

CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

Movie: *Up*

By Greg Jones

Background/summary: Written and directed by Pete Docter and Bob Peterson, Pixar's innovative film *Up* released in May of 2009. This animated action film exhibits a fast-paced plotline with a few twists and plenty of laughs. Carrying on the Pixar tradition of brilliant animation blended with relevant family themes, this film is both entertaining and a conversation piece.

Discover: What is the message/worldview?:

- There are two main characters, Carl, the elderly man whose house and balloons provide the theme of the movie, and Russell, a young wilderness explorer. Their stories get intertwined in a silly adventure to a faraway land, via a rather interesting mode of transportation.
- Carl's dealing with the loss of his lifelong love Ellie. The beginning of the movie chronicles their meeting and life together. Despite not being able to have children of their own, Carl and Ellie seemed to live quite an adventurous and joyous life together. As a result, their home is Carl's most prized possession. Carl's attachment to the home and symbolically, their lives together, provide the background for his obscure journey.
- Russell's attempting, like so many young boys and men, to receive love and acceptance from his father. However, as the storyline explains, Russell's father is absent from his life. The few cherished moments Russell experienced with his dad revolved around the outdoors, which explains Russell's obsession with being a wilderness explorer. His experiences dealing with that void in his life define him.
- Their stories become intertwined because Russell needs to "help the elderly" to earn a merit badge for his wilderness explorer program. Carl wants to flee the big city that has encroached on his life and go on the big adventure he promised Ellie years prior, to "Paradise Falls." Upon arriving in Paradise Falls, the two encounter a number of silly creatures and adventures, ultimately growing together while learning about themselves.
- The message of the movie deals with issues of family, success, and ultimately happiness. Carl and Russell both work toward their idea of what will bring them happiness. Both, predictably have those definitions slightly altered.



Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

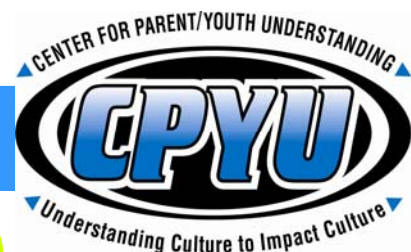
- With some silly and unique characters along the journey, the real message of *Up* is one that rests in people's ability to help themselves rather than reliance on Christ.
- Though the movie is not overtly humanist, it is not explicitly Christ-inspired either. There is no sense of salvation or redemption.
- One of the key elements to the movie is Russell's desire to help Carl in order to earn his "helping the elderly merit badge," for his wilderness explorer program. While helping others is clearly a biblical mandate, Russell is obviously doing this as a desire to make his own father happy. There are obvious parallels to the Christian life in how Christians help others with the desire to bring glory to God.
- The change in the characters' hearts and minds happens as they learn to put others first. Jesus says in Matthew 19:19 to, "love your neighbor as yourself." Through the course of the film, mutual assistance leads to greater collective success for the two main characters. By following this simple golden rule, these silly adventures serve to provide a rather worthwhile life lesson for viewers of all ages.

Decide: What do I do with it?

- The film holds a PG rating due to "peril and action." Like any good animated film, *Up* has an exciting villain and the main characters' struggle against him provides the reason for "peril and action."
- Younger viewers may not grasp the depth of the themes in the movie, but certain characters face some troubling moments that will need to be explained. Viewers may experience some very hard emotions. In particular, be prepared to explain the reality of losing a loved one (Carl's lifelong love Ellie) and parental absenteeism (Russell's dad).
- Hopefully parents will use this film as an opportunity to help their children gain a better understanding of the world around them, including painful moments like grieving or being disappointed by someone they love. Children, teens, and adults alike can use this as a cultural tool for relating to friends and family members who might be experiencing tough moments in their lives like Carl and Russell.
- Overall, the film is great for family viewing. It continues in the great Pixar tradition of surrealistic action mixed with comedic characters. Though it may not specifically call on the gospel message, use the film to address some of the important triumphs and traumas in life.



Greg Jones is a doctoral student studying American history at Kent State University. He and his wife are excited about their lives together with Jesus as they pursue His calling in Ravenna, Ohio.



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