



THE PROPOSAL (Cert 12A)

Directed by: Anne Fletcher

Running time: 108 minutes

SUMMARY

Margaret Tate (Sandra Bullock) is a successful chief editor at Ruick and Hunt Publishing in New York and is loathed by her co-workers.

Her executive assistant, Andrew Paxton (Ryan Reynolds), is an aspiring editor who has been working with her for three years without any recognition. One day, Margaret finds her career in jeopardy as she's facing deportation back to Canada because her visa has expired. To avoid this, she fakes an engagement to Andrew, who agrees to charade with a few conditions of his own, including promotion to editor.

The newly engaged couple then travel to Andrew's Alaskan hometown of Sitka to celebrate the ninetieth birthday of Andrew's grandmother. Over the weekend, Margaret grows closer to Andrew's family and they ask her to marry Andrew in their barn, a Paxton family tradition.

However, as the tension increases and love starts to blossom, the immigration officer unexpectedly arrives in Sitka and threatens to charge Andrew with fraud and end the marriage ...

WHAT YOU FELT ABOUT THE FILM

The first part of the session gives everyone the chance to think about the film and react to what they have seen in a way that everyone will have something to contribute.

This is a simple, quick exercise to get everyone thinking about their reaction to the film. Divide the group into pairs. One person will play the part of a

world-renowned film critic; the other will be interviewing them. The interview should last for three minutes and the film critic should answer the following questions (feel free to add your own here):

- What was the best bit in the film?
- Rate the film between 1 and 5.
- Who would you recommend see this film?
- Did you believe in the story?
- Who was the best character?
- Working for Margaret at the beginning of the film would be ...
- A bit where the film could have been better was ...

When the interview has taken place, get the pairs to change roles. You may want to get the interviewer to feed back their film critic's answers to the group.

KEY THEMES IN THE FILM

The Proposal is first and foremost a comedic tale of love, but it also touches on some important ideas about faith and God. This section gives a chance for young people to explore some of those questions by looking at four themes the film raises.

1. Lying inevitably gets us in trouble

Watch clip: 8 minutes, 38 seconds to 12 minutes, 47 seconds

In her desperation to stay in America, Margaret concocts a story about marrying Andrew and lands them both in the impossible predicament of needing to get married quickly. This leads from one problem to another. Margaret eventually decides she cannot marry Andrew and confesses to the business arrangement.

To introduce the topic of lying and its effects, play the classic icebreaker game, 'Two truths, one lie'. Invite your group to think of three facts about themselves (hopefully more exciting than 'I'm wearing a green T-shirt') of which two statements must be true and one a lie. In turn, each young person reveals their three facts and the rest of the group individually vote on which fact they thought was a lie.

After the game, take some time to discuss the group's views about lying. Was Margaret right to lie? What would they have done in her position?

Key question: Is lying ever justified?

Relevant Bible verses:

- Colossians 3.9–10
- Proverbs 25.18
- Deuteronomy 19.17–19
- Proverbs 6.16–19

2. Marriage is not to be taken lightly

Watch clip: 1 hour 23 minutes, 30 seconds to 1 hour 26 minutes, 40 seconds

In *The Proposal* we see two people who have a quite free and easy view of marriage at the start of the film, with Margaret in particular using it to gain a visa and nothing more. However, as the film develops both characters change their view on what love and marriage is really about.

Use this theme as an opportunity to have some discussion time in small groups (possibly single sex) on the topic of love and marriage. Use the following questions as a guide in your small groups. Afterwards, come back into a big group and feedback any appropriate answers:

- Is marriage outdated?
- How long should people be dating before getting engaged?
- Is it OK to have sex before marriage?
- Why do marriages break up?
- Why do people want to get married?
- What qualities in a couple would make a good marriage?

Key question: What are the right reasons to get married?

Relevant Bible verses:

- Genesis 2.24
- Proverbs 18.22
- 1 Corinthians 7.2–4
- Ephesians 4.31–32

3. Having good relationships is the most important thing in life

Watch clip: 1 hour 34 minutes, 53 seconds to 1 hour 37 minutes, 45 seconds

As the film progresses, Margaret realises her life is empty without meaningful relationships with others.

Divide the group into pairs. One of them then has two minutes to tell the other person everything that they can possibly think of about himself or herself. When time is up, swap around and repeat the exercise. Some topics could include:

- their favourite things in life
- their life ambitions
- what they dislike about school

- their family and friends
- their hobbies

When each person has told their story, ask the following questions and see if the young people discovered anything new about their partner:

- What is their favourite colour?
- What is their favourite flavour of ice cream?
- What is their least favourite subject at school and why?
- How many members do they have in their family
- What do they like to do in their spare time?

Add some more questions as you see fit, depending on the group you are working with.

Key question: What would a great relationship with people and God look like?

Relevant Bible verses:

- Ecclesiastes 4.9–11
- James 1.19
- Matthew 7.12
- Romans 12.9–10

4. The world is competitive

Watch clip: 2 minutes, 47 seconds to 7 minutes, 40 seconds

Andrew and Margaret work in the competitive business of book publishing where people are willing to fight dirty.

To explore this theme of competition, split your group into two teams and set the following impossible task: bounce two ping-pong balls into two different glasses simultaneously.

Ask for volunteers from each group and have a competition to see if anyone can complete this task. You might want to give a prize to anyone who manages it.

Instructions for the impossible task:

1. Prior to the game starting, contestants must stand at a table with hands at their sides.
2. Once the game begins, contestants may first grab two ping-pong balls with their designated hand. The contestants may only use that designated hand for all attempts.
3. Contestants may use both hands to reposition balls.
4. Contestants may only possess two balls at a time.
5. Balls must bounce at least once on the table.
6. To complete the game, two balls must bounce and land inside the two glasses on a single throw within the 60-second time limit. Any balls released within the 60-second time limit may count toward completion of the game.

Required items:

- two ping-pong balls
- two glasses
- table

Encourage the spectators and teams to cheer on those taking part.

Key question: How can competition be healthy or unhealthy?

Relevant Bible verses:

- Romans 12.1–2
- Matthew 6.24

- 1 Corinthians 9.25
- 1 John 3.16–18

TAKING IT BACK TO FAITH

The third part of the session is a chance to compare the story of the film with a story in the Bible. What are the similarities and differences? What do they tell us about God's Kingdom?

Young people may not grasp all the theological points that could be made, but it's important for them to get used to the idea of critiquing what they see and comparing these with the values and beliefs of the Christian faith.

For the basis of this discussion, contrast the character of Andrew Paxton with the story of Daniel in the Old Testament. Both men face, and have to overcome, adversity – fighting for what they believe in.

Summarise the story of Daniel and the lion's den and Andrew's 'lion's den' experience/story with Margaret. How are the stories similar and different? Consider questions like ...

- Where are there examples of deceit in both stories?
- What happens initially in both stories? How do they end?
- Why do you think that Daniel chose to disobey the king in the first place?
- How do you think Daniel felt when he was put into the lion's den? How do you think Andrew felt when he faced the marriage situation with Margaret?
- Would you have had the same assurance that you would be safe in Daniel's position?
- Are there qualities that Andrew and Daniel share?
- What did Andrew and Daniel rely on in times of adversity?
- Have you ever had a time where you've had to stand up for what you believe in?

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