

"BEHIND THE SCENES" YOUTHWORKER GUIDE



**THE INSPIRING TRUE STORY OF
BETHANY HAMILTON**

SOUL SURFER

IN THEATERS EVERYWHERE APRIL 15
SoulSurferTheMovie.com



PHOTOGRAPHY BY: MIKE COOTS



INTRODUCTION

By Ken McCoy

"Surfing isn't the most important thing in life. Love is. I've had the chance to embrace more people with one arm than I ever could with two."

– Bethany Hamilton

Wouldn't you like to have a few Bethany Hamiltons in your youth group? Maybe you can encourage your guys and girls to emulate Bethany's courage, faith, determination, and love. The perfect opportunity to do that is coming on April 15th – that's when *Soul Surfer* opens in theaters near you.

You might already be familiar with the story of the young surfer girl from Kauai who lost an arm to a shark. Her autobiographical book *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board* and the related DVD video called *The Heart of a Soul Surfer* have been making the rounds for several years. Now comes a major film, from a big-time studio, which reinforces the character qualities that you'd be thrilled to see in your young friends.

What makes this film especially meaningful for us at interlinc is that we have been closely tied in with the Hamilton family for a while now. Working with this film has been a "from the inside" and "behind the scenes" experience for us! Our good friend and close associate, Rick Bundschuh, makes us jealous because he's talented and lives on Kauai. He was there when the whole shark thing happened, and has been a part of helping Bethany and her family since then. (By the way, be sure to get a copy of Rick's latest book, *Deep Like Me* – musings from a guy whose brain works faster than his mind. It should be available in all the usual places in February.)

In this "Behind The Scenes" Youthworker Guide and the accompanying DVD, you will find all kinds of resources for you to maximize the opportunity that *Soul Surfer* represents. Use the Planning Timeline – all the hard planning work has been done for you! The included articles will provide thought-provoking concepts to support you. Take advantage of the Discussion Guides for the Hamilton family video, the Sarah Hill interview (Sarah is Bethany's church youth leader. Rick was able to video her excellent youthworker's viewpoint to the story – video that you won't find anywhere else!), and the three clips from the movie. Those videos are included on the DVD.

You'll, for sure, want to plan a Beach Party – and we've loaded you up with game ideas, videos, and a sick (that means "excellent") devotional to use. Your kids are going to be the envy of all their friends when they brag about the Beach Party!

These resources are just the beginning. Starting in March, you'll receive the weekly "Surf Report" emails sent just to the Soul Surfer Crew – youth leaders like yourself who want to make the most of the opportunity that the *Soul Surfer* movie represents. Those Surf Reports will have even more ideas and resources that you can use!

These materials were written by twin brothers from different mothers: **Ken McCoy** and **Rick Bundschuh**. Ken is interlinc's editor and the Emperor of JumpStart Ministries in Escondido, California. Rick's on interlinc's WriteGroup, is the pastor of Kauai Christian Fellowship, and a close friend of Bethany and the Hamilton family.

YOUTHWORKER GUIDE

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INTO THE MAELSTROM

By Rick Bundschuh

I was sitting in front of my computer working on some church stuff when I got the phone call; Bethany Hamilton had been attacked by a shark and was being rushed to the hospital.

Shock. Disbelief. A sudden burst of prayer. This kind of thing is not supposed to happen to a bright-eyed 13-year-old kid.

Oddly, I had been through this scenario five years before when Mike Coots, an 18-year-old bodyboarder from our youth group, lost the lower part of his leg to a Tiger shark at Majors Bay. Now another kid I knew had been attacked.

For those who have watched too many episodes of Shark Week, I can't emphasize enough how unusual this is. I have been surfing since I was 11 and spent my earlier years plowing down tourists with my inflated canvas raft – the prehistoric version of a bodyboard. And like all surfers, I am well aware that I share the ocean with some unsavory characters. But I had seen a shark only a few times in my decades of surfing – including the small one that swam between my legs and over my submerged board in Samoa.

