

Directors Cut

Pray.

Biblestudy

2.5

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A Cross Shadow Productions Film

Directed by Matt Mitchell, Executive Producer Tawn Kruger

Based on a Short Story by Matt Mitchell

1.) Guilt

Discussion Starter: The special edition of Pray 2.5 - Director's Cut includes a glimpse at the first few minutes of Pray 3. Within seconds of leaving the Apex Police Station, the villain is quickly pulled over and stopped by Sgt Jake Lyons, a police officer. The villain's initial reaction is one of fear and guilt, as he quietly mutters the question, "What is this?" Ask the group if anyone among them has ever been stopped or pulled over by a police officer. If so, what was their reaction? What emotions did they feel in that moment? Chances are, their reactions were quite similar (they probably felt a little fear, or perhaps even guilt if they were breaking any laws, speeding, running a red light, etc.) Allow the group to share their personal experiences for a few minutes.

In the Word: Ask someone to read aloud Romans 13:1 "Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God." Also read Matthew 22:21 where Jesus says "...give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

Digging Deeper: Scripture obviously encourages us to obey existing laws and to support the leaders (local, state, federal etc.) that are in place. When we choose to intentionally break the law, does this affect our witness and testimony to the world around us? Ask the group the following hypothetical questions:

1. If non-believers are constantly watching us to see our example, does it matter if we cheat on our taxes? Why or why not?
2. If nobody finds out, does it really matter if we cheat on a test or cheat on a boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse? Why or why not?
3. Does it matter if we cheat God by robbing Him of His tithes and offerings? What does the Bible say about that?
4. If Christ came to set us free from the Law, where do you draw the line between freedom and legalism?

2.) Prayer

Discussion Starter: Ask this simple question: "The title of the movie is Pray. So what exactly is Prayer?" (Let the group share their responses. Most people will instinctively answer that prayer is "talking to God". This answer, however, implies a monologue in which the person talks, and God just listens. Perhaps a better definition is that prayer is "Talking with God" as this implies a dialogue in which the person not only talks with God, but actually listens. Listening to the "still, small, Voice" of the Lord is an important part of prayer.)

In the Word: Ask someone to read aloud Philippians 4:6-7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Optional additional verses: Ephesians 6:10-18. Putting on the "full armor of God" certainly includes prayer. "...by prayer and supplication...". We prepare ourselves for the battles of the day by putting on our whole armor, much of which is accomplished through prayer.

Digging Deeper: It's easy to panic when you find yourself in a difficult or traumatic situation. In the movie, Madison finds herself facing several intense and scary situations. On two separate occasions, we notice that she prays for God's help, and on both occasions, we see the Lord answer her cries for help. (In the mall while looking for an open door to escape, and also while trying to start her car in the mall parking lot.) Ask the group: "Can anyone share an instance where they saw God answer a specific prayer?" (Could be healing from an illness, avoiding a major car accident, a family member finally accepting Christ, or perhaps just passing a test or getting an encouraging phone call just when you needed it etc.) Depending on time and length of the responses, you can follow-up by asking: "How did that bolster or increase your faith in God?" (It demonstrated that we can rely on Him, and that He will "never leave us nor forsake us.")

3.) Miracles

Discussion Starter: The movie opened with the definition of the word "Miracle". Have you (or someone you've known) ever witnessed or experienced an actual "Miracle"? Encourage them to share their story. After enough responses have been shared, ask them, "Can anyone remember the Bible Verse that was displayed at the end of the movie?" (see below)

In the Word: Ask someone to read aloud Matthew 19:26. "Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." NIV

Digging Deeper: Some people believe that miracles happen everyday, everywhere, all the time. Others believe that true miracles are very rare, and happen only in extreme circumstances to bring God glory. In the Bible, we read that Jesus performed many miracles. Do you believe that God still performs miracles today? Why or why not?

4.) Of this World or In it?

Discussion Starter: In the movie, the final climactic chase scene takes place at a Shopping Mall. We hear the words "Worldly" and "Materialistic" used a lot in today's culture. Can someone help define what either of those words mean? (Description or characteristic of someone who embraces or focuses on things of this world, its pleasures and interests rather than the spiritual things of God's Kingdom.)

In the Word: Ask someone to read aloud 1 John 2:15-17 "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world." James 4:4 "Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God."

Digging Deeper: In the movie, Madison goes to the Mall for a night of shopping. Although she is not necessarily being materialistic in this film, many young people do wrestle with this. What are some "worldly" things that can distract us from serving or following Christ? (money/pursuit of riches, things/possessions, job/career, boyfriend/girlfriend, hobbies or anything that consumes an unhealthy amount of our time & energy etc.)

5.) The Enemy

Discussion Starter: What are some of the different names you've heard for "Satan" or "The Devil"? (Lucifer, the tempter, deceiver, the Accuser, serpent, prince of darkness, the beast, Abaddon, Apollyon, Beelzebub, etc.)

