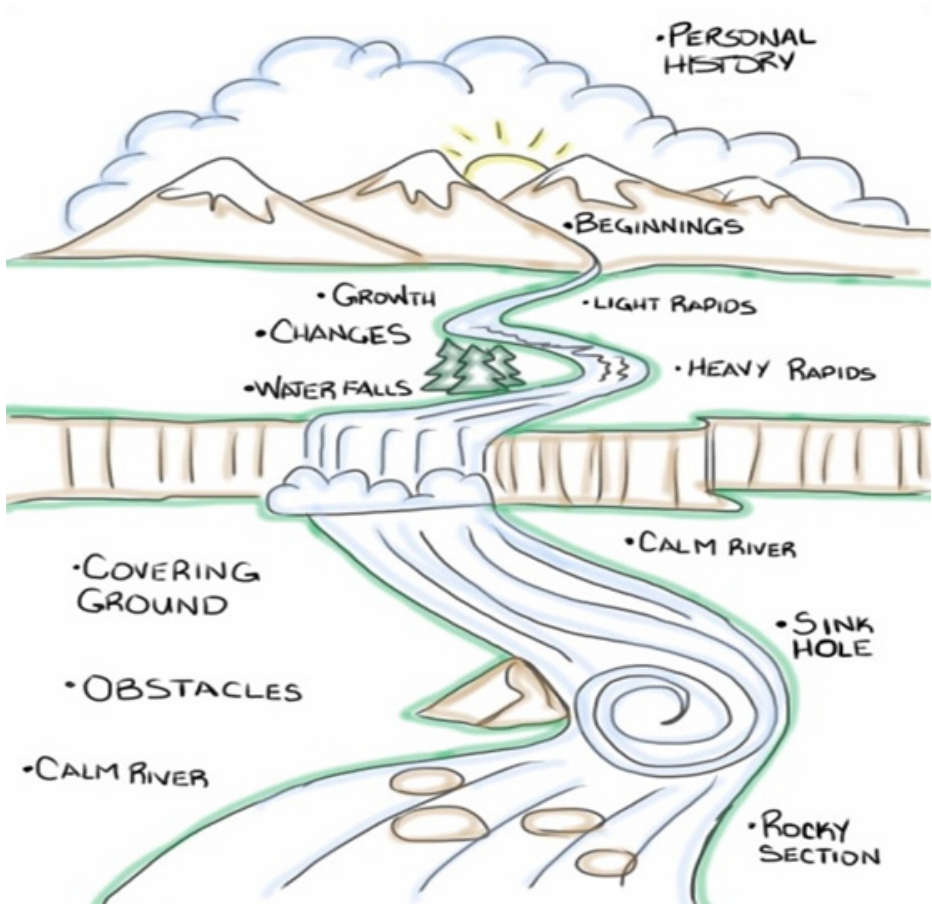
Crowd breaker/game

Two truths and a lie:

(You may want to do this exercise in smaller groups)

Each person thinks of two statements that are true about themselves and one that is a lie. One person at a time says his or her three statements and everyone else tries to guess which one is the lie. It's more interesting if you try and think of outrageous or unbelievable things that happened to you rather than everyday things such as "I had a dog growing up." No material resources are needed for this activity.

RIVER OF LIFE



River of Life drawings

Resources needed: A piece of paper and markers/crayons for each participant.

Read this out to the participants: Getting to know each other's stories is a powerful tool to create trust and understanding.

Each one of us has a personal story. We choose to allow some people to know only tiny bits of our story while others, (usually close friends and family), are allowed to know more intimate details of our lives. There is something powerful in listening to other people's stories and sharing our own.

You are each asked to draw a river, which roughly corresponds to the timeline order of events in your real life. For example, the river can be calm and straight, perhaps bubbling, during the good/happy times. The river might then wind itself around large, rocks that could represent obstacles that a person has faced. A major bend in the river could represent a major life change, such as moving away from home. A waterfall could represent those times when a person feels like they've lost control and they were caught in a downward spiral.

It is OK to feel that you are not yet ready to share some things in your group. Think of things that you are comfortable to share.

