

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF SOUL SURFER

BASED ON THE
INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY

SOUL ON FIRE

*You Get One Life.
Make Yours Matter.*

5-DAY
FAITH DEVOTIONAL

EXCLUSIVELY IN THEATERS OCTOBER 10

5-DAY FAITH DEVOTIONAL

John O’Leary is a Hope Bearer.

As a boy, a tragic accident nearly cost John O’Leary his life. The long road to recovery demanded everything from him and his family—faith, grit, sacrifice, and courage. What could have ended in despair became the spark for a life of resilience and inspiration.

Today, John speaks to thousands around the globe, carrying a message of faith, hope, and love that was literally forged in fire. John reminds us that no matter how great the adversity, together we can rise, heal, and change the world.

Where did John’s passion for life come from? He caught it from the kindness and faith of others.

John caught it from Hall-of-Fame broadcaster Jack Buck, who was drawn to the nine-year-old boy burned from head to toe. Throughout young John’s time in the hospital, Jack visited him often, and when Jack traveled, he wrote John letters, each one laced with hope and encouragement. Jack never saw John as a victim; he saw him as a future victor. He believed John’s setback was a setup for something greater. With every interaction, Jack became the voice of an eagle in John’s life, always calling him to reach higher.

From Mr. LaVelle, the hospital janitor, who quietly cleaned John’s room night after night as if he were working not for men but for the Lord [Col 3:23 ESV]. Infection was the greatest threat to John’s burned body, and as long as LaVelle was on duty, nothing—not even germs—would endanger him.

From his father, who, when John feared the anger that might come after burning the family home, leaned close and whispered, *“John, I’ve never been so proud of anyone in my life. And I love you, and there’s nothing you can do about it.”*

From his mother, who met her terrified son’s question head-on. *“Am I gonna die?”* John blurted through tears.

“Do you want to?” she asked evenly, her voice steady, her heart praying silently for wisdom. *“No,”* John replied.

“Good,” she said. *“Then you take the hand of God, and you fight like you’ve never fought before. Your dad and I will be with you every step of the way.”*

And fight he did. Today, John passes on what was passed to him: faith, hope, and love. Like a modern-day Timothy, the voice of Paul has resounded in John’s life—voices of courage, compassion, and conviction—showing and telling him what it means to live life to the fullest. What John has received, he now entrusts to others [2 Tim. 2:2 ESV].

John’s life is a testimony to this truth: *multiplication changes the world*. His story has inspired thousands because of those who first inspired him. One act of kindness became a spark, the spark became a flame, and the flame now lights the lives of multitudes. If Jack, LaVelle, and the O’Learys could shape one broken little boy into a hope bearer for the world, imagine what your words and your faithfulness could do. You don’t have to be famous. You don’t have to be impressive. You only have to be faithful.

So take the baton. Live with courage. Speak life. Entrust hope to others. And watch as God multiplies it beyond anything you could ever imagine.



DAY 1—THE CHAIN OF FAITH

*“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” — 2 Timothy 2:2 ESV*

Background: The Christian faith is not invented anew by each generation. It is *received* and *handed* down. Paul received the gospel from Christ (Gal. 1:11–12 ESV), he entrusted it to Timothy, and Timothy was to entrust it to others. This is the relay of truth: the baton of the gospel is passed hand-to-hand, heart-to-heart, generation-to-generation. Christianity is not a new idea each century but the *ancient faith once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3 ESV).

Illustration: When John was about to go into surgery, scared he wouldn’t survive, he asked his mom, Susan: “*Am I gonna die?*” Gripped with fear and the unknown, young John O’Leary looked to his mom for faith in a moment he couldn’t muster up his own. Susan replied, telling John to “*take God’s hand and fight like you’ve never fought before.*” Her encouragement didn’t end there—she assured John she and his father would be there with him the whole time.

Susan O’Leary was a beacon of faith for John in one of his darkest moments. She pointed him to the only Source of light and comfort—God. But Susan didn’t just tell John to pray... She told him that a battle lies ahead. That he had a choice to make to fight, but that no matter what, he wouldn’t be doing it alone. Intending to or not, Susan taught her son that night to cling fast to his faith, to fight, and to rest on the shoulders of those fighting alongside him.

Reflection Questions:

- *Who handed you the faith? (Parents, pastors, mentors, authors?)*
- *Who are you handing the faith to so the chain doesn’t end with you?*

Call to Action: Write down the names of three people who invested spiritually in you. Send one a note of thanks today.

Prayer: “*Lord, thank You for those who ran before me and placed the baton in my hand. Let me not be careless with this trust. Make me a faithful link in the unbroken chain of the gospel. Amen.*”



DAY 2—FAITHFUL, NOT FLASHY

*“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” — 2 Timothy 2:2 ESV*

Background: Notice Paul’s requirement of people: not “*talented*,” not “*gifted*,” but “*faithful*.” Faithfulness is steady, long obedience in the same direction. God is not looking for the most impressive but the most reliable. Discipleship requires lamps that burn steady, not fireworks that fade fast.

