

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF SOUL SURFER

WELCOME TO
JOHN O'LEARY DAY

BASED ON THE
INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY

SOUL ON FIRE

*You Get One Life.
Make Yours Matter.*

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

EXCLUSIVELY IN THEATERS OCTOBER 10

SOUL ON FIRE

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

FILM OVERVIEW

Directed by Sean McNamara (SOUL SURFER, REAGAN), written by Gregory Poirier, and inspired by John O'Leary's true story and 2016 bestselling memoir, *On Fire*, this film is an emotional and faith-filled portrait of resilience as O'Leary not only battles to survive but ultimately discovers what it means to truly live. O'Leary's story begins with his miraculous recovery from a near-death accident when he was nine years old. Given no chance of survival, John endures an unbelievable road to recovery with the support of his family, faith, community, and the kindness of his all-time idol, Baseball Hall of Fame Announcer Jack Buck. Grateful for his miracle and shaped by life's struggles, John's mission to better the world inspires millions to do the extraordinary.

From frontline workers to family members, and the support of the wider community, this film is a celebration of heroes.

THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Intended for use after viewing the film, this Discussion Guide provides a resource for biblically based discussion of various themes found in *Soul on Fire*. The Discussion Guide features three themes from the movie and has been designed so that groups can choose to either discuss the entire guide at once or focus on a singular theme.

This Discussion Guide was written in partnership with YM360, which exists to meet the needs of youth workers and believes all youth workers, regardless of church size, denomination, or level of experience have common needs. YM360 spends their time working to encourage and equip youth workers to meet these needs. For more information about YM360, visit their website at youthministry360.com.

**THIS GUIDE CONTAINS QUOTES AND SPOILERS AND IS
INTENDED TO USE AFTER A GROUP HAS SEEN THE FILM.**

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THEME ONE

IDENTITY

PURPOSE:

This Discussion Guide has been created to equip churches and ministry leaders with a tool that can be utilized alongside **Soul on Fire** to promote meaningful, spiritual conversations with viewers based upon a biblical theme presented in the film.

SOUL ON FIRE MOVIE RECAP:

In 1987, at just nine years old, John O’Leary was pulled from the flames of his family’s home with burns covering 100% of his body and with doctors giving him a 1% chance of survival. What followed was a battle for life that would test his resilience, his family’s faith, and the power of a community determined to believe God was not finished with his story. **Soul on Fire** brings this true story to the screen with raw honesty and unshakable hope, revealing how beauty can rise from unimaginable ashes.

More than a story of survival, this film is a declaration of grace and redemption. **Soul on Fire** reminds us that our scars are not the end. They are evidence of a Savior who brings purpose out of pain. Through faith, perseverance, and the love of those God places around us, John’s life became more than a miracle of healing; it became a living testimony to the glory of God and the hope Jesus offers to us all.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

We are created in the image of God, which means our identity isn’t defined by how we look, what we’ve experienced, the difficulties we face, the culture we live in, the scars we carry, or what others think about us. Instead, our true identity comes from God, is defined by God, and is found in our Lord and Savior—Jesus Christ. Nothing can separate us from God’s love. It is His love and His Word that define who we really are.

SCRIPTURE:

1 Peter 2:9-10 ⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

Genesis 1:26-27 ²⁶ *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* ²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Psalms 139:13-14 ¹³ *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.* ¹⁴ *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*

Romans 8:38-39 ³⁸ *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹ *nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Matthew 6:33 ³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Once you've watched the movie together, ask some or all of the following questions to facilitate a time of discussion and reflection.

Optional Opening Questions To Get The Conversation Started:

- If someone who doesn't know you well had to describe you in three words, what three words do you think they'd pick?
- Do you feel like any of those three words matches who you really are? Why or why not?

Talk About It:

- Who are you? You've probably been asked this question a thousand times before, and there are several ways you can answer it. You can respond by simply giving your name. You can respond to that question by saying what you like to do or something you're good at. For instance, you might say you're an athlete, a musician, or a gamer. You might respond by saying that you're a son, daughter, boyfriend, or girlfriend. If you have a job, you might wrap your identity up in what you do at work.
 - How would you answer the question, "Who are you?"
 - What happens when those things end or are taken away? How do people respond? Why?
 - Are the things that are true about us the same as our true identity? Why or why not?
- One of the recurring themes within **Soul on Fire** is that of people finding their identity in the things that are a part of their lives or things that have happened to them. In the opening scene, for instance, Deanna Rocco introduces herself by saying, "I have a scout troop. I am a den mother." Think back to the scene where John O'Leary is speaking to that group of third-grade Girl Scouts. He starts out by saying, "When I was nine years old, I was burned on 100% of my body."
 - Why do you think it is so easy for us to find our identity or define ourselves by what we do, what we are a part of, or the things that have happened to us?
 - Are there teams, clubs, groups you are a part of, achievements, labels, or things that have happened to you that you feel define you or that you find yourself placing your identity in? What are those? Why do you think you find your identity here, or allow yourself to be defined by these things?

