

Movie Synopsis:

Spurred on by a promise he made to his daughters, Walt Disney (Tom Hanks) embarks on what would become a 20-year quest to obtain the movie rights to "Mary Poppins." The author, P.L. Travers (Emma Thompson), proves to be an uncompromising curmudgeon who has no intention of letting her beloved characters become mangled in the Hollywood machine. However, when the books stop selling and she finds herself in need of money, Travers reluctantly agrees to consider Disney's proposition.

Redemptive Analogy:

Some people become trapped in their own story. There is no doubt that our past impacts who we are, but it should never limit who we can become. This movie reminds us that forgiveness and redemption hold the key to transforming our lives and releasing the burdens of our past. When we open our hearts to who we really are in Jesus, we can receive God's forgiveness and allow Him to write a new ending to our story.

Saving Mr. Banks

INTRO before showing the movie:

This movie is based on a true story about an author named Helen Goff who wrote under the pen-name Pamela Travers. Her best-known book is Mary Poppins – a book that touched the lives of so many people that Walt Disney himself decided the book must be turned into a movie.

As we watch this movie together, let's think about this timeless message of how our past *can* negatively influence our present, but it doesn't necessarily have to.

TO SHARE AFTER THE MOVIE:

It's always interesting when you hear someone else's story; where they came from, what they overcame, what they endured. There's always a story behind the story.

In the movie we saw how Pamela, an irrationally eccentric author, refused to allow Walt Disney to buy the movie rights for 20 years, fearing that he would compromise the integrity of her beloved characters. It was only upon the threat of going broke that she finally considered selling the rights, but only if she retained full script approval. After the prodding of several people, Pamela finally reluctantly agrees to fly to Hollywood and meet Walt Disney.

There's a scene where Walt Disney says to Pamela, "I've never gone back on a promise I've made to my kids. That's what being a daddy is all about." You can feel the emotion when Pamela responds, "Is it?" In fact, you can start to feel the tension of how her past paints her present and future. And really that's the question of the day: Does your past paint your present and your future?

The reality is there is no doubt that **our past impacts who we are, but it should never limit who we can become.** That's the problem for Pamela Travers; she continues to allow her past to define her future.

Is there anything in your past that continues to impact your present? Maybe you went through a tragedy no one knows about...you constantly think about it and you just can't move past it. Perhaps you were bullied, and you still carry the scars from mistreatment. Maybe somebody betrayed your trust and you find it incredibly difficult to trust again. Or maybe you have felt abandoned and believe you aren't worth loving.

There's a scene in the movie where Pamela is recalling memories of her dad. The emotion of this interaction likely hit many of you in a hauntingly surreal way. Maybe one of your parents wasn't there for you and you envy the relationships other people have. Perhaps your mom and dad were rarely sober – or maybe someone who should have protected you abused you emotionally, physically or sexually. Almost all of us deal with some type of memory – for some reason...especially with our fathers – and that memory continues to haunt us.

That's what Pamela continued to deal with as Walt Disney and his team did everything possible to make the script acceptable to her. She held so tightly to her characters because she could not separate her past from her present.

You might be able to relate to Pamela and the pain she continued to carry. What happened to her dad wasn't her fault, but she felt the burden of his mistakes and somehow believed that she was responsible, which made her unable to let go.

Many people are paralyzed because of their past. They think it's impossible to ever trust again, or to forgive, or to even enjoy life. They wrongly believe they could never have a good marriage or be a good parent or have close friends. Maybe after what they did or after what someone did to them, they find it impossible to believe they could ever have a close, intimate relationship with God.

When the pain of the past clouds the hope of a better future, we can remind ourselves and others what God says to Isaiah the prophet in the Bible,

Forget the former things, do not dwell on the past, see I am doing a new thing, now it springs up – do you not perceive it? I'm making a way in the wilderness. Isaiah 43:18-19

Don't dwell on the past. Why? Because you can't change your past...but you can let God heal your past. When God heals our past, that history doesn't go away - it's always a part of our story, but He enables us to move forward. So today God offers healing, He offers hope, He offers forgiveness, and He offers grace. Our good God can help you to no longer allow the things that hurt you to rule over you. God says let go of the former things, don't dwell on them, I am doing a new thing.

