

**MOVIE: TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD**

**\*\* Please read the Introduction to Large Group Studies in order to best utilize this material**

**Sub Topic theme:****GOD AS FATHER: And Church as Family****Lesson objective:**

To identify some of the loving characteristics of God's nature as our heavenly, spiritual father through a human portrayal of a father as seen through his children's eyes. Once identified, teens should be able to understand and embrace with certainty our heavenly Father's love, protection and provision for his children.

**Intro to the Movie:***To Kill a Mockingbird*

*This an old B&W movie starring Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch; however, the beauty of the portrayal of this father is seen through the eyes of the children. Well worth watching together!*

Based on a novel by Harper Lee, the story is told through the eyes of six-year-old Scout, a feisty young girl who lives in a small Alabama town with her older brother, Jem and their widower father, Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck).

There has been an arrest of a black man, Tom Robinson, accused of raping a white woman named Mayella Ewell. The town is up in arms and there's talk of lynching a "n\*\*\*\* who's obviously guilty". At the preliminary hearing, Atticus is selected to defend Tom. The town gets ready for a quick and speedy trial. As the trial gets nearer, some of the men in town decide to take matters into their own hands by removing Tom from jail and hanging him, but Atticus takes a chair, a lamp and a book down to the jail to sit up all night to guard Tom. But the drunken mob comes anyway and they tell Atticus to get out of the way and let them get on with it.

Scout, Jem and their neighbor's nephew Dill are hiding in the shadows during this interaction between Atticus and the mob. Scout comes out and says "Hey" to Mr. Cunningham, a member of the mob. Scout says, "I said hey, Mr. Cunningham" again,

and it's her presence that defuses the situation.

At various times throughout the movie the children discuss the "crazy" man who lives down the block. They think "Boo" Radley comes out at night and gets little kids and animals. .

The trial begins and it doesn't look good. Despite the obvious evidence presented by Atticus, the all-white jury in 1930's Alabama convicts Tom. Before an appeal can be arranged, Tom is transported for safekeeping; he tries to escape and is shot and killed as he runs away.

Later in the year, Scout and Jem are going to a Halloween party but are attacked on their way home through the woods. The man was killed by another unknown person who later turned out to be the mysterious man, Boo. The Sheriff decides to assume that the victim, Bob Ewell, *fell* on his own knife. Scout says to her dad (Atticus) that by punishing Boo for defending Jem they would be "Shooting a mockingbird" because Boo does no one any harm and only does good (Sings). As Atticus explained early in the film, mocking birds do no harm to anyone, simply singing all day.

(The 3D lenses) Look for themes such as the father's love for his children, which is demonstrated through his protection, and provision, and wise counsel, and honesty, and sensitivity, and respect for all people, and fairness, and openness, and sense of justice, and his personal restraint. Have students look for these and other examples of God's character displayed in this father's image.

### Discussion Group Questions:

1. If **you** were cast in this movie, which of the main characters would you rather be and why?
2. What are one or two of the characteristics of the father in this movie that stand out to you?
3. What things did Atticus Finch (the father) do that remind you of God's character and how he might act toward us (his children)?
4. As seen through the eyes of his daughter, Scout, the father was a loving father whom she seriously loved and respected. As seen through your eyes, how do you view God, our heavenly father? Where do those ideas come from?

**Group input:**

Leader-solicited responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions

Gathering of ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups with a focus on guiding the audience toward the main objective: *To identify some of the loving characteristics of God's nature as our heavenly, spiritual father through a human portrayal of a father as seen through his children's eyes. Once identified, teens should be able to understand and embrace with certainty our heavenly Father's love, protection and provision for his children.*

**Bullet Objective:**

*Put this summary section in your own words, but here are some ideas you can use:*

As military kids we often get exposed to a lot of things (places and people) that many other teens never see. As such, our views of things are usually a little different. The racial views expressed in this movie, for example, reflect a time in the south where a black man had very little chance of being acquitted in a case like this, even when the evidence pointed so directly away from Tom. But the military culture is a very progressive one where racial and gender issues are not tolerated, and a scene like this one may appear to be so very odd compared to your experience. In fact, many of you come from or have friends who are bi-racial, or sometimes multi-racial and come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. It's fairly commonplace in the military community to have teens who don't know what 'box' to check when it comes to their racial makeup.

This movie does a good job of drawing out some of the characteristics of God through the portrayal of a man of love and justice and fairness and respect in stark contrast to the culture in which he lived. Who he is actually shines in the midst of this darkness. Particularly as the story is relayed through the eyes of a young girl, her father is an amazing person and a 'place' where she feels loved and protected (safe) and provided for. These clearly are traits of our heavenly father as well, but not everyone has a dad who portrays these kinds of characteristics. That's why it's important to look at the God of the Scriptures and see into his loving heart and the way he takes care of his children.

Listen for some of these deeply personal and loving characteristics of God our heavenly father in these passages:

**1 John 3:1**

See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children – and so, in fact, we are.

**Ephesians 1:17**

<sup>17</sup> and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him.

**Galatians 4:6**

<sup>6</sup> To show that you are his children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, "Father, my Father."

**Hebrews 12:10**

<sup>10</sup> Our human fathers punished us for a short time, as it seemed right to them; but God does it for our own good, so that we may share his holiness. <sup>11</sup> When we are punished, it seems to us at the time something to make us sad, not glad. Later, however, those who have been disciplined by such punishment reap the peaceful reward of a righteous life

**Ephesians 1:3-8**

<sup>3</sup> Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! For in our union with Christ he has blessed us by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world. <sup>4</sup> Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him. Because of his love <sup>5</sup> God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children—this was his pleasure and purpose. <sup>6</sup> Let us praise God for his glorious grace, for the free gift he gave us in his dear Son! <sup>7</sup> For by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, <sup>8</sup> which he gave to us in such large measure!

**1 Peter 1:3-5**

<sup>3</sup> Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope, <sup>4</sup> and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away. <sup>5</sup> They are for you, who through faith are kept safe by God's power for the salvation, which is ready to be revealed at the end of time.

Wow, there is so much here and so much more in the Scriptures on how God protects and provides and loves us so much! He calls us his children when we come to him through Jesus Christ, and that means he is our father and he lavishes his unfailing love on us! He wants us to draw close to him and call him the endearing term, “Abba, father!”

**Challenge:**

1. Ask yourself if you have ever understood God as a loving heavenly father like these Scriptures talk about him. Try discussing this with some friends this week.
2. If you don't think that you are considered one of God's children, then talk to a Club Beyond leader, a youth pastor, or chaplain about how that can be possible for you.
3. If you think you are a child of God through Jesus Christ, share with someone this week about how you feel loved and provided for by your heavenly father. Discuss it with someone who you don't think feels like they are God's child.

*Pray for God's purpose and power to put it into action and transform lives. You may consider praying the Lord's Prayer together (Our Father). Remind them of the online personal journey at [ReZilientLife.com](http://ReZilientLife.com) for further involvement with this topic of a God as Father, and church as family.*