- Why do you think so many of us struggle, like John O’Leary, with letting our mistakes, our pain, our past, or what’s happened to us, become the first thing we tell about ourselves?
 - Let’s broaden that question outside of ourselves a little more. Why do you think so many people in the world today struggle so much with where their true identity is found?
- Read or have someone read **1 Peter 2:9-10** aloud.

⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

 - Through these verses, what does God’s Word say is true of those who follow Jesus?
 - How do the things we mentioned earlier, things where we find our identity at times, compare to the identity God gives those who follow Jesus in this passage?
 - How would your thoughts, your struggles, your doubts, or how you live life change if you started to see yourself the way God sees you instead of through the lens of the labels you currently use to identify and define yourself?
 - Throughout the movie, we see John O’Leary’s continual struggle with how he views himself, how others view him, and whether he will continue to live his life, allowing his accident or his bodily scars to define his identity. When Beth enters John’s life, she becomes a person who challenges John with truth in love by seeing the person behind the scars and refusing to let him stay imprisoned by his own brokenness, fears, and insecurities.
 - Why do you think so many of us tie our worth to how we look or how others see us?
 - How do messages from social media, friends, or the culture we live in influence the way we view our identity? What untrue stories are we letting these things tell us about who we are?
 - Why do we let what other people think or say about us define how we see ourselves? Why do we let these things seem “louder” than what God says about us?
 - Our culture often says that our identity or worth is found in achievements, appearance, or popularity. Do those things really match up to offer us a true identity? Why or why not?
 - How does John’s life remind us that true identity is found in something deeper?
 - Read or have someone read **Genesis 1:26-27** aloud.

²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

 - What do these verses in Genesis tell us about who our Creator says we really are and who we were created to be?
 - If we are all created by God and in the image of God, we are all His image-bearers. How does knowing your true identity as God’s image-bearer change the way you view yourself or think about your identity?
 - How does being made in God’s image give us value, purpose, meaning, and identity?
 - How should knowing that we are all created by God and in the image of God change the way we think about and interact with other people who are also God’s image-bearers?
 - John’s appearance was forever changed after the house fire he caused when he was just nine years old. Not only did John spend many years after that trying to hide his scars, but he also spent many years trying to hide behind them.

- John could have let his scars continue to define him for the rest of his life. He could have hidden behind long sleeves, pants, and being the life of the party, but instead, he chose to live a life with passion. John said, “You get one life. Make yours matter.” How do we move from letting our circumstances define us to letting God define us?
- Read or have someone read **Psalms 139:13-14** aloud.

¹³ *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.* What do these verses communicate about how we should see ourselves?

 - How does knowing that God personally knitted you together in your mother's womb shape the way you understand who you are and how much you matter to God, your Creator?
 - For years, John hid behind his scars because he thought them to be the most defining part of his identity. What are some of the ways people “hide” who they really are from others? What are some of the ways you try to “hide” who you really are from others?
 - How might seeing yourself as God's intentional creation (aka understanding you are not a mistake) change the labels you give yourself, or the way you define who you are?
- As John is being wheeled into surgery, his dad has a few seconds with him. While fighting to maintain composure, his dad says, “I love you, son. There's nothing you can do about it.” This is a powerful example of a father's love for his son, no matter what. John's dad demonstrated an unconditional love. There was nothing John could do that would make him lose the love his dad offers.
 - How does unconditional love change the way we see ourselves?
 - How does this type of love remind you of God's love for us?
- Read or have someone read **Romans 8:38-39** aloud.

³⁸ *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

 - What Paul is telling us in these verses is that absolutely nothing is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. How does knowing that God's love for you is unbreakable impact the way you view your worth and identity?
 - How can knowing that nothing can separate you from God's love give you confidence to change the way you approach your friendships, your failures, and even taking risks to glorify Him, knowing that your core identity (who you are and whose you are) is always secure?
 - There will be times in life when you will have to navigate hard things. There will be times in life where your circumstances are beyond difficult and seem completely unfair. There will be times in life when you may feel distant from God, or you might even begin to question your faith. What truths from this passage in Romans can you hold onto to help you weather the storm and remember who you are and whose you are?
- When John assumed Beth didn't want to date him because of how he looked, she was visibly offended. Later, Beth would go on to tell John (regarding his injury), “It's part of who you are. It's not who you are.”
 - How do friendships or relationships help us remember our true identity?
 - Who in your life is someone who helps you remember who you really are?
 - Who do you know that you can encourage and challenge to remember their true identity?

- John’s story challenges us to live fully alive. How would your life look different if you lived every day out of the truth of your God-given identity instead of insecurity, fear, or comparison?
 - Beth challenges John by saying, “You drink so you can be known for something.” What do you want to be known for?
 - What do you think most people want to be known for?
 - What happens when those things begin to fade or fail?
- Read or have someone read **Matthew 6:33** aloud.

³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

 - How does making God’s kingdom your top priority affect the way you see your own worth or success, especially when compared to the priorities and standards of your friends or the culture in which you live?
 - In what practical ways could someone your age “seek first” God’s kingdom in your day-to-day life—at school, on your team, online, or with friends? What are some challenges that may come up when trying to live your daily life seeking God’s kingdom first?

