

**Movie Synopsis:**

After their village is destroyed and their parents killed by Northern militia, Sudanese orphans Theo, his siblings and other survivors make a difficult journey to a refugee camp in Kenya. Thirteen years later, the group gets the chance to settle in the U.S. They are met in Kansas by Carrie Davis (Reese Witherspoon), who has been charged with finding them jobs. However, seeing how adrift they are in 20th-century America, Carrie endeavors to help them rebuild their shattered lives.

**Redemptive Analogy:**

This movie, based on a true story, is a touching example of people deeply loving and faithfully serving one another, making tremendous sacrifices and putting others' needs above their own. One brother gives himself up to the enemy in order to save his younger siblings. Then another brother goes to great lengths to find him. It's a story of selfless love, a life being laid down in order to serve another. It models forgiveness, compassion and honoring one another which, in turn, positively impact the actions of others. It's a story of faith and determination against all odds.

The Good Lie

**INTRO before showing the movie:**

This movie is based on the true story about a group of Sudanese children that survived the ravages of war and stood together against all odds. It started in the mid 1980's during the second Sudanese civil war, which tragically took the lives of about two and a half million people and displaced millions more. Around 1987 the war drove an estimated 20,000 young children, most of whom were orphaned, to run for their lives. These boys and girls, most of them around six or seven years of age, walked more than one thousand miles, with over half of them dying before they reached the refugee camp in Kenya. These survivors became known as "The Lost Boys of Sudan."

**TO SHARE AFTER THE MOVIE:**

There are so many valuable lessons in this story. One of the most powerful things in this true story is how these orphans deeply loved and faithfully served one another. Even as they made the almost impossible and dangerous trek through the plains and during hardships, sacrifice and even death, they consistently put each other ahead of themselves.

The Apostle Paul taught us to do this very same thing. In fact, I pray that God will use this message to inspire you to love God and to love others as God has loved us. Here is what Paul said, **“Love must be sincere.”** Then he said, **“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”** This goes against what most of us want to do by nature...but love must be sincere. We are taught to honor one another above ourselves. During their journey in the movie, Theo, the oldest brother, gave himself up to rebel soldiers by telling them that he was alone, while his brothers and sisters hid in the tall grass.

Most of us can only imagine what it would be like to lose parents to war, then to bury a baby brother who wasn't strong enough to survive. But amidst all of this tragedy, the event that seemed to dominate their minds was the sacrificial gift their oldest brother gave them when Theo surrendered so they could live.

Jesus said this, **“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”** (John 13:34) Then Jesus said some of the most powerful words in history, **“Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.”** (John 15:13) To lay down your life for someone that you love? Wow. And throughout this whole journey, that's exactly what these three boys and their sister Abital were willing to do. And so...part of their story which we saw in the movie was that by the grace of God, they were part of the 3600 of the refugee children who were selected to resettle in America.

Even though coming to America was unquestionably an answer to prayer, the boys being separated from their sister Abital was a crushing blow to this tight-knit family. Now the three brothers had to try to adjust to a vastly different culture, attempt to find suitable jobs with no education or experience, and start the seemingly impossible journey of trying to locate their sister.

We saw in the movie that these boys obviously had a lot to learn. Thankfully, with their own amazing survival skills and the ability to adapt, they learned quickly. When they met Carrie, the one who helped them get acclimated, at first she had no interest in helping the boys outside of simply doing her job. But as she learned more about their story and all they endured, she began not only to open up her home but also her heart.

As Carrie saw the brothers honor one another above themselves, suddenly she started to do the same. And when she couldn't find a family to take in their sister Abital whom they had found, Carrie decided to show the same devotion that the boys had shown to her and to try to become a host home for their sister. Then after God had answered that prayer, reuniting the brothers with their sister Abital, the letter she received gave them a glimmer of hope of something that seemed way too good to be true - that their older brother Theo could still be alive. If you remember, Theo gave himself up to the enemy to save his younger siblings. And for well over a decade, everyone assumed Theo was unquestionably murdered.

