

Movie Synopsis:

Walt Disney Animation Studios' "Encanto" tells the tale of an extraordinary family, the Madrigals, who live hidden in the mountains of Colombia, in a magical house, in a vibrant town, in a wondrous, charmed place called an Encanto. The magic of the Encanto has blessed every child in the family with a unique gift: from super strength to the power to heal ... every child except one, Mirabel. But when she discovers that the magic surrounding the Encanto is in danger, Mirabel decides that she, the only ordinary Madrigal, might just be her exceptional family's last hope.

Redemptive Analogy:

Like the Madrigal family, many people believe that they are only worth what others think about them and what they can do for people. But no one can get into heaven through their own good deeds. We are more than our abilities and achievements. Through God's Son, Jesus Christ, we have been made perfect in his eyes. He loves us for who we are, we don't need to prove ourselves. A relationship with God is our miracle that he has given to us through his pure and extravagant love.

INTRO before showing the movie:

Encanto is a story about a magical family in Colombia. Many people have connected with the complicated family dynamics and the struggles characters wrestle through in this film. This is a story about a family – a family who received a miracle. As we watch the movie, look for how each family member views the miracle they were given and how it affects how they feel about themselves and each other. Also think about why the family was given the miracle in the first place.

TO SHARE AFTER THE MOVIE:

Earning Our Worth

- Have you ever felt like you were unworthy of taking the spotlight – that others were better than you?
- Have you ever tried to do things for other people to earn love or prove your value?

The Madrigal family was given a miracle and a responsibility. The miracle was extravagant and beautiful, but it also became a burden. Maribel felt as though she was unworthy to be a part of her family – that without a gift she had nothing to give to others. So to "earn" her place in the family, Mirabel decided to save the miracle.

During her investigation, Mirabel was shocked to discover that she wasn't the only one struggling. Her sister Luisa seemed strong, but she was faltering under the weight of the expectations that came with her gift. Luisa wanted to have some fun and relax, but she felt like she would be letting Abuela and the village down if she did.

Like Mirabel and Luisa, you may believe that your value comes from your abilities – that you are only as valuable as what you do for others. Maybe you compare yourself to others and don't feel like you measure up.

In the Bible, Jesus once visited some of his friends, including two sisters. During this visit, one of the sisters, Martha, worked hard to be a good host. The other sister Mary ignored her responsibilities and chose to spend her time with Jesus instead. Martha probably would understand how Luisa felt trying to not let anyone down and would have the same feeling that she was only valued by what she did for others.

In frustration, Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary that she needed to help with the tasks. Jesus lovingly responded to Martha:

“Martha, Martha,’ the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.’” Luke 10:41-42

The truth is, you are worthy and loveable just as you are. Being with Jesus is more important than trying to meet other people's expectations. Our value is not in what we can do, but who we are in Jesus Christ, God's own Son.

Judging Others

- How does it make you feel when you judge someone else? Does it make you feel better about yourself?
- Have you ever made an assumption about someone, and then learned that you were wrong?
- Has anyone ever falsely judged you? How did it make you feel?

As Mirabel continued her investigation, she learned that the miracle was strengthened when the members of the Madrigal family loved and supported each other – but that wasn't always easy to do.

Do you remember how Mirabel reacted when she learned that she needed to hug her sister, Isabella? She didn't want to, because she didn't like her sister and she thought that Isabella also hated her.

It can be challenging when people don't meet our expectations of them. When we encounter difficult people the Bible encourages us to:

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:31-32

Judging others is easy to do, but it's important to remember that just like others don't know who we are on the inside, we don't know why people do what they do. When Mirabel stopped judging her sister, she was better able to understand Isabella and they could support each other in their struggles.

God calls us to be patient and understanding of others. Doing so shows the person that they are valued. Patience, mercy, and kindness help to build positive relationships.

The Lie of Perfection

- Have you ever felt like you had to be perfect?
- What makes someone “a good person?” Does everyone have the same standard?
- Have you ever made a mistake? Have you ever done something that you knew was unkind to someone else?

Mirabel learned that her perception of Isabella was wrong. Isabella was stuck – forced to maintain her image of “perfection.” Mirabel thought that Isabella was perfect, but in reality, she was hiding her flaws.

Like Isabella, many people try to pretend that they are perfect. You might be thinking, “I am a good person. I haven't done anything really bad.” But in secret, when you think no one is looking, you give in and do something you hope that no one will ever find out about. In our own power, we aren't good enough.

It is impossible to live a “perfect life.” Everyone makes mistakes. We hurt others both intentionally and unintentionally. As the Bible says in Romans 3:23,

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Maybe you're ashamed of things you've done in your past. You might believe that there is nothing that can redeem what you've done – no one will forgive you for your actions and you won't be loved anymore if people knew.

So, what can be done? Is there a way to return to God? Yes! Jesus Christ took on all of our mistakes, bad choices, and sins. He took our punishment so

that we could be forgiven and made new again. He chose to do this because he knows you, loves you, and wants to have a relationship with you. Jesus said,

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

Our Miracle

- Did you know that you have been given a real miracle from God?

At the end of the movie, Mirabel and Abuela realized that the miracle that the family was given was intended to be a blessing, not an obligation. The miracle was given from a place of love. No one earned it and the family never had to prove that they deserved it. The real miracle wasn't the cool house or the flashy superpowers of the family. Abuela explained, *“The miracle is you. Just you.”* The miracle was the gift of a hope and a future for the family.

Jesus came for you. He died and rose again for you. Through HIS actions, you have been forgiven. When you accept his gift and accept a loving relationship with him you are given a place with God's family. In the Bible, Jesus tells us:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's (God's) house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” John 14:1-3

Will you still make mistakes? Yes! But if you choose to have a relationship with God, he is always forgiving. He knows that we aren't perfect and that we make mistakes, even when we try not to. He doesn't expect you to perform for Him. He just wants you.

The Madrigal's miracle was all about love. It was given because of love, and the family lost it because they made the miracle a burden instead of the blessing it was intended to be. We have also been given a miracle, the miracle of a relationship with God.

Like the Madrigal's miracle, it's a gift of life and love. God loves you more than you can imagine and wants to have a personal relationship with you. It's okay if you struggle. It's okay if you've made mistakes. You don't have to have the right words to say to God. All you have to do is accept His gift. Lay down your burdens and come into His loving arms. Let's pray together now

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. You know what we are all struggling with individually. Thank you for making us. Thank you for your unconditional love and for accepting our flaws.

Please heal those of us today who may have been hurt by the judgment of others. Let them know that they are valuable and worthy of love. And please give us eyes to see when other people are hurting. Help us show mercy to others as you have given mercy to us. Help us to truly love the people around us.

Lord, there may be people here who feel like they are under a weight of responsibility and expectations. Please bring them help so they can lighten their load, and please free them from the burden of expectations.

And Lord, for those of us who are struggling with guilt and shame for the things that they have done, help them to know that there is NOTHING that can be done that you can't forgive and redeem.

Thank you for your gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Please forgive us when we judge others. Lord, thank you for the miracle of redemption through your son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for loving and wanting us unconditionally.

If you would like to accept the miracle, the gift of a relationship with God, please pray this with me... say, "Father, I'm sorry for all of the selfish things that I have done in my life. I am not perfect, and I know that I can't be perfect without you. Thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to take away my sins and mistakes. 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 your unconditional love. I want to have a relationship with you. I give my life to you. This I pray in the powerful, life transforming name of Jesus. Amen."