



Intro

(All links checked, April 2019).

There are a couple of media pieces called 'The Island'. One is the movie 'The Island' with Scarlett Johansson and Ewan McGregor. The second (and the one this session is more aimed at) is the Bear Grylls series where some men are put on an island and have to survive / do various survival type tasks.

You could also link this in with the Tom Hanks 'Castaway' movie or even the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' series of movies (e.g. when Jack Sparrow is marooned on an island). Or even one of the Bear Grylls episodes when he's on an island!

The Room / Layout

This is a session that can be done inside but can also be done outside. In fact if you're outside it may be all the better. If you have any kind of island nearby, why not do the session there! Or maybe a bit of land that is raised up / even on a 'tor' or hill somewhere. Another possibility is to go to a forest area and find a clearing, or 'fence off' an area of the forest with natural materials e.g. fallen branches etc. Or use someone's garden - probably best ask permission first ;)

If you are inside then no problems. Create an island area with some creative thinking...

If your church has some plants in pots (or you have some), bring them in to create a 'wilderness' type area. Get some sand from the road / pavement of a local beach (it's illegal to take sand from a beach); bring some 'windbreakers' and create a fenced off area in your building; get a couple of TVs or projectors and project island scenery onto the walls; get someone in the church who's an artist to paint a massive 'island' on loads of bits of paper put together (depending on the size of your group!!) Or simply use masking tape to create a circle in the middle of your room!!

Movie / Video Clips

[The Island With Bear Grylls Trailer](#) - Channel 4 direct link

[The Island With Bear Grylls, Choosing the island](#) - YouTube Direct Link

[Bear Grylls Castaway Part 1](#) - YouTube Direct Link

Find The Island

Alternatively, prime a guy who is in the church but not a youth worker (and one who is fun and good on camera) to go to make himself look a bit rough (e.g. not shave for a couple of days etc, ruffle up any hair (!) and make themselves look like they've been somewhere for a while - a bit unkempt and messy). Give them a phone or camera and take them to a nearby beach / place that can be made to look like a beach or an island or a forest or a green area. Then get them to do some kind of short 'selfie' video about the fact they've been shipwrecked or are on an island. They can end by asking the young people to help them. Play the video back on a laptop or tablet (or on screen if available).

You could even get the guy to show a bit of where he may be in the background of the video (without giving too much away) and then ask him to be there during the time of this session. You can then end the session by giving clues to help find the 'survivor' (who will be nearby to where the session is taking place - or even in the church building somewhere!) Be creative!!

The Bible - Acts 28.1-8 - Shipwrecked on The Island

Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, 'This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.' But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. There was an estate near by that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. His father was ill in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of those on the island who were ill came and were cured. They honoured us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

Island Games

1. Eating Survival Food

OK, so this really depends on how far you want to take this! You can present the young people with a few options. You can get some Haribo or similar sweets / candy, maybe in the shape of worms or liquorice laces- basically whatever you can get hold of!

Alternatively, you can collect a few bugs and worms etc and eat them...? Or maybe you could find some worms and put them in a box, make a hole and then get the young people to put their hand into the box one by one (!!)

2. Making Fire

This must be done outside and must be done very safely. You will need to clear an area in any forest (you cut a circle with a spade into the soil and lift out the soil, put aside and replace back afterwards). Or you go somewhere with concrete etc / do the fire lighting in a metal pan / bucket. You must also have water on standby and need to make sure it's not done on a windy day!

Do this in groups of 2-3 etc and supervise each group with an adult etc. You will need a fire steel (don't worry these are safe) and some cotton wool. Fluff up the cotton wool a little bit and for each person / group and use about a golf ball size worth of cotton wool only. When used properly the fire steel will easily and quickly light the cotton wool which will also go out quite quickly too.

[Video on using a fire steel](#) - direct YouTube link

3. Finding clean water

OK so depending on where you do this, the exercise can be done differently! You will need some water purification tablets which are fairly cheap - such as Aquaclear (around £7-£8) for a packet of 50. These have chlorine in to purify, so just make sure of any allergies etc.

The easiest option is simply to get some tap water and then use the puri-tabs to 'purify' the water. One tablet will purify 1 litre of water but this has to be left for 30mins. Obviously if it's tap water then it'll be fine!

You can make this more realistic by boiling the water. If you have any gas burners (eg old school gas cookers or more modern burners such as ones by Primus) or camping equipment to make this more 'realistic' that's great. You could even light the gas burners by using the fire you've made and lighting with a stick etc.

