

MOVIE: 28 DAYS

Sub Topic Theme:
Self Harm

Lesson Objective:

The main objective of this large group is to look at the story behind self-harm. Many times, if we talk about self-harm, we spend time talking about the different acts of self-harm, how to prevent further harm or where to find help, all very good things. What we want



to do here is examine what it takes to bring a person to the point of recognizing [or understanding] self-harm (cutting, eating disorders, abusing your body, tattooing, burning, or other forms of self-harm) and how to help bring healing.

Intro to the Movie:

It should be noted that this movie, although rated PG-13, can be very intense at points; and while is a very good movie to open up discussion on the tough subject of self-harm, the movie should be viewed by you as the leader beforehand. That way you can determine if your group is ready for this discussion. It should also be noted that while many topics could be addressed with this movie, the main topic for this large group is self-harm and the things behind it.

RottenTomatoes.com describes this movie: "In this romantic comedy, a journalist who's become too much the life of the party finds a new lease on life in a drug and alcohol treatment center. New York newspaper columnist Gwen Cummings (Sandra Bullock) has a fondness for liquor, a boyfriend (Dominic West) with a similar taste for the bottle, and a party girl image that camouflages plenty of emotional baggage. At the wedding of her sister (Elizabeth Perkins), Gwen's pursuit of a good time goes a bit too far when she topples the wedding cake and steals the bridal party's limousine. The result is a court-ordered, 28-day stay in a rehabilitation facility for drug and alcohol abusers. Gwen's failure to get with the program causes her to butt heads with the clinic's director (Steve Buscemi), but her attitude begins to change when she meets Eddie Boone (Viggo Mortensen), a baseball player trying to deal with his substance abuse problems."

While this movie's main character, Gwen, mainly struggles with alcohol, her overuse of the substance on a regular basis is another form of self-harm, one maybe not talked about in those terms. Gwen's roommate at rehab, Andrea, struggles with many things, cutting and heroin to name a couple. She eventually overdoses which kills her. What is important to remember when viewing this movie is that, although self-harm may

not be one of the main topics, each of the different characters struggles with something. Their struggles and their past help to determine how they respond to different events within the film.

As you watch, encourage your students to focus on the variety of ways the characters interact and respond to one another. Challenge them to consider which ones are truly beneficial and which could be categorized as self-harm. Additionally, encourage them to imagine how different the entire story would be in Jesus were present in one or all of the characters lives. Would it make things easier or harder? This is their 3D lens for the movie.

Group Input:

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective: *The main objective of this large group is to look at the story behind self-harm. Many times, if we talk about self-harm, we spend time talking about the different acts of self-harm, how to prevent further harm or where to find help, all very good things. What we want to do here is examine what it takes to bring a person to the point of recognizing [or understanding] self-harm and how to help bring healing.*

Bullet Objective:

Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:

Maybe you have seen this movie before or maybe you haven't. Either way I hope that after watching this movie you have learned something new and realize that self-harm, although a startling thing to come across, many times is not as startling as the story behind the self-harm. As we saw with Gwen, she grew up with an alcoholic mother; and while the movie shows her mom in pretty good spirits, maybe that was the only way her mom could enjoy life. Where was Gwen's Dad? Lily references this in the movie; she says that he left their mom and, by leaving their mom, also left them. That must have been hard too, being left behind. Did Gwen struggle with feelings of abandonment, self-worth? How did the life style she chose to live at the beginning of the movie possibly bring more pain?

A person's past, or story, is important. It helps us to understand better our friends and ourselves. By learning a person's story, we understand better why they may struggle this way or that way and we learn how to love them well. Maybe you're simply telling a friend that you will be there for them isn't enough because lots of people have told them that. Maybe you have to find a way to show it to them for them to believe it. That's okay, but you wouldn't know that if you had not taken the time to know them first.

Think about this: what would their life look like if they had an intimate

relationship with Jesus? Do you think his closeness may have changed some of the person's story from what it was to something completely different? Does Jesus really offer us an escape from self harm and many of the tragic stories behind the self harm? If that's true, then many of the stories we are living and see others live can be truly redeemed for good through a friendship and devotion to Jesus. The Bible has lots of stories about real people with real stories that an encounter with God changes.

When we look at the Old Testament we see that many times the past affects the way things in the future play out. Take Joshua for example. He was chosen to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land after Moses died. Big job, but God tells Joshua three times in the first nine verses in the book of Joshua to be determined and confident. Good words of wisdom; probably words Joshua needed to hear too. Let's check it out.