Illustration: In **SOUL ON FIRE**, one key relationship we see is John with his main nurse, Nurse Roy. John’s story isn’t just that of survival, but the literal steps he had to take to heal. When unfathomable pain hit and the will to try ran out, Nurse Roy was there to tell John, “*Boy, you will walk again.*” And walk he did. Not instantly, but through the steady persistence and of a reliable individual-turned-friend who was there for John day after day.

Reflection Questions:

- *Would the people in my life describe me as steady and reliable?*
- *Where do I have room to grow in consistency—marriage, work, or ministry?*

Call to Action: Identify one “*hidden*” responsibility (at home, work, or church) where you tend to slack. This week, commit to being faithful there as unto the Lord.

Prayer: “*Father, in a world that prizes charisma, teach me to prize character. Make me steadfast, immovable, always abounding in Your work (1 Cor. 15:58 ESV). Amen.*”



DAY 3—ENTRUSTING THE TREASURE

*“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” — 2 Timothy 2:2 ESV*

Background: The word *entrust* is a banking term. It means to deposit something valuable for safekeeping. The gospel is the greatest treasure on earth—not to be altered, cheapened, or lost. Every disciple-maker is a banker, safeguarding Christ’s riches and ensuring they are transferred securely to the next generation.

Illustration: John O’Leary and Jack Buck had a unique, beautiful friendship. In **SOUL ON FIRE**, you witness how Jack was there to support John in multiple key moments throughout his healing and young adult years, including when John graduated from college. Jack showed up to watch and celebrate the special moment, and in a very powerful scene, Jack entrusted John with a priceless valuable of his.

Reflection Questions:

- *Just as Jack entrusted John with something so meaningful, do I look to entrust the gospel with others as it was entrusted to me?*
- *Who is someone I can look to share this good news with this week?*

Call to Action: Write a 3–5 sentence summary of the gospel. Practice it until you can share it naturally.

Prayer: *“Lord, help me guard the deposit You have entrusted to me. Keep me from adding to or subtracting from Your truth. Let me be a steward who delivers the treasure intact. Amen.”*



DAY 4—MULTIPLICATION, NOT ADDITION

*“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” — 2 Timothy 2:2 ESV*

Background: The genius of discipleship is multiplication. Paul didn’t tell Timothy, *“Teach a lot of people.”* He told him, *“Teach faithful men who will teach others.”* This is not addition—it is exponential growth. One person discipling three others is good. But when those three people disciple three more, and the cycle continues, an unstoppable movement begins.

Illustration: As the years passed by, John O’Leary began to reflect on the people who impacted his life. He realized that along the way, they were each teaching him to care for and impact others, too. One key person was Deanna McClintock. Deanna was the first person to ask John if he would share his story with a young scout troop. She believed in him, his powerful story’s impact, and she was ultimately the first employee of John’s inspirational speaking business that has gone on to inspire a movement of millions.

Reflection Questions:

- *Am I trying to “do ministry” alone, or am I multiplying myself in others?*
- *Is there anyone the Lord is calling me to partner with to multiply his Kingdom?*

Call to Action: Be still this week. Take time to pray about what ministry the Lord has called (or is calling you to) and if there is anyone specific he is calling you to partner with in it.

Prayer: *“Lord, help me multiply your love and impact. Show me who I should invest in, partner with, and give me courage to begin. Amen.”*



DAY 5—LEGACY BEYOND YOUR YEARS

*“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” — 2 Timothy 2:2 ESV*

Background: Paul was nearing death when he wrote these words. Yet his vision was alive because his life was invested in people who would carry on the mission. Paul’s buildings are gone, his possessions forgotten, but his legacy endures because he discipled Timothy, who discipled others. This is the only legacy that outlives the grave: those who are shaped by the gospel also shape others.

Illustration: In a touching scene of **SOUL ON FIRE**, John has a heart-to-heart with his dad, Denny O’Leary. As his health was failing, Denny was able to remind John of his eternal hope— that even if he didn’t experience healing of his body on this side of eternity, he still had hope for a different type of healing. Denny’s faith despite his present illness and his vulnerability to share it with his son is a reminder of our eternal hope and legacy.

Reflection Questions:

- *If I died today, who would continue walking with Christ because of me?*
- *Is my hope in my circumstances or my Creator? Am I sharing my eternal hope with those around me?*

Call to Action: Discipleship is not a destination; it is a direction. You are either heading towards King Jesus or away from Him. Yes, train others up in the Lord, but make sure you are going that way first. You reproduce who you are, not what you do.

Prayer: *“Lord, I want my life to echo beyond my years. Give me children in the faith who will outlive me, outlast me, and outwork me for the gospel. Let my legacy not be what I built, but who I built. Amen.”*

This Discussion Guide was created in partnership with BetterMan, which provides a clear definition of biblical masculinity that makes marriages, parenting, work-life, relationships — everything — better. For more information about BetterMan, visit their website at BetterMan.com.

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