

THE STRAY

A TRUE STORY



DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE STRAY

On October 6, 2017, Pure Flix Entertainment and Purdie Distribution will release a new major motion picture, *The Stray*. Based on an amazing true story, *The Stray* follows a family in crisis who, against their better judgment, adopts a stray dog, only for that dog to save their lives when they are struck by lightning while on a backpacking trip.

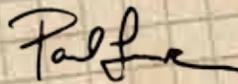
The film shows us how God answers prayer in unexpected ways, and how love and forgiveness can bind people together during difficult times. As the main character, Mitch, struggles to balance a demanding job and his family relationships - especially with his nine year-old son, Christian - a stray dog named Pluto unexpectedly enters the family's life, bringing it healing in both ordinary and extraordinary ways. The story prompts us to turn inward and consider our own brokenness, and to look closer and see how God is working to bless us and bring us wholeness. Bring your family, friends, and church groups to see it - *The Stray* is sure to jumpstart many worthwhile conversations.

To help guide your discussion and interaction with the film, we have provided this guide. You'll find downloadable links to the four scenes at our faith resources website, TheStray.Movie.

Enhance your film experience by diving into the pages of this guide ahead of *The Stray*'s October 6th release and choose to cover each section individually or sequentially over a number of weeks. We encourage you to take a group to see the movie so you can delve into a rich, thought-provoking conversation afterward.

Thank you for supporting this inspirational film.

Blessings,



Paul Lauer
Motive Entertainment







And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

— 1 JOHN 5:14

Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.”

— MATTHEW 21:22



TEACHABLE CONCEPTS

1. Prayer can be done in many different ways.
2. Prayer is for a conversation with God. What implication does this have in our lives?
3. Sometimes we pray for one thing but we get something else. Are we prepared for what God will give us?

FINAL PERSONAL THOUGHT & PRAYER

Take time to pray. Carve out time in your daily schedule. Maybe it's the morning or maybe it's the evening. Whenever it is, make a regular appointment with God that you'd miss only for the most important reasons in your life, and even then find another moment to pray.

Heavenly Father, we need You so much and for everything. You created us to love You and we honor You by reaching out to You with our prayers and supplications. Make me a person of prayer, a person who knows how small I am and yet so loved by You. Thank You for giving us the gift of prayer. Give us a heart willing to accept that gift. Amen.

“THEN PRAY FOR A STRAY, RACHEL.”

Every person has had a moment like Rachel's – when there's something we want so badly that we pray and ask God for it. In Rachel's case she wanted a puppy, a typical “little kid” prayer. She was thinking of God as a wish granter, almost like a genie or wizard. Of course that's not how God works. However, in the story of *The Stray*, little Rachel's prayer is answered when Pluto comes into her family's life.

It would be easy for us to dismiss this as just Hollywood sentimentality, but let's pause and reflect on this moment a little further. Praying for the stray dog was what this family truly needed, a fact that becomes clear as the film continues. Prayer is not the fulfillment of wishes or desires. Rather, it is where we cross paths with God, and through that interaction we realize what is good for us and what God does in our lives. All of our bounty and all the good things in our lives come from God who created us to love Him. That's what prayer is all about! Mitch tells his daughter to pray for a stray, which on the surface seems ridiculous. However, the stray ends up coming to them and fundamentally changes their lives. What seemed like a childish prayer ends up being a prayer that saves a family. Pluto becomes a friend to Mitch, Rachel, and the whole family.

People have all kinds of problems in their lives. Some people have marital issues. Others struggle with drug or alcohol dependency. Still others might be fighting a crisis of faith. Whatever the problem might be, prayer is the answer. Prayer can begin with a question such as, “Why is my marriage not working?” That's Mitch and Michelle's problem in the movie – he's working too hard and it's negatively affecting his family. When you frame a prayer as a question it begins a dialogue with God to help you find the solution to your problem. But this “dialogue prayer” also requires listening; it's a dialogue not a monologue. When we pray in this fashion we have to know when to stop speaking and when to start listening. Although you probably won't hear a voice from the sky, God does speak to us in many different ways. Sometimes it's through other people; maybe sometimes it's through a stray dog.

Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD. — PSALM 27:14

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. — ROMANS 12:2



“SOME THINGS TAKE TIME TO FIX.”

Mitch is struggling to make a connection with his son, Christian. Recently he’s tried to get him to open up, but Christian pushes him away, leaving him frustrated. Mitch’s wife, Michelle, tells him that, “Some things take time to fix.”

Time is something we humans really struggle with. Mitch, for example, has been clocking too many hours at work, neglecting quality time with his young family. This workaholic-like behavior has been going on for years, and it has really compromised Mitch’s relationship with Christian. Christian – rightly or wrongly – has pulled back from his father so as to not be disappointed by him once again. That kind of hurt doesn’t heal over night. Mitch’s attempts to repair his relationship with Christian aren’t working. He’s losing his patience. Michelle kindly reminds him this problem didn’t just happen.

In our lives we need to have a lot of patience with those we live with, those we work with, and those we call friends. Patience is the one thing we all say we need but sometimes it feels like there isn’t enough of it. Psalm 27 tells us, “Wait for the Lord.” We try to wait for Him and His guidance but humans seem to be pre-wired to want what we want and to have it yesterday. Mitch was always waiting for something good to happen to him. Initially, he doesn’t understand why Pluto is there, and what he has to teach him. Benjamin Franklin once said, “He that can have patience can have what he will.” The wisdom of this quote can be applied to our spiritual lives – that if we are patient, God’s will becomes clearer to us. We start to understand, little by little, that we just have to wait for Him to show us the way. In this film Pluto is sent from God, in a way, to help Mitch reconnect with his family – so he can see how important they are to him, and love them more fully. God has him placed where he needs to be, Mitch just doesn’t “get” that right away. The will of God is so often right in front of us; we just need to open our hearts to see it.



TEACHABLE CONCEPTS

1. Are we a patient? With our families, our friends, our co-workers? With ourselves? With God? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. Do we often push God to be on our schedule? On our timeline? How can we learn to be on His?
3. What are the important things in life?

FINAL PERSONAL THOUGHT & PRAYER

Lord, help me to be a patient person. Help me to be patient with my spouse, my kids, my friends, my co-workers, and most importantly, with myself. Help me to understand that while I’m not perfect, I can strive for perfection with Your help and guidance. Teach me to be a person with a compassionate heart who looks for the moment to be kind rather than to lash out. Help me to show love rather than hate. Allow me to be the person who strives to be selfless knowing how imperfect I am. Lord, let me see the good in all I encounter. Amen.



So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

— MATTHEW 10:31

Do not be afraid; just have faith.

— MARK 5:36

TEACHABLE CONCEPTS

1. Fear is unnecessary in our lives as Christians because we have God on our side.
2. We never know where help will come from.
3. Love is an important weapon to fight the fear in our lives.

FINAL PERSONAL THOUGHT & PRAYER

When we feel afraid, let's turn to God to help us. He hears us and meets our needs in surprising ways. His love is bigger than our fears. When we have Jesus in our lives, it puts the everyday stuff we worry about into perspective.

Heavenly Father, please help us all to "be not afraid" because we know that You watch over us and keep us safe. We know that sometimes bad things will still happen, not because You want them to but because of the fallen nature of humanity. Father, we ask for your protection when we step out in faith and try new adventures. Help us to trust You. We seek your blessings on all that we do. Amen

"I WANT TO STAY HOME WITH YOU."

Near the beginning of the movie, Christian doesn't want to go to school. He seems fearful, and it turns out he has reason to be. He's being bullied in the schoolyard. There's a scene where the bigger kids are picking on him, and no human comes to his aid. But God seems to see Christian in his time of need, and sends help in the form of "The Stray".

