



# FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Find time to explore these questions as a family after each session.

## Session 1

- Do you think death is bad, glad, or sad?
- What are some images that help you think about the afterlife?
- Why do people want to know what happens after they die?
- Skeptics say that heaven is wishful thinking about continuing our own life or about continuing our friends' and family members' lives. How would you respond to them?

## Session 2

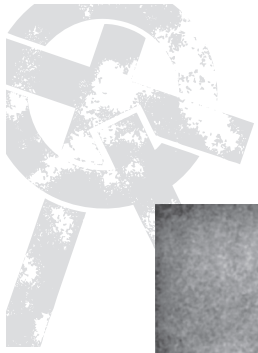
- What are some of the images or concepts of heaven portrayed in American society? in teenage popular culture? Are those images biblical or fantasies?
- In one word, what do you think heaven is like? In one sentence?
- Is eternal life about hope, living forever, living fully now, or something else?
- The image of heaven as peaceful, with lions lying down with lambs—what does that image mean to you? Is that an image of an afterlife heaven or heavenliness on earth?
- Other than lions and lambs, what things do you imagine are important parts of heaven? Why?

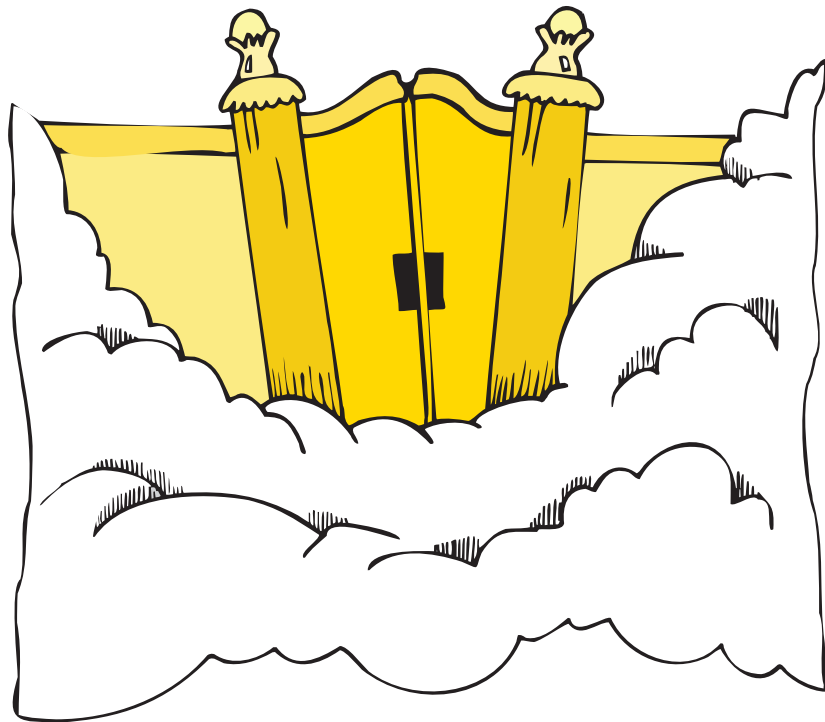
## Session 3

- What are some of the images or concepts of hell portrayed in American society? in teenage popular culture? Are those images biblical or fantasies?
- In one word, what do you think hell is like? In one sentence?
- Some people think God is too “nice” to send anyone to hell, others think hell is just an idea to motivate us to behave better, and still others are scared of a real place of punishment. Have you ever felt like any of those? What made you feel that way? Which do you think is most consistent with Scripture?
- Some people think about hell as total separation from God. What would that be like?

## Session 4

- Is there any formula for getting into heaven? If so, what is it?
- How would you feel if you found out that more or different people are in heaven than you expected? fewer than you expected?
- What is *grace*, and what does it have to do with getting into heaven? What is Reformed theology's understanding of grace?
- What will heaven be like if people have to earn their way there? if God's grace is the only way there?















Peace

HAPPINESS

Peace

HAPPINESS

PEACE

HAPPINESS

Love

Friendship

LOVE

Friendship

Love

Friendship







**Forever**

FOREVER

Forever

GRACE

Grace

**Grace**

Life

**LIFE**

Life

pain

**Pain**

**PAIN**





**Death**

**DEATH**

**Death**

**SUFFERING**

*Suffering*

*Anger*

*Anger*

*Anger*

*Alone*

**Alone**

**ALONE**



## SESSION 1 FAITH STATEMENT

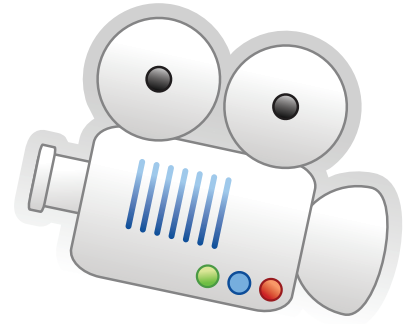
### Q. 1. What is your only comfort, in life and in death?

