

MOVIE: “The Count of Monte Cristo”

Sub Topic Theme:

When They’re Just not the Same

Lesson Objective:

Understanding that being faced with a parent who is just not the same is a truly challenging and difficult thing to deal with.

Recognizing that most youth feel totally powerless and cheated and with that comes a great range of

emotional responses – most of which consist of anger, pain, or detachment. By acknowledging the difficulty of their unique situation and affirming the love of God for them, we can begin to guide them through this life change by encouraging them to seek help, find their identity and foundation in Christ, and act courageously by speaking God’s love into the lives of those around them. In that way we remove the instability from their life and give them a confidence and faith grounded in the love and mercy of our Lord, and a resilience in the face of life’s troubles.



Intro to the Movie:

The Count of Monte Cristo

According to Fandango.com:

James Caviezel stars as Edmond Dantes, an honest sailor who plans to marry his beautiful lover Mercedes (Dagmara Dominczyk). Edmond doesn't know that his best friend Fernand Mondego (Guy Pearce) secretly desires Mercedes for himself and schemes with fallen aristocrat Villefort (James Frain) to frame Edmond for a crime he didn't commit. Sentenced to life on the remote island prison of D'If, Edmond becomes consumed by plans for revenge. Thirteen years pass and he meets a fellow innocent convict, Abbe Faria (Richard Harris), who becomes Edmond's mentor in swordfighting, finance, and escape, confiding that a vast treasure awaits a discoverer on the island of Monte Cristo. Eventually, Edmond is able to get away using Faria's tunnels and makes his way to Monte Cristo, where he retrieves the fortune and uses it to make himself over as the wealthy "Count of Monte Cristo." With the help of a loyal sidekick (Luis Guzman), Edmond insinuates himself into French royalty and sets about getting revenge on Villefort and Fernand, who is now married to Mercedes. *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002) also stars Michael Wincott and Albie Woodington

(The 3D lenses) Look at how the character of Edmund changes throughout the film, particularly when he returns from prison. Note the ways that he is just not the same and the effects that change has on those connected to him. Also look for bigger concepts, lessons that the film presents, particularly those that relate directly to someone being just not the same.

Discussion Group Questions:

1. Which character did you relate to the most in this story?
2. What is one way that Edmund changed from the beginning to end?
3. Where there any changes in Edmund after he left prison? Where they for the better or for the worse?
4. Which character received the greatest energy (wrong done)? Did they get “revenge”?

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:

***Understanding** that being faced with a parent who is just not the same is a truly challenging and difficult thing to deal with. Recognizing that most youth feel **totally powerless** and cheated and with that comes a great range of emotional responses – most of which consist of anger, pain, or detachment. By acknowledging the difficulty of their unique situation and **affirming the love of God** for them, we can begin to guide them through this life change by encouraging them to seek help, find their identity and foundation in Christ, and **act courageously** by speaking God’s love into the lives of those around them. In that way we remove the instability from their life and give them a **confidence and faith** grounded in the love and mercy of our Lord, and a **resilience** in the face of life’s troubles.*

Bullet Objective:

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

This movie tells many people’s stories. It might seem at first to just be about Edmund/the Count, but it actually shows what Mercedes, Mondego, Albert, Jacapo, and even Villefort and Abbe Faria go through as well. There are multiple stories and multiple dynamics that are shown here. Consider how close Edmund and Mercedes were when the film began. Their relationship was filled with love and joy and hope and support. And even though they were also romantic, perhaps you can relate to that in your own relationship with your parent. Maybe you confided in them and they knew your struggles and dreams. You were close with them and now that they have returned it is painful how distant you are from each other. That intimacy is gone and what remains is a stranger who may be treating you coldly and dismissively.

Or perhaps you are more like Fernand Mondago who enjoyed living life without Edmund and resents the fact that he has returned. Maybe you wish your parent had just stayed gone and all the angst and frustration of having them back home is just irritating. So all you feel is detachment, anger, and resentment.

What can be a very bewildering place to be is if you identify with Albert. You never really knew your mom or dad that well other than the idealized figure in your head and all the stories you heard, even ones you were part of, over and over from your family. Now that you are finally face to face with this person who is supposed to be your mom or dad, it's hard to know what to do, or think. You don't know them but you know you're supposed to love them; and, to top it off, they really don't seem much like the person everyone was describing.

Another person you might find your story paralleling is the Count's loyal friend Jacapo. Your mom or dad has returned and all you are trying to do is help them deal with life. You see they are struggling and you want them to figure out how to handle life back at home so you do whatever you can to help out, come along side of them, and advocate them to the others. You see that something has changed and that a lot of what they do isn't the best choice but you feel like all you can do is try and keep things afloat.

See, there are many different aspects you might identify with in this movie and maybe even others not shown in this film. It's normal to try and find a role to play and a position to hold in this new environment at home. Everything has changed and it can often feel like you have no ability to keep things stable or help fix things. Maybe you feel like everything is falling apart and nothing can help.

It's important to remember that there are things you can do. True, you can't make your mom or dad change and you can't wave a magic wand to make everything perfect, but you can decide to ask for help and turn to God for direction and love. By deciding to let God define your identity, rather than the pain and lies of this world, you will find yourself on the solid ground of God's love. He will guide you and show you how to be a light to those around you. If you truly seek every day to know God more and to speak his love into the lives of those around you, it will make an impact. You might not see it or know it, but God's light will shine out of you and his love will reach others. God has a transformative love and it never fails to heal and change and grow us and others in ways we never imagined!

Consider what Paul writes in Philippians 4:4-9:

“May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!

⁵ Show a gentle attitude toward everyone. The Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a

thankful heart. ⁷ And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

⁸ In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable. ⁹ Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.”

If your problem at home is bigger than you can handle and you are afraid of what might happen, always ask for help from a professional, like a youth leader, chaplain, or counselor. When you aren't sure what to do and you need God's guidance about what you should do, consider what is said here in James 1:5. “But if any of you lack wisdom, you should pray to God, who will give it to you; because God gives generously and graciously to all.”

I know when you go home and reality sets in, it can be hard to be certain whether or not you are doing the right thing, for the right reasons. Whenever you aren't sure if what you are doing is honoring to God and loving toward others, run it by Micah 6:8. “No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.”

Challenge:

1. Identify a specific action or emotion you have toward your parent and home situation that is not in line with what God commands us to do. Consider what is at the root of that in your heart – anger, fear, distrust – and then make the decision to hand it over to Jesus Christ and receive instead his forgiveness and love. Make a point to follow him the next time you want to react that same way.
2. Decide on a way specifically to change how you handle your home life this week. Talk to a Club Beyond leader or counselor or chaplain about how you might accomplish that. Remember that this is about transforming your heart into a vessel that holds God's love, not about eliciting a different action from your family members.
3. Write out a prayer asking Jesus to show you his presence and love. Pray it daily this week and feel free to share it with your family, close friends, and leaders. Use it as a way to strengthen your resolve to exist in the truth of God's love for you and to take it one step further by showing his love to those around you.

Pray for God's purpose and love to put it into action and transform lives. Remind them of the online personal journey at ReZilient Life for further involvement with this topic of When They're Just Not the Same!

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