While we who play in the ocean are aware of the risk (being hit by lightning on the golf course kills far more people), an attack is so seldom and random that we never really think about it.

The Hamiltons are friends of mine, even though they live on the other side of the island. I got to know them when we did a church plant operation that they were part of, and Bethany and her older brothers were an active part of our youth group activities. Tom and Cheri were both surfers. Tom was a waiter and Cheri cleaned condos and delivered tourist magazines around the island (which gave her a chance to surf just about everywhere a swell was hitting). Noah, the oldest, loved to hunt me down in paintball and was a huge Christian music junky who helped host our Music Tasting Parties on the North Shore. Timmy was

built bigger than his brother but, like many middle children, had gone against the flow by being the only one in the family to bodyboard instead of stand up surf.

Bethany, whom I'd known since she was a child, was a wiry imp with almost white blonde hair and a natural physical talent that was making her a surfing standout at a young age. Now she was in the hospital and the rumor mill about the severity of her wounds was in full production.

I decided to give it an hour or two before heading to the hospital.

I was not surprised at the swarms of people wandering helplessly around the foyer. This was a typical reaction on our small island where lives are knit closely together. Tragedy strikes, you drop what you are doing and run to the hospital where you stand around wondering and worrying.

The press, having flown over from Oahu, showed up right behind me. They were clamoring for a story and looking for a parent, a doctor, or anyone else who would go on camera.

I saw Tom and threaded my way over to him. He already had the "deer in the headlights" look. He grasped my hand and said "Rick, I am so glad you are here!" I pulled him off to the side and got the short version of what happened. (Bethany had just come out of surgery and Tom had only recently regained movement in his legs as he was on the gurney numbed for knee surgery when he was bumped from the operating room in order to make a place for his daughter.) We prayed together and then I strongly advised that he find someone to handle the press and go hang out with his family, advice which he took.

I never did see Bethany that day. After an hour or so I left, having done my "ministry" with the throngs of concerned kids waiting for nothing in particular in the foyer. I went home and journaled my thoughts of that day.

Later in the week I came back to visit. A doctor was seeing Bethany so I visited with Timmy instead and left something for him to give to her. I recall telling him that he would have a new bodyboarding partner now, not thinking it would be possible for a person with one arm to stand up surf. (Paddling and pushing up is insanely hard with one arm.) Tim said, "Yeah, I gave her a set of fins already."

There was no thought from any of us that this attack would keep Bethany out of the water.

In the weeks to follow Bethany proved us wrong. By the time her wound healed she was up and riding a surfboard. Within a year she was back in competition and famous worldwide. She was and is the most recognizable surfer in history. The Hamiltons asked me to help tell her story to the world in book form. (Which turned into a hilarious endeavor as I tried to get a restless young teen to sit still and focus long enough to try to dredge up a profound thought, especially when her friends were waiting at the door.)

So what did I journal that day of the shark attack – what did I write as a friend, a pastor, and a father myself? I was mostly trying – but also not trying – to make sense of the inexplicable. I was questioning and trusting at the same time. I was wondering why God would mess with a young Christian kid in this way and wondering if there was nothing more than random cause and effect at work by choosing to play in the ocean. I journaled about not seeing clearly and having the same confusion all of us, who cared about Bethany and her family, felt.

What came out of the maelstrom is a marvelous story of determination, inspiration, and faith. It's a story and a bunch of people I am so grateful to have a place in their lives.

SARAH HILL INTERVIEW Discussion Guide

By Ken McCoy



Sarah has been Bethany Hamilton's youth leader and friend for several years. We are fortunate that we were able to get her "behind the scenes" description of what happened just after the shark attack, and since. Here are some of the questions that our friend Rick Bundschuh took with him when he drove up to the north shore of Kauai to interview Sarah:

THE ATTACK

- Describe your initial reaction to hearing about the shark attack on Bethany.
- Describe those first few days after the attack from a youth leader's perspective.
- As you know, when a traumatic event happens on campus or to a student, the school goes into "crisis mode" – with special meetings, counselors brought in, etc. How did your youth ministry move into "crisis mode"?
- You mention that the entire group held a worship service in Bethany's hospital room. That's very cool! How did that come about?