That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of his own blood has fully paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil; that he protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit his purpose for my salvation. Therefore, by God’s Holy Spirit, God also assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for God.

—*Heidelberg Catechism* (4.001)



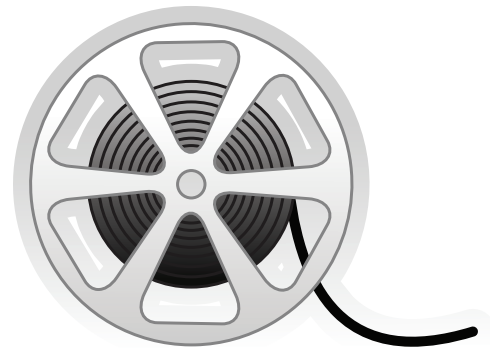




## FILM QUESTIONS

Reflection Questions for *What Dreams May Come*:

- Is it more of a tragedy when a young person dies? Why or why not?
- Why do people worry about the last words they say to someone? Are they more important somehow?
- Do you think dead people can watch the living, for a while or forever? Can they interact with the living?
- Do you think dead people reflect back on their lives or just enjoy God?
- "Thought is real. Physical is the illusion." Is this a denial of the Christian tradition of resurrection, or is resurrection of the body something like what the film portrays?
- "Where is God in all this? He is up there, somewhere, shouting down that he loves us, wondering why we can't hear him." What do you think about this quote?
- Could heaven be heaven if your loved ones weren't there?
- When you die, will you be more happy to see people who died before you or more sad about losing people who are still living?
- If there is work in heaven, what kind would you want to do?
- "Everybody's hell is different. It's not all fire and pain. The real hell is your life gone wrong." What do you think about this quote?
- "You were expecting physical danger. . . . In hell there's real danger, of losing your mind." What do you think about this quote?
- Why in the film, and in many people's imaginations, is heaven something you create, and hell some other terror?
- Is there a way out of hell? Why or why not?





## SESSION 2 FAITH STATEMENT

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;  
he descended into hell;  
the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick\* and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the  
communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of  
the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

—Apostles' Creed

\* *quick* means "living"





## PLAYLIST: HEAVEN



For some personal devotional time, listen to a song and explore the reflection questions that come with it. If possible, find and read the song's lyrics while you listen.

### **"Stairway to Heaven," Led Zeppelin**

The "lady" in the first verse does not appreciate all her blessings, but we are told later that "there are two paths you can go by . . . There's still time to change the road you're on." What might "Stairway to Heaven" teach us about being aware of all the things that God gives us? How might that relate to heaven? Read Matthew 6:19–21. Can awareness of God's blessings and grace be a path, or stairway, to heaven? Why or why not? Choose a line from the song that seems important to the issue of heaven and either spend some time journaling on it or write a prayer that is based on it.

### **"Tears in Heaven," Eric Clapton**

Clapton wrote this song after his son died in a tragic accident. Notice that some lines are questions and others are hopeful. Do you have more questions, beliefs, or hopes about heaven? Do you think heaven will be a reunion for people who die at different times? If there is peace in heaven, why are our hearts broken here when we lose someone close? Read Psalm 30:5. Are there tears in heaven, or just joy? Take a line from the song that seems important to the issue of heaven and either spend some time journaling on it or write a prayer that is based on it.

### **"Knockin' on Heaven's Door," Guns n' Roses, or any of the many cover versions**

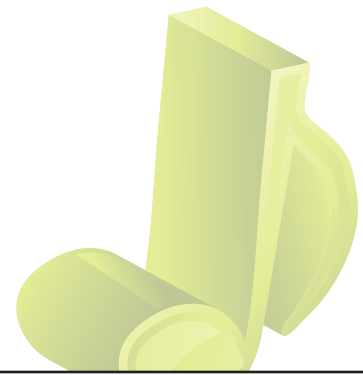
Bob Dylan wrote this song for a film—a scene in which a country deputy dies—but many artists have used it for more personal tributes. What are the "badge" and "guns" that you will not be able to use when you die? Can we knock on heaven's door while on the earth, or only when we die? Read Matthew 7:7–11. What does this Scripture say about "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" and about heaven itself? Take a line from the song that seems important to the issue of heaven and either spend some time journaling on it or write a prayer that is based on it.