In the Word: Ask someone to read aloud 1st Peter 5:8. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." NIV

Digging Deeper: In this movie, how does the Villain mimic the devil in the way he behaves? (Wants to do us harm, pursues us our whole life attempting to snare us in his various traps, tries to make us believe we are alone, wears a mask to hide his true identity, etc.)

6.) Beauty... in God's eyes

Discussion Starter: In the scene with Madison and her boyfriend at the restaurant, Madison is refusing to eat because she wants to lose weight. Often times Hollywood poorly represents what a "healthy" body type would be, leaving young women to believe that a super-skinny size is the only way to be beautiful. What do you think is beautiful?

In the Word: Have someone read Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you..." and Psalm 139:13-14 "For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made..." Throughout the

Bible, God tells us in His word that He created us. Even before we were born God had in mind who we would be. This includes everything from our talents and abilities, likes and dislikes, to our physical appearance. If we say that we are unhappy with ourselves, is that the same as basically telling God that He didn't do a very good job creating us? (see next verses)

Digging Deeper: Have someone read Romans 9:19-21. "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" Why do you think God created you? What are your gifts/talents? Do you thank God for giving these to you? What do you believe is a healthy lifestyle and healthy appearance? Does our culture think that beauty can come in all shapes and sizes? More importantly, how do you think God feels about this?

7.) True Love Waits

Discussion Starter: There is a scene in the hotel hallway where Madison's friend, Robert, says he likes her ring. Madison replies "Thanks! True love waits, baby." How do you define "true love"?

In the Word: Read 1 Cor.6:12-20. In our society today there seems to be an attitude of "everyone is doing it". In mainstream movies and TV shows we see people living together and having sex, sometimes even with multiple partners. However, we rarely see the consequences of these actions. The Bible is very clear about God's standard for purity, and that is that sex outside of marriage is not His will. Period. God expects us to have the self-control it takes to be able to wait until marriage. Sex was created to be a beautiful, intimate time for a man and woman in a marriage relationship. Anything outside of this distorts what God had in mind, and can bring serious consequences to the participants.

Digging Deeper: What are some consequences of ignoring God's standards and having premarital sex? (disease, pregnancy, guilt, problems for future relationships, low self-image, low standards). God loves us so much that He wants us to be blessed with healthy relationships and He wants to protect us from pain and regret. He knows that the consequences of disobedience can cause all kinds of problems, the least of these, are stress and excess "drama" in your life. Read the following questions to the group and have them answer True or False.

1. Committing to sexual purity before God honors Him and empowers myself to be in control of my own body. (*True*)
2. Surrounding myself with like-minded friends who have also committed to purity can help me stick to my commitment. (*True*)
3. God's Word says that sex outside of marriage is fine as long as I'm really in love. (*False*)
4. I believe that my future spouse is worth waiting for. (*True*)
5. It's wise to begin praying today for the sexual purity of the spouse God has already picked out for me. (*Hopefully True*)
6. Talking openly to a potential boyfriend/girlfriend before seriously dating will help lessen the pressure and stress of possible expectations in this area of my relationship. (*True*)

8.) Kidnapped

Discussion Starter: *Pray 2* begins with Laurie's kidnapping. In her fear, she turns to prayer. What causes *you* to pray? Do you wait for something bad to happen or do you pray throughout your day?

In the Word: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 shares these words on prayer:

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul explains that prayer is more than words we say with our heads bowed. Prayer is *talking with God*. We are encouraged to pray in ongoing conversation with God throughout the moments of our day, regardless of our circumstances.

Digging Deeper: Over the next week, take five minutes at the end of each day to write (or type) your thoughts to answer "How I Prayed Today." List all of the times and ways you can remember talking with God. If you don't like your list, improve the next day and track your progress. You'll be surprised how monitoring your prayer life for seven days will change how you pray.

9.) The Campout

Discussion Starter: The teenagers of *Pray 2.5* enter the film on their way to their fall camping trip. The campers are excited about the time together and look forward to this annual tradition. Why is an event like a camping trip so much fun? What is it about spending time with friends that we enjoy?

In the Word: The first people to follow Jesus regularly gathered together. We are told, "*They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people*" (Acts 2:46-47). They shared meals, friendship, and opportunities to talk about their faith with others who shared their values.

Likewise, we are encouraged when we invest time with friends who share our faith. We enjoy the community, the fun, and the common faith we share in Christ.

Digging Deeper: Choose a time to spend together with some of your Christian friends in the next couple of weeks. Whether a camping trip like in *Pray 2.5* or simply a night together at a friend's house, schedule an opportunity for fun with friends who share your faith.