Joshua 1:1-9

1 After the death of the LORD's servant Moses, the LORD spoke to Moses' helper, Joshua son of Nun. **2** He said, "My servant Moses is dead. Get ready now, you and all the people of Israel, and cross the Jordan River into the land that I am giving them. **3** As I told Moses, I have given you and all my people the entire land that you will be marching over. **4** Your borders will reach from the desert in the south to the Lebanon Mountains in the north; from the great Euphrates River in the east, through the Hittite country, to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. **5** Joshua, no one will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will always be with you; I will never abandon you. **6** Be determined and confident, for you will be the leader of these people as they occupy this land which I promised their ancestors. **7** Just be determined, be confident; and make sure that you obey the whole Law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not neglect any part of it and you will succeed wherever you go. **8** Be sure that the book of the Law is always read in your worship. Study it day and night, and make sure that you obey everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. **9** Remember that I have commanded you to be determined and confident! Do not be afraid or discouraged, for I, the LORD your God, am with you wherever you go."

When the book of Joshua opens up we see the Lord commanding Joshua to lead his people, but we also see God telling Joshua to be determined and confident (strong and courageous NIV). If we continue to read we see Joshua was obedient, but maybe Joshua, while putting up a brave face was a little nervous and that is why God reminded Joshua to be determined and confident, reminded him that that he was with him. Why would Joshua be nervous though? Let's look back in Scripture to see more of Joshua's story and find out what happened before Joshua became his people's leader.

Numbers 13:25-33

25 After exploring the land for forty days, the spies returned **26** to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had brought. **27** They told Moses, "We explored

the land and found it to be rich and fertile; and here is some of its fruit. **28** But the people who live there are powerful, and their cities are very large and well fortified. Even worse, we saw the descendants of the giants there. **29** Amalekites live in the southern part of the land; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country; and Canaanites live by the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan River.”

30 Caleb silenced the people who were complaining against Moses, and said, “We should attack now and take the land; we are strong enough to conquer it.”

31 But the men who had gone with Caleb said, “No, we are not strong enough to attack them; the people there are more powerful than we are.” **32** So they spread a false report among the Israelites about the land they had explored. They said, “That land doesn't even produce enough to feed the people who live there. Everyone we saw was very tall, **33** and we even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. We felt as small as grasshoppers, and that is how we must have looked to them.”

God told the people to go and check out the land that he promised them, but most of the men came back with bad reports, blinded by the things that seemed like big problems. They forgot how much God had taken them through successfully already. Check out God’s response to their disbelief.

Numbers 14:26-35

²⁶ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ²⁷ “How much longer are these wicked people going to complain against me? I have heard enough of these complaints! ²⁸ Now give them this answer: ‘I swear that as surely as I live, I will do to you just what you have asked. I, the LORD, have spoken. ²⁹ (A) You will die and your corpses will be scattered across this wilderness. Because you have complained against me, none of you over twenty years of age will enter that land. ³⁰ I promised to let you live there, but not one of you will, except Caleb and Joshua. ³¹ You said that your children would be captured, but I will bring them into the land that you rejected, and it will be their home. ³² You will die here in this wilderness. ³³ (B) Your children will wander in the wilderness for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last one of you dies. ³⁴ You will suffer the consequences of your sin for forty years, one year for each of the forty days you spent exploring the land. You will know what it means to have me against you! ³⁵ I swear that I will do this to you wicked people who have gathered together against me. Here in the wilderness every one of you will die. I, the LORD, have spoken.’”

No wonder Joshua was nervous! Caleb and Joshua were the only two guys who gave a good report. There were serious consequences for not being obedient. But we wouldn’t know that if we didn’t know Joshua’s back story. God knew what was probably going on in his heart and gave him the confidence he needed to plow ahead. When you know a person’s story, you can help them better. Think about different people in your life; how

well do you know them? What can you do to know them better and how might knowing them better help you love and understand them better? How can you bring healing to another person by being available and asking someone about their story?

Challenge:

1. Sit down and take the time to think out some good questions to ask people. Maybe you want to enter deeper relationships and conversation, but have never thought about how. Write out at least five good questions to ask a person. You may even want to think about follow up questions. Practice good listening to know and love others better for who they are.
2. Pray about the people in your life right now. Ask God to open your eyes in ways they have not been opened before. Ask him to help you love others better, to judge slower and to soften your heart to those you don't know.
3. God puts different people in our lives at different times for a reason. Is there someone right now who is in your life you need to spend more time with? Get to know better? Maybe you need to allow them to get to know you better. Who is it? How are you going to obey God and begin building a deeper relationship?

Pray for God's purpose and power to put these challenges into action and transform lives. Remind them of the online personal journey at ReZilient Life for further involvement with this topic of Self-harm.