SINCE THEN

- I can imagine that there might have been some "push back" reaction to Bethany's instant stardom. How have you handled having a celebrity in the group? How have the kids responded to the attention Bethany has received?
- Being a female youth leader, how do you attract and lead those "alpha male" guys?

This video interview is worth sharing with your youth ministry leadership team, and even with parents. You might want to show the whole video at once (it's less than fifteen minutes long), or pause along the way and discuss what was just shared. So, use these discussion questions in the way that works best for you.

"What do you say to comfort someone, when you're not okay with what's happened to them yourself?"

- When have you been at a loss for words to comfort someone?
- Why is the presence of others important during difficult circumstances?

Sarah quotes **Jeremiah 29:11** and explains, "The Lord said to me, 'I'm going to use her as a voice.'"

- Have you had an experience when the Holy Spirit brought a specific Scripture to mind?
- How can we help our kids know the Word better, or the Holy Spirit can bring it to their minds when they need it?

"Within an hour, fifty people were there. I've never seen such a power team of prayer come together so quickly."

- When Christians go into crisis mode, prayer is usually the first thing they do. Why?
- How can we embed more deeply a sense of prayer in our group?

"I definitely had a lot of kids emotionally affected... so it was a good opportunity to encourage them that God is faithful, no matter what happens."

- What is the first question that comes to mind when a tragedy has occurred? ("Why?")
- How did Sarah's actions turn that question around?

Sarah describes the worship service in Bethany's room. "What a lesson we can learn from these kids: they cling to Christ."

- What lesson would we learn from our group at this time?
- How can we make worship singing more important to our students?

"I was thankful that I could encourage Bethany during times of struggle..."

- What do you notice about Sarah's role as Bethany came to terms with her new reality?
- How has God used you to encourage a student?

"Going through this made us a stronger youth group."

- How would you describe a "strong" youth group?
- How "strong" would you say our group is?

Sarah stood up for Bethany when she'd hear rumors or complaints.

- How do youth leaders "have the back" of their students?
- How do we likewise support parents, pastors, etc.?

"Bethany doesn't like being a celebrity – but she's anxious to share her faith."

- Who in our group is anxious to share his or her faith?
- How can we encourage more students to be like that?

Sarah uses surfing to relate to guys. She's real with kids, and builds relationships with guys and girls.

- What would you say are the qualities of a good youth leader?
- How might a woman be as strong an influence as a man for teenaged guys? What about a man's influence for teenaged girls?

Sarah had an offer to work on the mainland, but didn't take it. The shark attack confirmed her ministry. She was glad she didn't take the easy way out.

- Describe a time when you were tempted to "take the easy way out" of youth ministry.
- What has God used to confirm your ministry with kids?

"It's important to be transparent with the youth that you serve alongside."

- Note Sarah's addition of "alongside." How does her view of youth ministry relate to yours?
- When are you least able to be "transparent" with kids?

"Honest sharing that we're not okay with this is what got the group through the difficult time."

- When was the last time that you had "honest sharing" with teenagers?
- How might that kind of openness get a group through a difficult time?

"Any youth leader knows that it's a thankless, difficult ministry. God uses us not only to impact the world through the kids who we serve, but to prepare them for the Church of the next generation."

- How do you relate to this statement that Bethany makes?
- When has youth ministry NOT been thankless for you?

Sarah quotes **1 Corinthians 15:58**. "Even if your work is not recognized, God sees it – and everything you do, He's using, as long as you're doing it unto Him."

- How has God used your efforts with teenagers lately?
- Does "doing it unto Him" come easily to you, or do you struggle with that issue?