10.) The Shape of Fear

Discussion Starter: On Emily's talk show, Emily interviews Laurie regarding her kidnapping. She asks, "How can you say God took care of you?" Her question reveals the common concern many of us have when we question, "Where is God when bad things happen?" How would you answer this question?

In the Word: The Bible promises that those who trust in Christ will spend eternity in heaven. However, the Bible never promises heaven on earth. Instead, we are told:

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:11-13).

In Peter's situation, some people who followed Jesus were being mistreated because of their faith. Peter's advice was not to question that God allowed suffering, but to rejoice that they shared in suffering just as Jesus did.

This does not minimize our pain, but indicates that *pain is not without purpose*. Some of our greatest impact in life is due to how we respond during times of trouble. In Laurie's case, she used her pain as an opportunity to speak about the love of Christ and shared proceeds from her book to help support her church.

Digging Deeper: Share a problem area you are facing right now in your life. How could this problem cause you to depend on God and communicate his love? Encourage one another in your group and pray for one another for strength to endure your present difficulty in a way that honors God and helps others in the process.

11.) The Word

Discussion Starter: During the campout, the students of *Pray 2.5* spend time studying the Bible together. Is it important to read God's Word? Why or why not?

In the Word: The longest chapter of the Bible, Psalm 119, focuses on the value of understanding God's truth. In it, the songwriter reveals, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you"* (verse 11).

In addition, God's Word is often called perfect. Why? 2 Timothy 3:16 shares that truth from God is literally "God-breathed." It is an extension of a perfect God designed to help us choose what is right and live a life of purpose.

Many people wish they could ask God their tough questions about life. Yet the Bible already provides God's answers to many of the key issues of life. When we read it, we hear God's view on the issues of life and grow deeper in our spiritual journey.

Digging Deeper: Discuss or write down "Three questions I would like to ask God." Over the next week, see what answers you can find in the Bible to the three questions you selected. You may be surprised how much God has already said in response to your questions.

[NOTE: To find the related verses to your questions, use the concordance in the back of a Bible or search for keywords online at www.biblegateway.com.]

12.) "I Love You"

Discussion Starter: After Laurie's interview, her daughter leaves with Laurie's parents. As Laurie says goodbye, she remembers to tell her daughter, "I love you." Do you regularly tell your family members or close friends that you love them? Why or why not?

In the Word: The night before Jesus was crucified, he shared a final meal with his closest friends. During this time, he shared, *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"* (John 13:34-35).

Interestingly, Jesus did not command them to love other people in these verses. He instructed them to love *one another*. Why? Because when a group of people really loves each other, it causes others to want to join them.

Digging Deeper: On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you and your friends show love to one another through your words and actions? Do you find yourself using too much sarcasm or neglecting to show encouragement toward one another?

Take a few moments in your group to have each person to receive encouraging words from the others in your group (as time allows). [For example, when it is Jake's turn, each person says one thing they really appreciate about him and why he is important to them.] You may be very surprised at how powerful this exercise works.

13.) Church

Discussion Starter: Around the campfire, Pastor Dave asks one of his students, "So, I haven't seen you around church much lately. What's up?"

Dave then shares his story of how he was reminded of the importance of church involvement. How did his story of the coal removed from the fire influence the student listening to the story? How did it impact you?

In the Word: Hebrews 10:25 shares to, *"...not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

God realizes that a commitment to regular worship with others is not easy. However, he encourages us to continue gathering together to help one another in our faith. Together, we

each challenge those around us to move forward rather than to give up or accept a mediocre lifestyle.

Next Steps: As a group, create a "church challenge" or "youth ministry challenge." Commit to "actively" attending every time possible for the next six weeks. Actively attending means to show up with the purpose of encouraging others in some way. This could include an actual role helping with music or greeting people or a more informal role of encouraging those around you and contacting those who don't show up.

14.) Another Man's Sins

Discussion Starter: In the final minutes of the film, the villain calls his brother. Our villain feels set up, exclaiming, "One man shouldn't pay for another man's sins." It doesn't seem fair. How is this idea similar to what Christ has done for us?

In the Word: The apostle John wrote that the purpose of Christ's death was to pay for our sins: *"This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"* (1 John 4:10). Even though we don't deserve it, Jesus died in our place. *Through him* we can have a relationship with God and eternal life.

Now What? Spend a few moments ending your time together with prayer. Specifically thank God for being our substitute by sending Jesus to die for our sins.

Before praying, remember to challenge those in your group to make sure each person has chosen to accept this gift of life Jesus offers.

Romans 10:9 explains, "...it is with your *heart* that you believe and are justified, and it is with your *mouth* that you confess and are saved." If you are uncertain about your relationship with God, take a moment right now to believe in him and to confess that you will follow him with your life.

For more information on *Pray 2.5* and other films from Cross Shadow Productions, log on to www.praythemovie.com.

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