Haven't there been times in our own lives when things seemed scary or hopeless? God has a way of sending people (and yes pets!) into our lives when we least expect it. Personal story: I was grieving the loss of a beloved Black Lab named Buddy when I received a phone call. It was my cousin, saying he had a new dog for me, if I had interest. The dog was a retired K-9 from my cousin's law enforcement agency. They were having a hard time finding a new home for him. So I met the lovable pooch and we have been together for a few years now. One didn't replace the other but the new dog helped me get over my grief, which is exactly what I needed at the time.. God knows what is best for us, He knows that we can be fearful creatures and He also loves us and helps us in whatever form that help might take.



Jesus answered and said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing, for what he does, his son will do also.' — JOHN 5:19

Train the young in the way they should go; even when old, they will not swerve from it. — PROVERBS 22:6



“I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD HELP ME LEARN TO THROW A BASEBALL?”

When Christian asks his Dad for help throwing a baseball you get the feeling that his mother put him up to it. Yet, he really does want to spend time with his father, and what better way than with good old baseball. Mitch is instantly uncomfortable because in his mind all he sees is work and deadlines. He is torn between two good values; providing for his family and spending time with his kids. It's an age-old dilemma but the reality is that the son imitates the father. Unintentionally, Mitch is teaching Christian is that family comes second to work. That's not something we'd want our children to learn but – time and again – Mitch chooses work over family. The message is clear to his young son that he is not as important as his father's work. Some people never see the error of this way of life. Then they wonder why their kids never visit or why their sons don't spend enough time with their own kids. It's learned behavior that our kids glean from us. That's why it's important for us to be strong role models for our children, and that starts with our faith.



TEACHABLE CONCEPTS

1. We should try to emulate Jesus as he emulated the Father.
2. Words and actions have an effect on people. Can we think of examples in our lives when that's been the case?
3. Is family the most important thing in our lives? If not, why not?

FINAL PERSONAL THOUGHT & PRAYER

Our relationship with our parents can leave a lasting impression and can color all of our current and future relationships. How do we see this in our own lives? How can we be better at influencing the young people in our lives? Is there any behavior that needs to change?

SYNOPSIS:

The Stray tells the true story of a stray dog who saves a struggling family in more ways than one.

Written and directed by Mitch Davis (*The Other Side of Heaven*), the movie releases in select markets nationwide in October 2017.

“Pluto” comes out of nowhere and quickly makes himself at home with the Davis family, who are on the brink of falling apart. Dad (Michael Cassidy; *Argo*, *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice*) is a career-driven workaholic who is neglecting his marriage and family. Mom (Sarah Lancaster; *Chuck*, *Saved by the Bell: The New Class*) is at her wit’s end raising three young kids. The last thing they need is another mouth to feed. Or is it? In just a short time with the Davis family, Pluto the “wonderdog” manages to save a lost toddler, bring comfort and companionship to a hurting 9-year-old boy (Connor Corum; *Heaven is for Real*), help restore a marriage, and repair a broken father-son relationship. Pluto is not only a guard dog - he’s a guardian angel.

The Stray is filled with hope, faith, and inspiring themes:

How can we heal our broken relationships?
How can we break through our own fears
and doubts?

What matters most in life?
How can faith help us through our
troubling times?

GET INVOLVED:

The Stray is a poignant and heart-warming true story that shows how the things we sometimes value least in life are in fact the most important. This movie can be a tool to share hope and inspiration with your family, friends, and co-workers. Here’s how you can get involved:

USE FREE PREACHING/OUTREACHING RESOURCES: Visit our website often for updates on events, materials, videos and tools to share the film with others.

GET SOCIAL:

Send the link to the trailer (www.TheStray.movie/trailer) to your friends, contacts and community and ask them to share its inspiring messages. Follow us at [Facebook.com/TheStrayDogMovie](https://www.facebook.com/TheStrayDogMovie) and [Twitter.com/TheStrayDogFilm](https://twitter.com/TheStrayDogFilm).

HOST A MOVIE PREMIERE OF THE STRAY ON OCTOBER 5, 2017.

Host a premiere night screening of The Stray at a theater near you, and invite your family, friends, co-workers, community leaders, school, church or other organizations to attend. For more info call 800-585-1892.

