

**MOVIE: “Win, Win”**

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

**Sub Topic Theme:**

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

**Lesson Objective:**

To initiate discussion with teens on why God might seemingly allows “bad things” to happen to good people. The 2011 movie “Win, Win” provides a great platform upon which to generate discussion.



Leaders will want to note that the movie does have an R rating due to language and some adult thematic content. But the movie does have much redeeming value. By today’s standards, the language and content of the movie give an authentic glimpse into the lives of a genuine family doing its best to make ends meet. The family is not Christian. Consequently, and not surprisingly, they speak and behave at times that are decidedly un-Christian. But they are “good folks.” Viewers will find that the plot delivers a powerful message with a down-to-earth sense of humor and unassuming realness. In this way, the movie has surprising appeal. Check out the trailer below:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lixOX9bajIc&feature=related>

**Intro to the Movie:**

Small town lawyer, Mike Flaherty, is down on his luck. Even though he works hard and does his best to serve his clients, he finds himself in a series of unfortunate events. To make ends meet, he moonlights as a high school assistant wrestling coach, where he appears to have even minimal impact there.

So when a devilish opportunity arises to “help” one of his elderly and slightly disoriented clients, Mike seizes the moment by becoming his legal guardian, which enables him to collect \$1,000 per month to cover living and care expenses. The extra income averts some immediate problems, but it creates others, especially when the elderly man’s estranged grandson, Kyle, unexpectedly shows up from out of town. As we come to learn, the boy’s mother had a falling out with her father years earlier and has a host of personal problems, making for an unbearable living situation for her teenage son. We also discover that Kyle is a remarkably gifted young man with uncanny leadership skills and rare athletic talent. Visibly troubled by all the drama at home, viewers cannot help

but be attracted to his rare but delightful blend of confidence, humility and raw candor. Fortunately, Mike is able to channel Kyle’s strengths by enrolling him in school and signing him up for the wrestling team. Kyle’s successes on and off the mat have a medicinal effect on everyone. But that quickly changes when the boy’s mother suddenly shows up, throwing a major glitch in both Mike’s scheme and Kyle’s growing sense of stability. The mother demands her son’s return and that she become the guardian of her father. In reality, what she really wants is his money. In the end, a solution is finally found where everyone wins, hence the title of the movie.

What makes this movie appropriate is that seemingly “bad” things end up working for the ultimate good. The story and characters are real and believable. Thus, it has a high entertainment value. Even better, the messages embedded within the plot are powerful and instructive.

As you prepare your teens to watch the movie, have them pay attention to all the “bad” choices and unfortunate events that take place in both Mike and Kyle’s life. The story centers on these two characters. It is only when their worlds collide that two bad situations are made right. This is your 3D lens for the movie.

### Discussion Group Questions:

Leaders, there are more questions here than you probably need. These are here only as a guide to help facilitate small group discussions. Feel free to delete some or add your own that you think are better suited for your students. *The main idea here is that students interact with the movie and extend that discussion to the hurt and pain we all experience in this world.*

- As you watched the movie, what vices and virtues (or weaknesses and strengths) did you observe in Mark? In Kyle? What did you find appealing in each of their characters?
- What message might the directors of this movie have been trying to communicate through the medium of the big screen? What are some values that we can take away from a movie like this?
- In the opening scene, Mark’s daughter asks where daddy is. When her mother answers, “He’s running,” the daughter responds with another, almost prophetic question, “From what?” In what ways do both Mark and Kyle try to “run” from their problems? Neither of them appears willing to face their issues head on. How do you handle problems in your life? Do you “run” like Mark and Kyle or do you face them head on?
- A strength of this movie is its remarkable portrayal of a down-to-earth human story, filled with pain, hardship, trial and resolution. In your own life, what sort of

trials, hurts or pain have you encountered? How are you dealing with them? Does it seem easier to avoid those issues altogether? If so, why? Is that the best way to deal with conflict? Why not?

- Were you happy with the movie's resolution? In your view, did everyone win? Why or why not? Was the ultimate good reached in spite of the poor choices made by Mark and Kyle? In what ways were Mark and Kyle's characters transformed through the movie?
- Respond to this statement: God cares more about our character than he does our circumstances. Do you agree or disagree? When bad things happen to us, do you believe God 1) directly causes them as "punishment" for upsetting him, 2) permits them because he likes to see us suffer, or 3) uses them to ultimately glorify himself? How can God be glorified through bad things?
- Consider the "bad" things that happened in this movie. What were some of them? What caused those things to happen? When "bad" things happen to you, what typically causes them? Have you ever blamed God for the "bad" stuff that happens in your life? If so, let's talk about that situation.

