

THE MIRACLE MAKER

USING THE FILM IN CHURCH GROUPS – 7 ACTIVITIES FOR STARTERS

The Miracle Maker is on video/DVD release from 30 October 2000. It's a film that you'll want friends, family, neighbours, workmates and others to experience for themselves.

YOUR CHURCH has a vital part to play. It's not just a walk-on role – your church has a speaking part that is central to the plot! You can write your own lines and improvise, but you'll need some direction. Here are some ideas for you to work on immediately.

1. PACK THEM IN!

Every church has a network of members, friends, parishioners [or equivalent], youth groups, school contacts and so on - whole communities on their doorstep. Here is a top class film to invite people to and give as many as possible the opportunity to experience and understand the gospel story. Please contact www.filmbank.co.uk if you are organising group showings.

You may wish to arrange refreshments before or after the film – or perhaps a supper where people can discuss the film further. This way, you can turn *The Miracle Maker* into a real event for the church to gather around and work on together.

2. VIDEOS FOR SCHOOLS

Consider subsidising videos for local schools so that as many teachers and class groups as possible can see the film. Children from seven years upwards will enjoy the film – what better way to introduce them to the life of Jesus?

3. ANIMATION GENERATION

Animation is a hugely popular art form. It is incredibly powerful and emotive, able to carry big themes and stories. *The Miracle Maker* is all the more amazing for the fact that the diminutive models convey a real sense of character and personality. You are able to suspend disbelief and forget that they aren't human – a remarkable achievement by the animators.

Why not challenge the church to create its own animated version of a Bible Story? They might use video, the web, computer-generated graphics or simply draw a 'storyboard'. There could be a competition for the youth group to come up with the best storyboard that could be presented to the whole church at a special service.

4. TALKING PICTURES

Use *The Miracle Maker* as a focus for small group discussions. Look at the character of Jesus, the 'eye-witness' perspective given by Jairus' daughter, the conflict Jairus faced before going to Jesus and the film's emotional impact ... there is so much to talk about. Many of us have our own mental picture of Jesus.

- How did this film challenge that view?

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- Did it make you think differently about Jesus?
- Did it challenge perceptions or alter opinions?
- Did it make you uncomfortable or did it make Jesus appear more accessible?
- What about the humour in the film – did this make you think differently about Jesus or any of the other characters?
- Did you notice anything that you had not appreciated before in Jesus' life?

The film is strongly influenced by Eastern European iconography. Talk about contemporary 'icons' and what influence they have. Perhaps look at art history and examine how Jesus has been portrayed across the centuries and in different cultures. In what ways is *The Miracle Maker* a portrayal of Jesus that fits our times? Other sections of the website will be of help here.

5. BACK TO COLLAGE

The combination of state-of-the-art 3D animation techniques and 2D cel animation offer a radically different encounter with the biblical story. As a build-up to watching the film, or after seeing it, encourage everyone in your church to contribute to a collage of words, images, photos, cuttings – anything that portrays their thoughts about Jesus or the whole gospel. Use the final version as a creative aid to worship.

Alternatively, encourage everyone to bring something to add to the collage and create it as part of an Easter service or activity. You could even ask local schools who see the film to contribute items – the invitation could be extended to poetry, prose, painting, and into IT.

The result will be a contemporary collage inspired by *The Miracle Maker*.

6. EYES OF A CHILD

Murray Watts, the screenwriter of the film, has given a beautiful twist to the story by looking at Jesus' life through the eyes of a child – Tamar, the daughter of Jairus. In junior church or other children's groups, encourage the children to tell their own stories of Jesus, or to write, draw or in some other way describe the parts of the film that they were most drawn to. What scene did they like best? Which character? What did they think of Tamar? Would they have done anything differently to portray a child's view of Jesus?

Perhaps local press might be interested in what they come up with. Local schools may be interested in working with you on this activity. The end result could be a very touching and challenging child's-eye view of Jesus and key incidents in his life.

7. FILM REVIEW

Something for the youth group to get stuck in to!

Ask the youth group to organise a film review night. You could show the whole film or a selection of your favourite parts.

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Select a male and female host for the evening.

Get three or four people to give their personal review of the film in their own style.

Chair a discussion around some of the issues, e.g.

- What impact did the film have?
- How was the experience different from the 'normal' presentation of the Bible and in particular of Jesus?
- Did it make them think of Jesus in a new way?

Devise a questionnaire to find out what people thought of the film and reveal the findings on the night.

You could even incorporate some of the other ideas into the evening – for example, the story board competition. Perhaps give some 'Oscar' awards for the winners of various categories– e.g. best animation, best poem, best collage piece, etc.

Compare the film to other 'blockbuster' animation films of the year; *Toy Story 2*, *Pokemon*, *South Park* etc. *The Miracle Maker* is clearly a very different kind of film. Why? Is it effective? Would it be possible to use a different approach?

Serve food and drink and have some entertainment – music or storytelling. Perhaps run some audience participation items such as guessing film themes or a game where people have to guess which film particular lines come from; use your imagination and the possibilities are endless!

Finally, popcorn is a must!