CLOSING STATEMENT:

John O’Leary’s story in **Soul on Fire** reminds us that no label can compare to this: **You are created by God, loved by Him, and called His own.** Take out your phone and save that in a note somewhere. Write those words on your bathroom mirror when you get home. Put it in a place where you see it every day and can be reminded of this truth. When you see it, pause for just a moment, and give God thanks for creating you in His image and for giving you your true identity, which is found in Jesus Christ.

PRAYER:

Almighty God,

Thank You for creating each and every one of us in Your image. No matter our current or future circumstances, no matter our pasts, help us to remember that nothing can ever separate us from Your love. Teach us to put You first in our lives, trusting that You will take care of everything we need. Remind us that we are your image-bearers and help us to treat every person with whom we come in contact as one who is also created in the image of God. When we feel unsure, afraid, unsteady, or in doubt, remind us that our true identity is found in You alone. Remind us in these times of who we are and whose we are. Help us to live each day to reflect your light and love, knowing that we are deeply loved, incredibly valued, and are never alone.

In Jesus’s Name,
Amen.



THEME TWO

COMMUNITY

PURPOSE:

This Discussion Guide has been created to equip churches and ministry leaders with a tool that can be utilized alongside **Soul on Fire** to promote meaningful, spiritual conversations with viewers based upon a biblical theme presented in the film.

SOUL ON FIRE MOVIE RECAP:

In 1987, at just nine years old, John O’Leary was pulled from the flames of his family’s home with burns covering 100% of his body and with doctors giving him a 1% chance of survival. What followed was a battle for life that would test his resilience, his family’s faith, and the power of a community determined to believe God was not finished with his story. **Soul on Fire** brings this true story to the screen with raw honesty and unshakable hope, revealing how beauty can rise from unimaginable ashes.

More than a story of survival, this film is a declaration of grace and redemption. **Soul on Fire** reminds us that our scars are not the end. They are evidence of a Savior who brings purpose out of pain. Through faith, perseverance, and the love of those God places around us, John’s life became more than a miracle of healing; it became a living testimony to the glory of God and the hope Jesus offers to us all.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

We are not meant to go through life alone; we need community. Just like Jesus showed us by humbling Himself and serving others, we’re called to do the same by lowering the walls we’ve put in place and stepping into others’ struggles with Godly encouragement and intentional presence. It’s important as followers of Jesus that we also build and belong to communities where we support one another, share in God’s comfort, encourage each other to love and glorify the Lord in doing good, and celebrate the unique role that each Christian plays in the body of Jesus Christ, which is the Church.

SCRIPTURE:

Hebrews 10:23-25 ²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* ²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 ⁹ *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.* ¹⁰ *For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!* ¹¹ *Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?* ¹² *And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

Romans 12:3-5 ³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* ⁴ *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,* ⁵ *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

Philippians 2:1-9 ¹ *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,* ² *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* ³ *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* ⁴ *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* ⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ⁷ *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 ² *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,* ⁴ *who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* ⁵ *For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.* ⁶ *If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.* ⁷ *Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Once you've watched the movie together, ask some or all of the following questions to facilitate a time of discussion and reflection.

Optional Opening Questions To Get The Conversation Started:

- In the movie, we hear John O'Leary's father talking to him about building and hiding behind a wall. If people could peek behind your "wall," what's one fun or random thing they'd discover about you (like a hidden talent, hobby, or guilty-pleasure snack)?
- If you had to build a wall out of your favorite food, what food would you choose and why?

Talk About It:

- **Soul on Fire** is a story about John O'Leary, a man who overcame incredible odds as a young boy when an accident nearly took his life. In the opening scene, Deanna asks John to share his story with her small third-grade troop of Girl Scouts, and his response comes with fear and visible anxiety.
 - Why do you think Deanna would ask John to share his story with this group of third-grade girls?
 - Put yourself in John's shoes for a moment; where do you think his anxiety came from? How would you respond if you were asked to share a traumatizing event from your own life with a group of strangers?

- This is the first time John has ever spoken to a group of people in his community about his story. How did John's willingness to share his story help those in his community and eventually, all over the world?
- Jack Buck, a Hall of Fame sportscaster, is best known for his time with the St. Louis Cardinals. However, he took a special interest in John's recovery after his accident. In many scenes, Jack Buck made personal appearances to encourage John.
 - Why do you think Jack Buck, someone with fame and influence, made the choice to personally invest in a complete stranger's life, like John O'Leary?
 - Why do you think encouragement from someone outside of John's own family may have carried so much weight in his recovery and throughout his life?
 - What does this show us about the power of our encouragement and intentional presence in someone else's struggle?
- Read or have someone read **Hebrews 10:23-25** aloud.