### Group Input:

Solicit responses from the large group on reactions to some of the questions.

Gather ideas and themes recognized in the discussion groups and focus on guiding your teens toward an honest reflection on the tension inherent with an all-loving, all-powerful God and the reality of pain and suffering in our world.

### Bullet Objective:

*Put this summary section in your own words, but here is an idea you can use:*

One of the great aspects of this movie is its honest look at some hard realities in life. I like how the directors do not shy away from the fact that life is filled with real choices and consequences.

Believe it or not, the same is true with the Bible. Scripture deals honestly with life; it does not paint the human experience with rose-colored glasses. Within the pages of the Bible, you will find stories of people who lie, cheat, steal, fornicate (that is to have sex with someone other than your spouse), murder and do all kinds of other surprising stuff. And the Bible also has a lot to say about pain and suffering, which makes it a practical resource for all of us here this evening.

I want to read a few verses from the book of Job. Job is known as someone who experienced extreme pain and suffering for apparently no reason. Listen along:

*Job 1:1-12*

<sup>1</sup> There was a man named Job, living in the land of Uz, who worshiped God and was faithful to him. He was a good man, careful not to do anything evil. <sup>2</sup> He had seven sons and three daughters, <sup>3</sup> and owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, one thousand head of cattle, and five hundred donkeys. He also had a large number of servants and was the richest man in the East.

<sup>4</sup> Job's sons used to take turns giving a feast, to which all the others would come, and they always invited their three sisters to join them. <sup>5</sup> The morning after each feast, Job would get up early and offer sacrifices for each of his children in order to purify them. He always did this because he thought that one of them might have sinned by insulting God unintentionally.

<sup>6</sup> When the day came for the heavenly beings to appear before the LORD, Satan was there among them. <sup>7</sup> The LORD asked him, "What have you been doing?"

Satan answered, "I have been walking here and there, roaming around the earth."

<sup>8</sup> "Did you notice my servant Job?" the LORD asked. "There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he is. He worships me and is careful not to do anything evil."

<sup>9</sup> Satan replied, "Would Job worship you if he got nothing out of it? <sup>10</sup> You have always protected him and his family and everything he owns. You bless everything he does, and you have given him enough cattle to fill the whole country. <sup>11</sup> But now suppose you take away everything he has—he will curse you to your face! "

<sup>12</sup> "All right," the LORD said to Satan, "everything he has is in your power, but you must not hurt Job himself." So Satan left.

The rest of chapter 1 and most of chapter 2 go on to describe how Job loses all he owns, including his children. Talk about suffering! To make matters worse for Job, such tragedy seems undeserved. Verse one says Job was a good man, "careful not to do anything evil." Unlike in the movie we just watched, Kyle and Mike had some unfortunate things happen to them largely due to their own silly choices. But that's not the case here.

Let's make a couple of observations. First, Satan believes the only reason Job serves God is because of the blessings God has given Job. He argues that if those blessings were removed, Job would throw God under the bus. Satan basically wagers a bet with God. What does God do? He takes it! This action by God reveals something: God believes he alone is worthy of humankind's adoration. In other words, God is so great that he is the prize. Everything else could be stripped from us, but if we have God we have enough. That's how much God thinks of himself!

Second, God permits Job's suffering, but he does not cause it. Satan is the cause for the suffering. Before Satan can do anything, he must first seek permission from God. Only once that is granted can Satan move forward. So the root cause of all suffering is not God but Satan. Now we may well wonder *why* God would ever permit such suffering in the

first place, and that is precisely going to be Job's complaint, "Why *me*, God? What have I done to deserve this treatment?" But here's an interesting thing we learn from Job's complaint: God never gives a reason; He never answers Job's deepest questions. And neither is he obligated to do so. It's like God is saying, "Job, even if I told you the reason for your suffering, you wouldn't understand. So I'm not going to tell you. You'll just have to *trust me*."

Friends, one of the hardest things you will ever need to do is to trust God, particularly when what is happening to you may not make any sense. But listen, time and again the Bible commands us to trust God. Proverbs 3:5-6 illustrates, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the LORD in everything you do, and he will show you the right way."

**Challenge:**

I want to challenge you with only one simple question this evening. Are you willing to trust God even when what is happening to you doesn't make any sense, or even in the face of seemingly undeserved hardship?

*Lord, thank you for all that you bring into our lives, even those things that are hurtful. The pain in our world screams to us as a megaphone in our ear that this world is not right. We desperately need you to come and fix it. In the meantime, Father, give us grace and mercy to trust in you no matter the circumstances. Amen!*