### **"Big House," Audio Adrenaline**

If heaven is God's home, then the Bible is God's invitation to move in! Read John 14:2. What does this Scripture say about "Big House"? Other than big rooms, big tables of food, big yards for football, what do you imagine God's home to be like? What does Audio Adrenaline mean by saying God's house has "rooms for everyone"? Take a line from the song that seems important to the issue of heaven and either spend some time journaling on it or write a prayer that is based on it.



## PLAYLIST: HEAVEN



### **“Lose My Soul,” tobyMac**

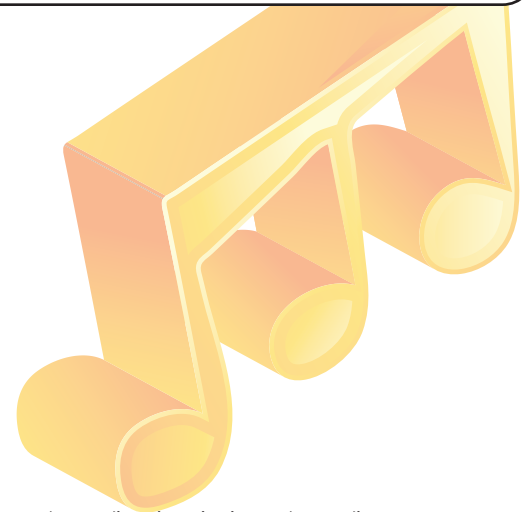
TobyMac asks for help to save his soul. Can the temptations of this world pull us away from heaven? TobyMac calls heaven an “after party.” How might heaven be like a party? Read Revelation 21:22–25. What does it mean to live in “light of eternity”? Take a line from the song that seems important to the issue of heaven and either spend some time journaling on it or write a prayer that is based on it.

### **“Dare You to Move,” Switchfoot**

Some people think “Dare You to Move” is only about overcoming depression. Where do you see a message about heaven? The loudest, most exciting part of the song is when the singer yells, “Salvation is here!” When do we feel salvation in life? Read Matthew 6:14. What does it mean to you that every day is a chance to embrace forgiveness? How is that a “dare”? Take a line from the song that seems important to the issue of heaven and either spend some time journaling on it or write a prayer that is based on it.

### **“Heaven,” Los Lonely Boys**

The Spanish bridge of the song can be translated as “You that’s in a higher place, send me down a blessing.”<sup>1</sup> Does that mean that “Heaven” is more about heaven on earth, or eternal glory in the afterlife? What does “Heaven” say about life on earth? about life after death? about God and God’s grace? Read Psalm 23. Compare the psalm and the song. Do they have similar or different senses of God’s comfort in life or death? of God’s grace? Take a line from the song that seems important to the issue of heaven and either spend some time journaling on it or write a prayer that is based on it.



1. Facebook Lyrics Domain, Los Lonely Boys, “Heaven,” [apps.facebook.com/lyricsdomain/artist/los\\_lonely\\_boys/song/heaven](https://apps.facebook.com/lyricsdomain/artist/los_lonely_boys/song/heaven).





# WORDLE WORKSHEET

## Step 1:

In the box below, write words or phrases that describe your thoughts, beliefs, and description of heaven.

## Step 2:

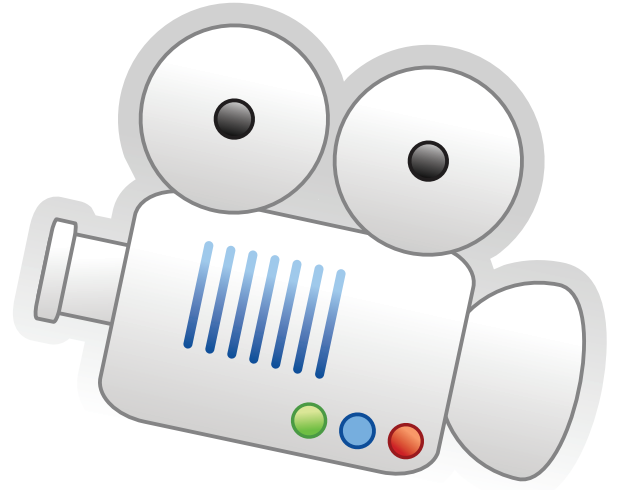
Go to [wordle.net](http://wordle.net) to create a “word cloud” that expresses your understanding of heaven.