²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* ²⁴ *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

 - What do these verses teach us about the role we can play in building up others and helping them persevere—especially when life gets hard?
 - How can holding onto “the confession of our hope [in Jesus] without wavering” make a difference in the way you encourage the people around you at home, at church, and in your circles of influence?
 - Share an example of a time when someone encouraged you to grow in your faith or to keep following Jesus. Why did the things this person did or the words this person said matter so much to you?
 - What are some ways that you can practically “stir up” or motivate others to show love and do good things for others?
 - This passage of Scripture warns against “neglecting to meet together.” Why do you think regularly gathering with other followers of Jesus is so important for growing in our faith and walk with the Lord?
- You might have noticed that one of the themes found in **Soul on Fire** is the importance of community. Honestly, it's not always easy to find ourselves in places where we feel surrounded by people like Nurse Roy or Jack Buck, people who genuinely show up, encourage us, and walk with us through challenges. Many of us long for that kind of support but aren't sure where to find it, or we may even overlook the people God has already placed in our lives.
 - How do you define community?
 - When you think of the type of community that you desire to belong to, what things are part of it? What things are not part of it?
- Read or have someone read **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** aloud.

⁹ *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.* ¹⁰ *For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!* ¹¹ *Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?* ¹² *And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

 - Verse nine of this passage says, “Two are better than one.” Why do you think God designed us to live and grow in community with other followers of Jesus instead of alone?
 - What are some possible dangers of someone trying to live out their faith alone, without the help and encouragement of others who are also following Jesus?

- If we believe that it is important to make spending time together in community with other followers of Jesus a priority in our lives, why do so many of us willingly choose to place a lot of other things in front of it?
 - This passage of Scripture says, *“For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”* Share an example from the movie where John had others around to help lift him up.
 - Think about your own life; what’s a real-life example of a time when someone went out of their way to lift you up? How did these words or actions make you feel?
 - If we know what it’s like to have someone lift us up, what makes it so hard sometimes to really be there for someone else who’s going through a tough challenge?
 - Why do you think we often pull back instead of stepping in when we notice someone who needs help? Why does it sometimes feel uncomfortable or even risky to walk with someone through their struggles?
 - What do you think it means that *“a threefold cord is not quickly broken,”* and how does including God in our relationships make a community even stronger?
- Once John recovered enough from his injuries to return home, his mother was determined to hold him to high standards—encouraging him to write, take piano lessons, and learn to eat without the use of his fingers. In one memorable scene, she and Jack Buck came up with a plan: for every letter John wrote, he would receive a signed baseball from a Cardinals player. What started as a challenge became a reward system that not only motivated John but also showed how a community can rally together to help someone grow, even in the face of great struggle.
 - Why do you think John’s mother chose to hold him to high standards instead of lowering expectations after his accident?
 - What does the baseball reward system teach us about how encouragement and accountability can make complex challenges feel possible in our lives and in our faith journey?
 - Why do you think authentic community is so important when someone is learning how to live with pain, injury, or loss? What should be the differences between the kind of community found in a support group and that found in fellowship with other followers of Jesus?
 - Read or have someone read **Romans 12:3-5** aloud.

³ *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* ⁴ *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,* ⁵ *so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

 - Romans 12:3 encourages us not to think of ourselves more highly than we should but to “think with sober judgment.” What is humility? Why do you think humility is important in the life of a Jesus follower and in a community of people who claim Jesus as their Savior and Lord?
 - This passage of Scripture goes on to compare followers of Jesus to parts of a body, each with different functions. If the Church (the people, not the building) is the body of Jesus Christ, what are these verses saying about the unique role God has for each person as a part of His body?
 - How can recognizing that we all have different gifts and roles help prevent comparison or jealousy among us as we all seek to follow Jesus and bring Him glory?
 - John’s dad, Denny, says, *“Stop thinking about what it gives you. Start thinking about what it needs from you. Alright? Take it slow, treat it a little easier, invest in it. You’d be amazed at what you get back.”* In the moment, it appears that Denny is talking about an old car that is giving John some aggravation, but this line could apply to so many things. Let’s think about this quote as it pertains to community.

- How do you think Denny’s advice about the old car—“*invest in it and you’d be amazed at what you get back*”—also applies to our relationships and places of community?
 - What makes it tempting to only think about what a community gives us instead of what we can give back?
 - Why do you think investing in others, even when it’s slow or difficult, often leads to stronger friendships and deeper growth in our walks with Jesus?
- Read or have someone read **Philippians 2:1-9** aloud.
¹ *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,* ² *complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* ³ *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* ⁴ *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* ⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ⁷ *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
 - In this passage of Scripture, Paul calls us to have the same mind as Jesus Christ, showing humility by valuing others above ourselves. What does it look like in your day-to-day life to value others above yourself?
 - In these verses, Paul warns us against our tendency towards “*selfish ambition*” (putting ourselves or our own interests above others) and “*vain conceit*” (excessive pride). How do these attitudes show up in the culture we live in today? How do they show up in your own life? How can we overcome these things through Jesus’ example?
 - How does Jesus’s humility, as laid out in this Scripture passage where it says He “*Emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant,*” challenge the things the world tells us about leadership, success, and serving others?
 - What are some practical ways that we can imitate Jesus’ obedience and humility in our relationships with others in the community of our family, the community of our friends, or our church community?
 - Throughout the movie, John is seen talking to several groups that include a Girl Scout troop, prison inmates, the St Louis Cardinals, hundreds at company trainings, and thousands of people at a conference. His story has impacted many by motivating them to share their own stories of faith and redemption, and by not allowing a physical hardship or traumatic event to shape their lives.
 - Why do you think John’s story is able to connect with so many different kinds of people, from Girl Scouts to prison inmates to executives to professional athletes?
 - What does this show us about the power of sharing the story God has given you, even when it includes pain or weakness?
 - Why do you think people are often encouraged when they hear the story of someone else’s faith and redemption?
 - Read or have someone read **2 Corinthians 1:3-7** aloud.
² *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,* ⁴ *who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* ⁵ *For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.[a]* ⁶ *If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.* ⁷ *Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.*