But although they assumed this letter was most likely a scam and it would be a long shot to look for Theo, his brother Mamere traveled back to Kenya in hopes of possibly finding Theo alive. As we saw in the movie, after much searching the more than 100,000 refugees at the refugee camp...the day came when the long-lost brothers reunited.

What an amazing scene! Someone searches for someone who is seemingly lost...and ultimately finds that person.

A unique twist to this story is that Mamere's plan wasn't to simply find his lost brother Theo. We saw how Mamere actually ended up substituting his own position of favor and prosperity...in order for Theo to have a better life. The Bible says this,

***Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love, not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*** 1 John 4:7-11

I don't know how God will use this message in your life, but I can imagine he is speaking to so many people right now saying a variety of things. Perhaps God is showing you that it's time to reach out to an estranged family member and try with God's help to make amends. Maybe you've been hurt by someone you love and God is going to empower you to forgive what they did, just as God has forgiven you. It is time to let the healing begin. Or perhaps, like Carrie in this

story, you see someone in need around you, and you have the ability to help. It might be inconvenient. It might be costly. It might be complicated, but you'll help anyway.

Why? Because that's what God calls us to do. Because remember what Jesus said: ***We are to love each other as God has loved us.*** Why? Because ***greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends.***

As you reflect on this message today and what God's words from the Bible are saying specifically to you...We can all tend to be self-centered and focus on what others can do for us, instead of asking how God could use us to bless them. There are those of you who may be reminded of the relationships around you: a spouse, your family, someone in your community, a coworker, a friend - and you recognize they are actually in need right now. In order to serve them, it might cost you something. But, guess what...God is always going to sacrifice something in order to serve others. Husbands, you need to lay down some of your own needs to serve your wife. All of us are called to lay down our lives in order to serve someone else and to show love. I want you to think for a moment, is there someone in your life that needs something: encouragement, help, assistance, some love, a listening ear, simply some time?

God wants to use you to go out of your way to serve someone in need. Someone at your workplace. An old friend that you need to reach out to... Did you know that every time you participate in giving to church with your tithes/offerings...your sacrificial giving is serving others? This is our purpose – and this is the time to show the same love to others that has been shown to us.

### **Closing prayer example:**

Let's take a moment and pray together. Father, I pray today that you would touch our hearts with the truth of your Word and the power of this message to show the greatest kind of love that there is, that we would forgive, that we would be generous, that we would reach out, that we would be unselfish, that we would honor one another above ourselves, that we would be devoted to one another, that we would show the same love that has been shown to us to others who are in need. And, God, I pray that we would have the honor of considering others better than ourselves, of serving them in the name of Jesus, that they would grow closer to you and be transformed by your grace and by your love. That's exactly what you did, Jesus...when you died for us on the cross. Use us, God.

As you keep your heads bowed and your eyes closed, there may be some of you that are sensing a tug on the inside of you. Your heart is moving towards God, and yet you are not yet in a close relationship with him, and you might wonder why. We need to understand that we all have a massive problem. It is our biggest spiritual problem in the world, and that is that by nature we are sinners. By nature, we are selfish. Our sin separates us from God. But what's so amazing about God is that He loved us so much that He actually became one of us in the person of his son Jesus. Jesus was God in the flesh. And Jesus was without sin. He never did anything wrong, and because of that He was qualified to be the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus is called the Lamb of God. People used to sacrifice a lamb for sins. Jesus was the one sacrificed for the forgiveness of our sins so that any of us who call upon Him will be forgiven and be completely transformed. **Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends.** That's exactly what Jesus did for you. He gave His life so you could live eternally.

There may be those of you who recognize you have a need for forgiveness. You have a need for a personal relationship with God. Today you are hearing the greatest news in the history of the world, that Jesus gave His life so you could live. There are those of you, it's time for you to call on His name and say, "Jesus, I want you to be in my life. I want you to save me and forgive me of my sins. I want you to be first in every single way. Today by faith I surrender my life to you. Amen" If that's your prayer today, God hears you. Jesus will make your life new. If you prayed that prayer today, I'd love to talk with you more about it...