Pamela finally had a moment of doing exactly what the apostle Paul from the Bible taught us to do:

I focus on this one thing; forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God through Jesus Christ is calling us. Philippians 3:13

Forgetting the past and looking forward to what's ahead. That's what we have to do. We have to *constantly* let go of the past and look forward. To press on, to run the eternal race, and win the heavenly prize – to let go of what is done and take hold of what God is doing for us ahead.

Yet it can be hard to let go of the things you've told yourself and carried with you all your life. When Pamela once again balked at selling the rights to Walt Disney, he flew to her home in London and asked her one more time to allow him to make a movie from her book, *Mary Poppins*. In a very vulnerable moment, Walt opened up to her about his own past. Like so many people, he had a very demanding father and he couldn't live up to his father's expectations. He loved his dad, but he was tired of remembering him in a negative light.

So, Walt decided to finish his story differently and to live a future that was not dictated by his past.

So what about you? What do you need to let go of, to forget? Is there someone you need to forgive? Is that someone you need to forgive – you?

Forget the former things. Do not dwell on the past. Look forward to what lies ahead. See God is doing a new thing. You have to remember you are not what happened to you. You are not what someone did to you. You are not what you did. **You are who God says you are.** And He says, in Christ, you are forgiven, you are whole, and you are new. Enough is enough. Let go of the past. Today is the day to let God come in and heal your heart.

Closing prayer example:

Father, in the mighty name of Jesus, I pray for every person sitting here today. I believe you have them here for this moment. I pray that you would give every person the courage to step beyond their past and to step into the future you have for them. I thank you that you have the power to heal any and every wound. You are not afraid of any of our issues, our pain, or our mess. Would you please help each one of us to forgive those who have hurt us? Help each of us forgive the dad, the mom, the friend, the spouse, the teacher, the leader or even ourselves for the pain that was caused, and how it influenced us. Holy Spirit, I ask that you

touch the deep places of our hearts and empower us to truly settle the past. Thank you that your presence is here to heal us.

Thank you that you are speaking to many of us today, saying that it's time to step away from the past and stop letting it define who we are or can be. As we continue to pray – if you are thinking, “Yes, there is something holding me back – something in my past that tries to define who I am – and today I need God to help me move forward.” If that's you, would you just open your hands right now, as a symbol of letting go. I believe God is going to move in your life today. Just open your hands and say in your heart, “Yes, I'm going to let go of the past, I'm going to let God heal my hurts, and I'm going to let him bring me into a new future.” And as we continue to pray – there may be some of you who feel like this is really never going to happen because you don't have confidence in your ability to overcome the guilt, the shame, and the hurts of the past. Well, are you ready for this? You're right. On your own, you're not able to do it. The only way for you to truly be free from guilt and shame is to receive the gift of forgiveness and new life offered by God, through His son, Jesus. You will no longer have to take care of your past, you can receive what Jesus did for you. He can make you brand new. That's your opportunity today – to receive the free gift that God is offering you – and you can receive it by making Jesus the Lord of your life. So, today, you can decide today if you want to continue trying to take care of all your issues by yourself or if you're ready to surrender your life to Jesus and let Him take care of you.

If you want to receive God's promise of new life, once and for all, and if you want to have the power to move into your new future, then in your heart say “Jesus, I give you my life.” Pray this with me... say, “Father, I thank you that in this simple act of surrender you make me new. You wash me clean from guilt and shame and you transform me and my life into a life of freedom and joy. Thank you for healing my past and bringing about a new future through your death, burial, and resurrection. This I pray in the powerful, life transforming name of Jesus. Amen.”