4. Building a Shelter

This is going to be dependent on where you choose to do the session, so here are some ideas to help (getting one of Bear Grylls' books called 'Living Wild' may also be a help to you. There are others such as Ray Mears 'Essential Bushcraft' but Bear's book also contains some stuff about his faith which it'd be good to read out as well). So here are the ideas:

Inside - why not get some strong string or paracord (from local army surplus) and then get some cheap sheets or tarps (tarpaulin, again from a local army surplus). You can then stretch the string across a room tightly and put the sheet / tarp over the top. Or use two bits of string and then place the tarp flat on the top to create an easy to make 'shelter'. Or just put up a gazebo in the room and get the young people to help!

Outside - there are lots of types of shelters you can make, especially if you're in an area with lots of long sticks. You can simply lean a load of sticks up against a wall and create a 'lean-to' shelter which people can then sit 'behind' e.g. against the wall.



Or you can create a kind of 'goalpost' setup using sticks (see the picture below). Then lean a load of sticks up against the 'goalposts'.

You can even add other sticks horizontally (weaving in and out of the sticks standing up) and even put moss on the structure etc!

Have a look in the Bear Grylls 'Living Wild' book for clearer instructions!

Or just think creatively - for example find a large tent from someone in the church, find out how to set it up in their garden beforehand and then work with the young people to set it up and do the rest of the session inside the tent !!

Something more complex that may inspire - a shelter myself and friend built with moss etc:



5. Add in any other exercises

For example tying knots or preparing some food or doing some teamwork exercises. Be creative, thinking about your group, your experience, their experience and the environment you're in.

Island Insights

1. Keeping on going even in hard times

If you think you had to do some hard work in the Island Games today, think about Paul. He was on a ship as a prisoner when he was shipwrecked. The men on board were even thinking of killing him and all the prisoners! He swam to shore, presumably losing anything he'd had. Some of the men probably had hypothermia as it was cold and wet. The people were friendly but then Paul was bitten by a snake! Even the worst challenges on "I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here" or on "The Island with Bear Grylls" weren't as bad as the things Paul went through!

The Bible tells us that in this world we'll have trouble and challenges (we've all had things go wrong in our life, or times that have been really hard). But the great news is that Jesus has promised never to leave us or forget us (Hebrews 13.5). If we know Jesus as real in our life, we have his Holy Spirit in us all the time. No matter how we feel or what's happening, God is right there with us. Jesus also tells us that he has overcome the world. No matter what life throws at us, Jesus is bigger than it and he's greater than it.

Nothing surprises him and he has the answer for everything we go through. He's for us and not against us and he's cheering us on all the way.

John 16.33 - I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

We also read that when the men were shipwrecked on the island of Malta and the locals built a fire, that Paul was out searching for brushwood (for the fire) when he was bitten by the snake! Sometimes in life I've been doing things to help other people and to be good, to be helpful and kind. But sometimes things bite you on the hand - people aren't kind back, they don't appreciate you or even say nasty things about you. But it doesn't matter what people say or do, we should keep on doing good things as the Bible tells us in Galatians 6.9-10 and in 1 Corinthians 15.58. Jesus told his disciples that we are blessed (God is with us in a good way) when people persecute us and say and do nasty things! God is with us and will give us the victory (even when we don't appear to understand). The Bible also promises us that God in us is greater than anything else in the world so never forget that!

1 John 4.4 - You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

2. A heart for God and for others

We also see the heart of love, compassion and leadership from Paul who is out helping and serving and doing good - finding wood for the fire. What kind of person are you? Are you the kind of person who sits back and lets others do things or do you get stuck in and help? I remember someone saying to me when I was thinking of which University to go to. They told me, 'it doesn't matter where you go, it matters what you put in to where you go. You'll get out of something whatever you put in.' And they were right!

You never lose with God. If you give and serve and love and are kind, helpful to people - God sees everything. He remembers what you've done for others and for him. He loves it and loves you. Even if no-one else sees, God sees. So be the kind of person who goes the extra mile for people and does good things even when no-one is looking (yes, even picking up litter or putting clothes back on a shelf in a shop). God will also use our good acts to show Jesus to other people - as someone said we are like 'little Jesus's' on earth. No we're not gods and we're not perfect like Jesus who is perfect and who is God. But we are his representatives and as we grow in our relationship with Jesus, these kind things should just happen and come out of us naturally!