- Verse three of this passage calls God, “*the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.*” What does it mean that God is our source of comfort? How does knowing God as our comforter help in times of struggle, tragedy, or doubt?
 - The passage goes on to say that God comforts us in our afflictions so we can comfort others. How can your story of struggles, painful moments, doubts, or fears help you encourage others who are going through something difficult?
 - In what ways can comforting others with God’s comfort strengthen your relationships and faith?
 - Paul talks about sharing abundantly in Jesus’ sufferings and His comfort. What does it mean to share in both suffering and comfort with other followers of Jesus?
 - How can being part of a community of other followers of Jesus help us to share both the hard and the good moments together?
- Think back to the scene where John is reunited with Nurse Roy during a motivational speech and afterward, the conversation the two have about all that has taken place. It’s in this moment that, for the first time, we get the opportunity to take a step back and see the importance that the larger community surrounding John—each playing a critical role in his healing, in his finding purpose, and living a life on fire.
 - I’m going to list a few members of this larger community off, and I want you to share some ways they played a critical part in John O’Leary’s story.
 - John’s older brother
 - John’s older sister
 - John’s younger sister
 - John’s mom
 - John’s dad
 - The neighborhood
 - Nurse Roy
 - Lavell, the hospital custodian
 - Jack Buck
 - The St Louis Cardinals
 - Beth
 - Which example of community from John’s story stands out the most to you and why?
 - Why do you think John’s recovery and discovery of identity and purpose required so many different kinds of people—from nurses and janitors to neighbors, athletes, and broadcasters?
 - What does this say about the way God designed us for community, to need one another, and His using a community of others to shape the story He is telling through us?

CLOSING STATEMENT:

John O’Leary’s story in **Soul on Fire** reminds us of this: **You were not created to do life alone; God wired you for community and connection.** Take out your phone and save that in a note somewhere. Write those words on your bathroom mirror when you get home. Put it in a place where you see it every day and can be reminded of this truth. Whenever you see it, take a moment to thank God for creating others to “do life with” and share its ups and downs. Ask Him to make you aware of those whom you could serve in Jesus-like humility and give you the courage to drop your walls so that you can engage someone else’s struggle with encouragement and intentional presence. Lastly, ask the Lord to surround you with a community of others who are walking this same path and who are earnestly seeking to know Him, follow Him, and make Him known.

PRAYER:

Holy God,

Thank You for creating us to live in community. Thank you for providing us with communities, like this one, full of others who desire to support, encourage, and lift up one another while seeking to follow and glorify You. Open our eyes to notice those around us who are struggling. Give us the courage and compassion to engage. Help us to follow Jesus' example by serving in humility, putting others before ourselves, and encouraging one another along the way. When we face our own struggles, remind us that Your comfort is always with us, and empower us to share that comfort with those around us. Teach us to celebrate the unique gifts You've given each of us and to work together as one body in Jesus Christ. Help us to leave this place with a holy burden on our hearts to build and be a part of a community that starts here—a place filled with people who support one another, encourage one another, serve one another, spur spiritual growth in one another, and invite others to experience the life to the full that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus's Name,

Amen.



THEME THREE

GRACE

PURPOSE:

This Discussion Guide has been created to equip churches and ministry leaders with a tool that can be utilized alongside **Soul on Fire** to promote meaningful, spiritual conversations with viewers based upon a biblical theme presented in the film.

SOUL ON FIRE MOVIE RECAP:

In 1987, at just nine years old, John O’Leary was pulled from the flames of his family’s home with burns covering 100% of his body and with doctors giving him a 1% chance of survival. What followed was a battle for life that would test his resilience, his family’s faith, and the power of a community determined to believe God was not finished with his story. **Soul on Fire** brings this true story to the screen with raw honesty and unshakable hope, revealing how beauty can rise from unimaginable ashes.

