

The Greatest Showman

Movie Synopsis:

Step right up... and into the spellbinding imagination of a man who set out to reveal that life itself can be the most thrilling show of all. Inspired by the legend and ambitions of America's original pop-culture impresario, P.T. Barnum (Hugh Jackman), comes an inspirational rags-to-riches tale of a brash dreamer who rose from nothing to prove that anything you can envision is possible and that everyone, no matter how invisible, has a stupendous story worthy of a world-class spectacle. Hugh Jackman leads an all-star cast in this bold and original musical filled with infectious show stopping performances that will bring you to your feet time and time again.

Redemptive Analogy:

Who do you trust with your dreams? The world is filled with people desperate for accolades and praise. But maybe, as Charity says, you don't "need everyone to love you. Just a few good people." God is trustworthy with our hopes. He made us all special, with our own giftings and talents to be used for His glory. He has wonderful plans for us and desires a relationship with us. God's love is worth more than all of the praise the world has to offer.

INTRO before showing the movie:

Welcome to the world of the fantastical! Where unique oddities are celebrated and where pizzazz takes center stage. This is the Hollywood retelling of the life of circus master extraordinaire, PT Barnum and his larger-than-life, world-famous show.

As we watch the movie, notice the evolution of PT Barnum from childhood through adulthood and think about how success and popularity can affect a person. And, see what happens when people are accepted and loved despite their differences.

TO SHARE AFTER THE MOVIE:

“A Million Dreams” - God is Trustworthy:

- What are some dreams that you have for your life?
- Who do you trust with your dreams?
- Has a dream negatively impacted any of your relationships?

What a joy it is to dream! In the song, “A Million Dreams,” young Phineas T. Barnum shares his dreams with his friend Charity and then later together as a married couple. Charity desires to share in them, whether he’s right or wrong.

However, Phineas believes that he alone can protect his vision. Eventually, he became so focused on being on top, that he started neglecting his family and the circus. So much so, that he failed to consult Charity about putting up their house for collateral, which ended up being seized by the bank. She told Phineas she would have said yes to taking that risk, but she wished he let her take it with him.

Everyone has dreams, to have a family, to be financially secure, to have a fulfilling career, etc. It is tempting to try to achieve your dreams on your own, but like Phineas, we have people who love us and want to help us with our dreams. It can be scary to trust others with our hopes and future, but when we shut other people out of our plans and dreams, we suffocate our relationship with them.

By sharing our plans with loved ones, the burden becomes easier to carry. God is the best one to entrust with our hopes and dreams. The Bible says,

Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

God puts dreams in our hearts. He has given us passions and things to hope for. He gives us desires to desire! Whatever He calls us to, He will be there to help us reach those dreams and goals. If we let Him, He will take our hand to lead and guide us every step of the way.

We can make our own plans, but the Lord gives the right answer. People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives. Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:1-3

God is trustworthy. The most exciting and safe place to be is hand-in-hand with Him.

In Jeremiah 29:11, God says,

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.”

This doesn't mean that we won't have hardships or heartaches in life. Most everyone experiences both good and difficult times. There may be dry seasons in our lives or times when we feel like we're drowning in negativity, despair, or helplessness. During those difficult times we can have hope that God will work out all things for our good. Even when there is pain, He will bring peace and comfort.

“Never Enough” — God is Sufficient:

- What are some things people may strive for in life besides success and popularity?
- Have you allowed certain circumstances to change your character/actions/words in a negative way?

Phineas wanted to make a bigger impact on people than just his “side show,” the circus. He wanted to promote something “real,” like the talented and mesmerizing singer Jenny Lind. In the song “Never Enough,” Jenny Lind sings that everything the world can offer, like fame and fortune, will never be enough unless that special person is there to share it with her.

No amount of success, accolades, riches, popularity, or power is worth more than a personal relationship with the Lord and inviting Him to lead your life. It's better to strive after God and the things of God—eternal things. No matter how much we can gain on this earth, none of that will matter in light of eternity. Whatever we gain here cannot be taken with us when we die. The Bible explains,

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Matthew 16:25-26

One could admire Phineas wanting to provide a life for his daughters where no one would look down on his daughters the way he was looked down on as a child. Charity reminded her husband that he doesn't “need everyone to love [him]. Just a few good people.” His wanting to be a better version of himself wasn't wrong, but it became somewhat of an obsession. Phineas began to act in ways and say things that were unlike the person he used to be.