Galatians 6.7-9 - Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

3. It's All About Me... (Not!) God is with us.

There's a funny video on youtube of a guy who takes some Christian worship songs and changes the meaning to make the worship all about himself. It's a parody - he doesn't really believe it, he's making a funny video to make a point! This is funny and definitely worth showing!!

Direct YouTube link - <https://youtu.be/8XHkMPA1334>

It's important to remember what Jesus told his disciples in Luke 10.27 when he was asked what the most important commandment was:

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

When the snake bit Paul, he calmly shook the snake off. Everyone expected him to die but Paul knew who he was in Christ. Jesus had told his disciples (and tells us the same):

Mark 16.18 - they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on people who are ill, and they will get well.'

The snake did not hurt Paul because of his faith in God and because God protected him. All the people wanted to worship him after this miracle. But Paul didn't claim to be some kind of god as the people thought he was. I'm sure that Paul gave the glory to God (we should do the same and not claim credit for things!) But the important thing was that Paul knew who he was.

Often we worry about who we are and what we look like. It's hard in school sometimes. I went to a good school where the government paid most of my fees but we weren't well off. When others were going on holiday all round the world, we were at a local beach. I didn't have all the things other people had but I never had any hassles. But some people do because they don't fit in.

Or we may want to be like other people. In the movie 'Mean Girls', Lindsay Lohan tries to fit in with the cool girls. But eventually she finds they are shallow and not really her friends. Instead she asks forgiveness from her actual friends and fits back in with them and is much happier.

It's really hard but if we hold on to the truth about who we are in Jesus, it really helps. If you are a Christian, you are a son or daughter of God; you are on your way to heaven; you have God living on the inside of you; you have a God who loves you as you are; a Saviour who died for you; a God who made you unique and fashioned you personally even before time began. He loves you with an everlasting love, wants the best for you, will help you in everything and wants good things for you that will last and do you good!

4. Finally, Paul did good works

The governor of Malta was very hospitable to Paul and his shipwrecked companions. But the governor's father was ill and in bed. So Paul went to see him, prayed for him and he was healed. Funnily enough when this happened, all the other sick on the island came to Paul and were cured! How amazing!

Sometimes life is like that. Things happen that we don't understand and think it's bad. If you were shipwrecked and lost everything, you'd probably think it was bad! But often it's not what happens to us but how we react that is important. Paul reacted well. He helped get fire wood, probably did lots of other things and he then went and prayed for the governor's father.

Sometimes it takes a lot of courage even to do small things like offering to pray for someone or help someone. One time I felt God ask me to help pay for a man's shopping in the store so I did and he was so grateful. Another time I felt God encourage me to pray for a man's knee that was hurting but I didn't sadly. So none of us are perfect! But we should try. It probably took some courage for Paul to offer to pray for the man but he did and of course the man was healed!

Then all the other people came and they were healed as well. God's will is for people to be healed, to be restored and to see the power of the devil smashed. There is so much evil in the world and God has given us the power and desire to do what we can where we can when we can. But we have to say yes! Look what happened to Paul - there was a healing revival on the island of Malta! What seemed to have been a disaster (the shipwreck) was turned into something amazing and good (people healed and God's truth brought to Malta). As a result, Paul and his companions got supplies and were able to sail off.

Romans 8.28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." - the first part of the verse can also be translated, "all things work together for good to those who love God, who; or that in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good..."

For the contestants of "The Island with Bear Grylls" there is an end to their island experience. And one day there will be an end to our life on earth. But if we know Jesus, we were given eternal life from the moment we said yes to Jesus. The Bible tells us that the earth isn't our home. Our real home is in heaven with Jesus (in fact Ephesians tells us we are seated in heavenly places right now as well as being on the earth in physical bodies - get your head round that one!!)

The amazing thing about God is that he chooses to use us! It's crazy but that's what God does. He uses us to touch other people with his Good News, his love, healing and help. But like Paul we have to respond and say 'yes' to God. This will take us out of our comfort zones and into the 'deeper water' but the deeper water is where the amazing things happen. So how will you respond today?

Bear Grylls book, 'Living Wild'

Read out pages 249-252 as they are amazing and a great inspiration of faith to everyone!

A Response

Note - wherever you run the session, have a place 'outside' of the 'island' you've created. The response is that if people are prepared to say yes to God, that they move from the 'island' to the place 'outside' the island. This is symbolic for saying yes to God and wanting to position themselves with God and whatever he wants for their life.