More than a story of survival, this film is a declaration of grace and redemption. **Soul on Fire** reminds us that our scars are not the end. They are evidence of a Savior who brings purpose out of pain. Through faith, perseverance, and the love of those God places around us, John’s life became more than a miracle of healing; it became a living testimony to the glory of God and the hope Jesus offers to us all.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Grace is the foundation of God’s relationship with humankind. As a concept, grace is expressed quite a few different ways in Scripture, but can be thought of as the overwhelming goodness of God—His mercy, kindness, and ultimately salvation—poured out over us. Oh, and one more important note: it’s completely, 100% undeserved by us! That’s the essential quality of grace. It is simply God’s unearned goodness. Grace is God’s free gift. Grace meets us in our need and sustains us in our weakness. Grace isn’t abstract; it’s embodied in Jesus, and as followers of Him, we are to grow in grace and pass it on

SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 2:1-9 ¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 1:3-10 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him.

Romans 3:23-24 ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Titus 2:11-12 ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

2 Peter 3:18 ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Colossians 3:12-17 ¹² Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Once you’ve watched the movie together, ask some or all of the following questions to facilitate a time of discussion and reflection.

Optional Opening Questions To Get The Conversation Started:

- Let’s pretend that I gave you each a magic gift box and told you that you’re allowed to put anything you want into that box (other than yourself) and give it to anyone you want (other than yourself). What would you put into the box, and whom would you give it to?

- Now, let's say that I took away that magic gift box, but that you still wanted to give the gift you thought of to that same person you had in mind. In the "real world," what would you need to do in order to give them that gift? Make sure in your answers to this question you consider all that you would need to do to give the gift, such as getting a part-time job to pay for it, planning, the amount of time required, and the sacrifices you might need to make.

Talk About It:

- Whether it's for your birthday, during Christmas, or just because, you would think that it is pretty safe to assume that all of us enjoy giving and especially receiving gifts. However, there are some of us whose hearts beat more rapidly, whose palms begin to sweat, and whose anxiety starts to rise at the very thought of needing to pick out the perfect gift for someone. There are also many of us who feel guilty or panic whenever we get a gift that we were not expecting and have nothing to offer in return.
 - What is the best gift you have ever received, and what made it so meaningful or incredibly special to you?
 - Have you ever received a gift from someone that you knew took the gift giver a lot of time, planning, effort, or sacrifice to give it to you? If that's happened to you, would you be willing to share that story and tell us what that experience was like??
 - Have you ever received a gift from someone that you didn't know was coming, and when you opened that gift, you had a hard time accepting it or felt terrible that you didn't have anything to give them in return? If that's happened to you, would you be willing to share that story and tell us what that experience was like?
- One of the common themes in the gifts we said were meaningful or incredibly special to us is that the givers of the gifts choose to plan, put in effort, and even make personal sacrifices in order to offer us those gifts. As we watched John O'Leary's story be told in **Soul on Fire**, you may have noticed a very similar theme begin to unfold. In fact, just before the ending credits roll, we are shown a montage of photographs, actual snapshots, from John's life, which include some of the actual people portrayed throughout the film. As the montage rolls along and the music plays, we're able to read the following inspiring summary of what we have just witnessed:

"The kid who had to relearn how to write has authored two bestselling books that have been translated into more than a dozen languages. The insecure speaker who once got sick at the thought of talking to a crowd of people went on to teach millions how to live inspired. The party animal who overslept for his own graduation was welcomed back by his alma mater as a commencement speaker. The man who was once filled with feelings of being unworthy of love overcame these things and went on to marry his best friend, Beth. They now celebrate the beauty of it all with their four children."

- Which of these transformations in John's story was the most inspiring to you? Why?
- John O'Leary's story of overcoming adversity and tragedy is remarkable to say the least, but one of the most astonishing and unexpected parts of his story is all of the moments where a holy God and a significant number of people whom God placed in John's path repeatedly offered him the meaningful and incredibly special gift of extraordinary grace.
 - Grace" is kind of a churchy word. You may not have really heard the word used a ton in normal conversations outside of church. Because we don't usually use the word "grace" in normal conversation, we can end up using it without really talking about what it really means. So, before we go any further, how would you define "grace" in your own words?
 - Grace can be thought of as the overwhelming goodness and undeserved favor of God—His mercy, kindness, and ultimately salvation—poured out over humankind. If grace is God's free gift of undeserved favor (giving us something we do not deserve and have not earned), how is God's grace different from God's mercy?

- Read or have someone read **Ephesians 2:1-9** aloud.

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

- As Paul ends this passage of Scripture, he makes it crystal clear and allows no room for confusion about the source of our hope and salvation, saying, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” If grace and faith are gifts from God, how does this shape the way we understand our relationship and dependency on Him, especially when we feel unworthy, distant, or too covered in scars to be loved?
- Why do you think God chose grace, a completely undeserved gift, as the means of salvation instead of requiring achievement or scar-free perfection? What does that say about God’s character and love?
- In these verses, Paul says that it is “by grace you have been saved,” and that this salvation is “not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” What does boasting look like in modern Christian life (in person or on social media), and how does it point people to ourselves instead of to God?
- Our rescue from sin and death is a free and generous gift, not something we could ever earn through our own effort. John O’Leary did nothing to earn the grace of a new life with purpose or the generous blessings of so many who showed him acts of kindness and generosity after the fire. His story is not one of self-sufficiency or getting up off the mat after being knocked down by life’s unexpected trials or tragedies. The extraordinary kindness shown by those like Jack Buck and God’s work in John’s physical and spiritual healing were all unearned and undeserved gifts—just like God’s gift of life through salvation found in Jesus Christ. In what ways does John’s story point others to Jesus more than pointing to himself?