- The greater the frequency of a word, the larger it will be on the cloud, so try typing the most important words of your creed multiple times.
- Try omitting common words such as *and* or *I*.
- It is easy to play with different colors, fonts, and styles and to randomize your word cloud.

## Step 3:

Reflect on the following questions:

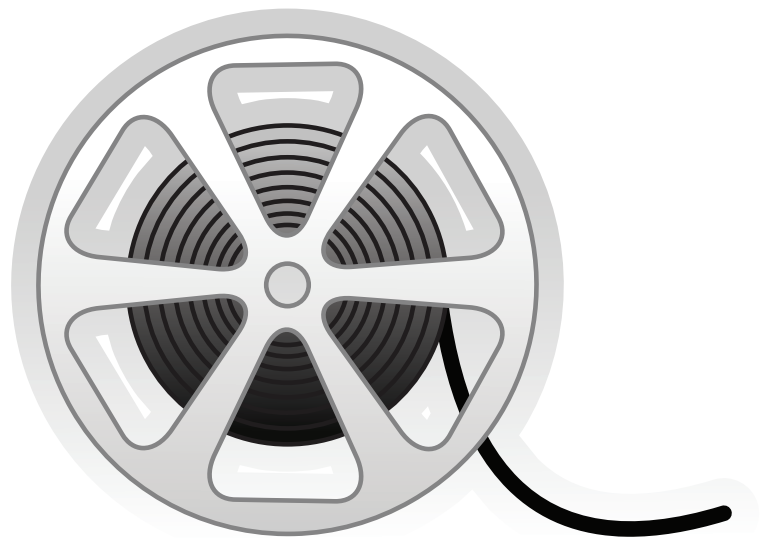
- Which words in your word cloud should be biggest? Why?
- How important is heaven compared to your other beliefs?
- How well does your word cloud represent your faith?
- Would your parents’ or caregivers’ word clouds emphasize different words or similar words?



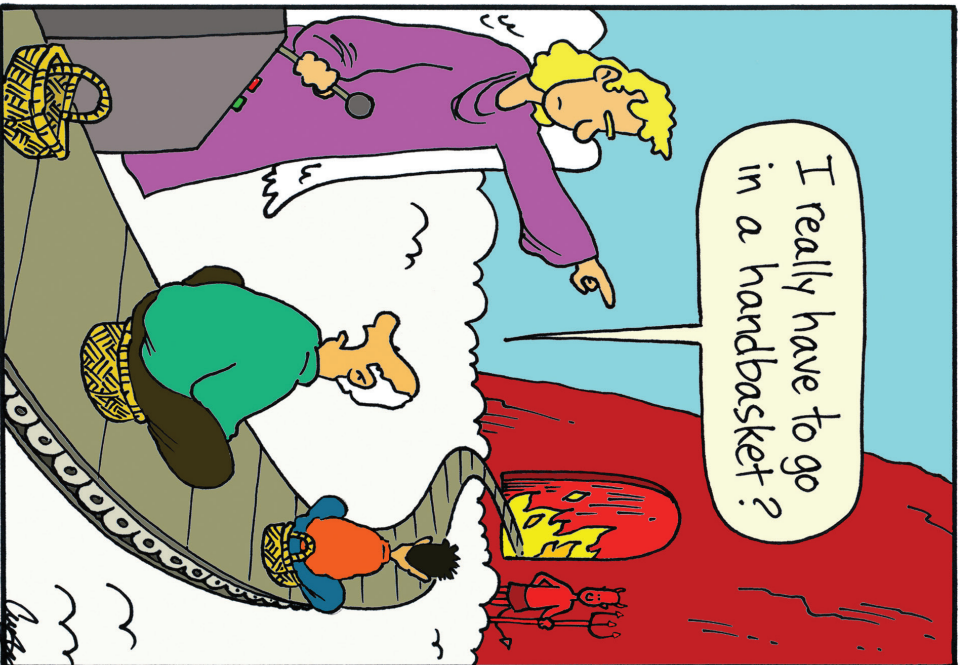
## FILM QUESTIONS

Reflection Questions for *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*:

- Is this a good or truthful portrayal of the afterlife?
- Do you think we will have emotions such as anger and sadness in heaven?
- Do you think we will continue to learn things in heaven?
- Will we have a chance to forgive people and to be forgiven?
- In one word, what do you think heaven is like? In one sentence?



# HELL CARTOONS



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## TEEN THOUGHTS ON HELL.