With God, there is nothing we can do to make Him love us more—or less. His love is constant and everlasting. We, as humans, are not “enough,” which is why it is such great news that God is *more* than enough—for us, for everything!

And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

“This is Me” — You Belong and Have a Purpose:

- Have you ever felt unloved or unaccepted? How did that make you feel? Did that cause you to doubt your worth in God’s eyes?
- What are some of your giftings/talents and how are you using them? How can you use them to be a blessing to others?

In the movie, Lettie Lutz (the bearded woman) and the circus cast sing “This is Me” right after P.T. rudely prevents them from entering a special pre-show gathering. The man they trusted and looked up to shut them out to separate them from the fancy guests. Phineas had given the former outcasts a place to belong. Though the betrayal hurt them deeply, the cast chose to hold on to their self-worth in defiance of what the world was telling them.

It’s nice to be loved and accepted by people, isn’t it? However, trying to please everyone is an impossible task. Being known and loved by the Creator of the universe is far more valuable and meaningful. The Lord loves us not because of who we are or what we do, but because of who *He* is. He Himself is love. God loves us despite our failures and inadequacies.

Unfortunately, in today’s world, it’s become an increasingly common mindset that who we think or feel we are, is the only “truth” that matters. That may help some people feel better about themselves, but that’s not necessarily the truth. True acceptance is found in embracing who God created us to be. In Psalm 139:14, the psalmist David praises the Lord:

“I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well.”

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Sometimes that can be hard when people around us (especially those whom we love and trust) try to pull us down, criticize our ideas, or make us feel unworthy. But, God made you on purpose and for a purpose. You can be bold, confident, and thrive in our unique God-given talents, characters, abilities. And, you can use what you've been given to be a blessing and encouragement to others.

You may be “marching to the beat of your own drum,” but if it's the beat God gave you, keep on marchin'! Remember, God loves you and you matter to Him.

“From Now On” — Reconciliation:

- Is there tension between you and someone in your life? What steps can you take to reconciliation?
- If someone has wronged you in some way, have you forgiven the person, whether they have asked for your forgiveness or not?

At the end of the movie, after the circus suffers the loss of their circus building, Phineas reflects on his life and the choices he's made. He craved the praises of men, tried to please those in high society, and wanted to be successful. In the song “From Now On,” Phineas promises that the light of popularity and success wouldn't blind him anymore.

Charity had taken their girls to live with her parents when the house was taken by the bank. Phineas, wanting to make things right, goes to his in-laws' in hopes of making up with her.

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18–19

It's no secret that we humans are not perfect. The sin in our lives separates us from God. It's through God's only Son, Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection that the chasm is bridged, and we have direct access to the Father. Conversing and spending time with Him is just a prayer away.

Closing prayer example:

Dear Lord, you are all that is good and holy and perfect. You are everything we need and so much more. There might be someone here who is struggling on their own to secure happiness in this world. Lord, may you let them know that you are near and that you have a perfect plan for them.

Someone might be feeling down about themselves or feel unloved or unaccepted, remind them of Your unconditional love for them. You created them perfectly and wonderfully and You always want the best for them.

Thank you for the gifts and talents You've given us. Please help us recognize what they are and how to use them to bless others. When we see others who are treated poorly or looked down on, please give us compassion to be kind to them. Help us to see their worth in Your eyes and love them as You love us.

And Lord, there might be someone here tonight who doesn't have a personal relationship with you. If that is you, if you need forgiveness for your sins and you would like God to have control of your future with His perfect love, please say this prayer with me in your head:

Dear Lord, I'm sorry that I tried to achieve my dreams on my own. There are times when I have been selfish and hurtful to others. Please forgive me of my sins. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, I have direct access to You. Thank you for making a way for me to have a personal relationship with You. Please be the Lord over my life and be with me always.

Amen.