- Read or have someone read **Ephesians 1:3-10** aloud.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him.

- Paul says in verse three that God has “blessed us in [Jesus] Christ with every spiritual blessing.” What are some of God’s blessings that he lists in this passage?
 - How does knowing that these blessings only come from God’s grace in Jesus Christ shape the way we see ourselves, our value to God, and who we should be glorifying—especially when our culture is telling us that we should be glorifying ourselves and building up our own “personal brands”?
 - Paul talks about God “making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in [Jesus] Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in [Jesus] Christ.” How does understanding grace as part of God’s big, loving plan encourage us to trust Him even when life feels confusing or our circumstances seem unfair?
- When young John returned to his room after the first excruciatingly painful cleaning and changing of his bandages, he made a clicking noise, asking his parents for the letter board. As they worked with him to pick the letters and read out what he wanted to say, they were left with a singular question: Why me?

- When was the last time you found yourself in a “Why me?” kind of place with God? How did you respond? Looking back, what did God teach you as He walked with you through that painful situation?
- When it comes to God’s gift of extraordinary grace, we first have to understand the answer to the “Why me?” of needing grace in the first place. Why do you think we all need God’s grace?
- Read or have someone read **Romans 3:23-24** aloud.
²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,* ²⁴ *and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,* ²⁵ *whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.*
 - What does it mean that everyone, even those who do inspiring things like John O’Leary, still miss God’s standard or “fall short of the glory of God”? How does this help answer the question, “Why me?” when feeling flawed, unworthy, or unlovable?
 - In verse twenty-four, Paul says we are “*justified by His grace as a gift.*” How does knowing that justification (being declared in a right relationship with God) is given freely, not earned, impact the way you see yourself and God’s love?
 - Why is it often so hard for us to accept God’s gift of grace? When you or someone you know struggles with shame or guilt because of their sin or shortcomings, how can these verses offer hope and reassurance instead of condemnation?
 - How does understanding that grace is completely unearned challenge our ideas about earning God’s favor through things we do or don’t do? What are some things you do or see others do, trying to earn this grace instead of accepting this gift that could never be earned?
 - John O’Leary’s body and life were deeply scarred and broken by the fire. God’s grace and mercy met John precisely where he was in that broken place and ultimately brought him healing, restoration, and a new life with purpose beyond anything John could have ever achieved on his own. Most of us will never have to deal with the pain and scars of being burned alive, but we will all go through difficult times and “Why me?” moments. When you find yourself in that broken place, remember that God’s grace will always meet us in our need and find us when we are unable to save ourselves.
- Toward the end of **Soul on Fire**, John goes home to visit his father, who has worsening Parkinson’s disease. When asked how he stays so positive when he is in such pain and things are so hard for him, John’s dad responds by saying that he has too much to be grateful for. He goes on to say, “*I’m grateful to be healed. Healed, not cured. Because Parkinson’s disease may end up killing me, but I get to wake up each day knowing God has healed me and I know how my story ends.*”
 - Think about someone you know who has faced something incredibly difficult, like navigating a debilitating disease or the immense grief of losing someone close, yet their faith shone brighter than their circumstances. What did you see in this person that inspires you? What did they have that made their outlook so different than so many others?
 - What do you think John’s dad meant when he said that he knew how his story ends?
 - How can holding onto God’s grace in difficult circumstances change how we walk through them?
- Read or have someone read **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** aloud.
⁹ *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* ¹⁰ *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
 - How does what God says in these verses challenge the idea that strength or perfection is needed to experience God’s presence or receive His grace?
 - Why do you think Paul says that he “*will boast all the more gladly*” of his weaknesses instead of trying to hide them? How does this reveal the reality of God’s grace during hardship, shame, or failure?

- When Paul writes, “*For when I am weak, then I am strong,*” how does grace redefine what it means to be strong, and how might that inspire us to be vulnerable and honest within a community of other Jesus followers?
 - How does the promise of Jesus’ power resting upon us in times of weakness deepen your understanding of God’s love and His presence, especially during seasons of struggle, pain, and difficult circumstances?
 - The grace of God sustains us when we are weak. As followers of Jesus, we learn to rely on God’s sufficiency instead of our own strength. God meets us there in our weakness with exactly what we need. John O’Leary’s survival and life mission demonstrate this truth. Despite his physical weakness and trauma, God’s grace empowered him steadily, showing that divine power sustains us in our weakest moments.
- When Jack Buck shows up to John’s college graduation, he gives him the crystal baseball he received when he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. John tells him that he can’t take it, to which Jack responds, “*You’re not taking it, it’s a gift. It means a lot to me, and I hope it’ll mean a lot to you. It’s priceless.*” John then says, “*Mr. Buck, everything that you did—all the hospital visits, the autographed balls, the day at the park. I guess what I want to know is why me?*” Jack responds, “*Seemed like you needed it.*”
 - Why do you think Jack shows John such incredible acts of grace all throughout his life?
 - Which of the many acts of unearned love and grace from Jack to John do you think was the biggest or most surprising? Why?
 - Which of the many acts of unearned love and grace from our Holy Father to us do you think is the biggest and most surprising? Why?
- Read or have someone read **Titus 2:11-12** aloud.