REMEMBER, WHAT YOU HEAR IN YOUR GROUP, STAYS IN YOUR GROUP. DON'T SHARE THIS WITH ANYONE WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION.

You can also get the youth to include in their River of Life some of their cross cultural experiences if this is relevant

Share your Story using your drawings

Break up into small groups of three or four. Each person is given five minutes to explain their River of Life drawing. They do not have to share everything they have drawn.

Wrap up

Sharing and listening to people's story is a great way to get to know people and to build relationships. Each person's story is a window into who they are, and events in their lives that have shaped their hopes, dreams and fears. We are able to better understand their values and how they see life. This especially applies to people who come from different cultures. You are encouraged to make sharing and listening to people's stories an important part of your life.

Think about people at school or in your family, as well as your neighbours whose stories you would like to know. Also think of people who are different from you in culture, language, age, etc. Ask them to share with you and then also share your story. Make a start this week and try to be intentional about this.

Drawing your River of Life and sharing some events may have caused you to think of some personal and painful things that have happened in your life. We encourage you to find a counsellor with whom you can talk through these issues. We will help you to find the right person.

Ask God to give you the courage so that story-telling and listening will become part of your life, and that each encounter will be meaningful and helpful.

Make copies and give out the following set of questions:

- 1 Share a little about your early life: Where you were born; your home language; your childhood.
- 2 When you were growing up, which person or persons shaped your life and values? Why & how?
- 3 Share one or two highlights or successes in your life so far.
- 4 What are your dreams for South Africa?

During the next week take the set of questions that you have been given and use them to ask 1 or 2 people about their lives.

The first person can be someone you know quite well, for example a family member or a friend. The second person can be someone that you are getting to know or want to know. This could also be someone who is different from you, but of the same gender.

Leader's note: *Provide time in the next week or two for the youth to report back on their experiences.*

LESSON 3: CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

Crowd breaker May I introduce

Give each participant a card or piece of paper and ask them to write their names, the name of a person they would like to speak with (real or fictional) and a question they would like to ask that person. The youth then pair up and swop cards and explain why they would like to meet that particular person and ask that question.

Each young person then tells the group about the information they gained through the discussion.

Resources needed: One card or piece of paper, and one pen/marker for each participant

Video clip “Brandon & Yanelisa’s story”

In the following video clip Brandon & Yanelisa, good friends from Hudson Park High school in East London, tell their stories about going to initiation school together.

Show video clip “Brandon & Yanelisa’s story”



Discussion groups

Break into discussion groups of 4 or 5 people each.
 Appoint group leaders and give the leaders a set of the questions.

Get the groups to discuss the following:

- 1 What do you think of Brandon's decision to go to initiation school with his friend Yanelisa?
- 2 Do you think it was an easy decision? Why or why not?
- 3 How did this make Yanelisa feel?
- 4 What reasons did Yanelisa and Brandon give that showed their belief that it is important to get to know each other's cultures?
- 5 Yanelisa said that in South Africa we have challenges in getting to know each other's cultures. What are some of the challenges we face in South Africa?
- 6 What do you think would result if we made a greater effort to get to know each other's cultures?
- 7 What practical things could we do to accomplish this?
- 8 In Ephesians 4:4 in the Message translation we read: "You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness. But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same."
 What do you think this says about the discussions we have just had?

Wrap up

Wrap up by sharing some of the advantages of learning about other cultures.

You can use the following list as a guide:

- Diversity enriches our lives.
- We learn from each other.
- We have different gifts and ways of looking at things that enable us to accomplish the goal of building a new South Africa.
- In South Africa we don't have a choice. We will never prosper as a nation if we don't learn to understand and trust each other.

Share some practical things that the youth can do to get to know

- Make a decision to actively find ways to get to know people and build relationships with people from different cultures. It starts with the will to do this.
- Get to know people's stories. If you have done the lesson on storytelling refer to this.
- If you have said and done things that have hurt others, ask them for forgiveness. This will take courage.
- If other people have hurt you, decide to forgive them. Think of ways you can let them know that you have forgiven them.
- Find ways of helping people who are less fortunate than you.
- Remember the words of Jesus in John 13:34-35.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

beyond the river

TWO LIVES. ONE JOURNEY.



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