¹¹ *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,* ¹² *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,* ¹³ *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,* ¹⁴ *who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

 - Why do you think God’s ultimate act of grace in offering salvation through Jesus Christ is offered to everyone regardless of background, mistakes, or scars? What does this reveal about God’s character? How does this challenge our feelings of unworthiness?
 - Verse twelve teaches that grace is not just forgiveness but also “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.” How does receiving God’s grace through Jesus go beyond forgiveness to become an active force that empowers us as believers to transform our lives for His glory, rather than just excusing our mistakes?
 - How can you recognize and rely on God’s grace in your everyday struggles and temptations instead of just trying harder on your own?
 - How can seeing God’s grace as an ongoing teacher rather than just a one-time event change the way you grow in your faith and relate to others who need the saving grace that can only be found in Jesus?
 - God’s grace isn’t abstract; it’s embodied in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Jesus reveals God’s grace and invites everyone into new life. This is ultimately where John O’Leary’s experience with God’s extraordinary grace takes him. John’s spiritual transformation didn’t happen overnight, but his being changed and made new by the power of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ shows the power of grace to not only heal but also train and transform hearts. God’s grace in Jesus brings salvation and a new way of living. It did for John O’Leary, and it can for anyone—no matter your past and no matter your scars.

- The movie closes with John, now a renowned speaker, sharing his newfound purpose with a large audience in Las Vegas, where he says, *“To move through the adversities of life, we must have a reason to thrive that is bigger than all of the challenges that we face. My purpose is simple—because God demands it, and because my family deserves it, and because the world is starved for it. You get one life, make yours matter!”*
 - As a follower of Jesus, what is your purpose in life?
 - What is your “reason to thrive that is bigger than all of the challenges?”
 - What would it look like for you to offer someone the gift of grace in your everyday life?

- Read or have someone read **2 Peter 3:18** and someone else **Colossians 3:12-17** aloud.

¹⁸ *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

¹² *Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,*
¹³ *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* ¹⁴ *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*
¹⁵ *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.* ¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* ¹⁷ *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

- What do you think Peter means when he urges followers of Jesus to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”? How is this different from simply receiving grace and moving on?
- In what practical ways can you daily “grow in grace”? How would this look in moments of doubt, failure, feeling stagnant in our walks with Jesus, or when we have conflict with others?
- How could actively growing in grace help someone respond to mistakes and setbacks with hope instead of shame and self-criticism?
- In the Colossians passage, Paul gives us a list of things that we as followers of Jesus should “clothe” ourselves with. Which of these things is the hardest one for you to wear (i.e., which do you struggle to live out the most?)
- In verse seventeen, Paul urges that as followers of Jesus, we should do “whatever we do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” With this in mind, how does grace shape our motivation and purpose in everyday decisions, words, and actions, especially when living out our faith is challenging?
- As followers of Jesus, we are to grow in grace and pass it on. This means that God’s grace is supposed to shape us more and more, and lead us to show others the same unearned Grace that God has shown us. John O’Leary’s story may already be a movie, but it’s a story that is still being written. John’s ongoing faith journey and his message to encourage and inspire thousands testify to the way God’s grace grows in a person and extends outward, making a difference in the lives of many and bringing glory to the true Author of the story.

CLOSING STATEMENT:

John O’Leary’s story in **Soul on Fire** reminds us of this: **Grace is the overwhelming goodness of God—poured out over me. It’s completely, 100% undeserved! It is simply God’s free gift of unearned goodness to me.** Take out your phone and save that in a note somewhere. Write those words on your bathroom mirror when you get home. Put it in a place where you see it every day and can be reminded of this truth. Whenever you see it, take a moment to thank God for lavishing His grace upon you. Thank Him for His grace that meets you in your need. Thank Him for His grace that saved you when you were unable to save yourself. Thank Him for His grace that sustains you when you are weak. Thank Him for Jesus, who embodies God’s grace and gives you new life. Lastly, ask Him to help you grow in His grace and pass it on to others for His glory.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father,

We come before You with grateful hearts, amazed by the free gift of Your grace that meets us in our brokenness and transforms our lives. Thank You for loving us so deeply that You offer us forgiveness, healing, and purpose—not because we deserve it, but because of Your willingness to lavish Your grace upon us. Help us to accept Your free gift of grace even when we feel unworthy. Teach us to receive Your grace daily and to extend it freely to others through kindness, compassion, patience, and love. May everything we do, in word or in deed or say, bring glory to Your name. May our stories, like this story of John O’Leary, be living testimonies of Your power to redeem and make all things new. We only get one life, Lord, so help us to make ours matter.

In Jesus’s Name,
Amen.