"hmm . . . I believe that I go to be judged by our God and God decides if I go to heaven. I don't think that hell is a place because God loves us all too much to put us there"

—Stephany,\* age 15

"Hard to say. We imagine it is a very horrible place filled with bad people and wicked sinners and maybe even demons with tentacles for legs and claws for hands and a Chihuahua for a head and maybe a hippo body haha. OR MAYBE!!!!!! its just a bluff so that people won't commit many more sins than normal! I mean it would make sense! Make a very demonic and scary place and ensure people that when you do bad things you end up here! But REALLY there is no such place, God just wanted people to be good to each other from the beginning :]]]]]]]"

— Marcus,\* age 15

\*Names have been changed to protect privacy.





## SESSION 3 FAITH STATEMENT

The same Jesus Christ is the judge of all people. His judgment discloses the ultimate seriousness of life and gives promise of God's final victory over the power of sin and death. To receive life from the risen Lord is to have life eternal; to refuse life from him is to choose the death which is separation from God. All who put their trust in Christ face divine judgment without fear, for the judge is their redeemer.

— *Confession of 1967 (9.11)*,  
inclusive language version





# HELL IN THE BIBLE

**What does this verse teach us about hell?**

## The Word *Hell*

Matthew 5:22	Mark 9:43
Matthew 5:29	Mark 9:45
Matthew 5:30	Mark 9:47
Matthew 10:28	Luke 12:5
Matthew 18:9	James 3:6
Matthew 23:15	2 Peter 2:4
Matthew 23:33	

## Some Other Images of Hell

Numbers 16:33	Luke 10:15
Job 11:8	Luke 16:23
Psalms 30:3	1 Peter 3:19
Matthew 11:23	Revelation 1:18
Matthew 16:18	





















# SALVATION TOWER STATEMENTS



Floss your teeth daily

Clean your room

Help feed the poor

Do your homework

Respect your sexuality

Do not covet your friend's car

Keep curfew

Write thank-you notes

Never cheat at school

Volunteer for a charity

Tell your parents the truth

Try not to curse

Go to church

Pray at least once a day

Apologize when you mess up

Do not visit vulgar Web sites

Smile at strangers

Listen to Christian music

Do not be vain

Do not share secrets



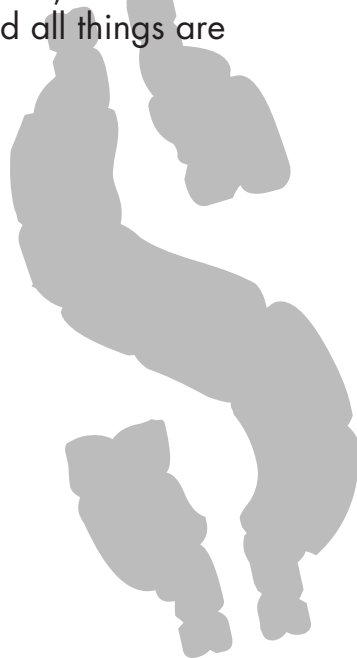


# WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

## Matthew 19:16–26

Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and mother; also, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, “Then who can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”



## Instructions:

1. Have one person in your small group read this passage aloud.
2. Circle the words or phrases that stand out to you.
3. Explore the following questions together:
  - Does Jesus mean this literally, that rich people are very unlikely to go to heaven?
  - If Jesus meant this, why does God pick on rich people?
  - If Jesus did not mean this, what else might he have been getting at?
  - If Jesus meant that people who ignore justice issues (such as helping the homeless) are less likely to get into heaven, why should it be harder for a rich person?
  - Who has a harder time getting into heaven: a rich person who donates some money to charity for tax purposes or a poor person who doesn't do anything to help his or her neighbor?
4. Have another person in your small group read the passage again.
5. Underline the words or phrases that convince you most what Jesus means.
6. Explore the following questions together:
  - Is it wrong to be rich? Why or why not?
  - If Jesus wasn't talking about the afterlife, what else might he be telling the young, rich man?
  - If we had world peace, as Jesus seems to mean sometimes when he uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven,” would there be as many rich people as we have now, alongside as many poor people as we have now?



## SESSION 4 FAITH STATEMENT

Now it is most certain that all of us are by nature sinners and godless, and before God's judgment-seat are convicted of godlessness and are guilty of death, but that, solely by the grace of Christ and not from any merit of ours or consideration for us, we are justified, that is, absolved from sin and death by God the Judge. For what is clearer than what Paul said: "Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23f).

— *Second Helvetic Confession (5.107)*







# STORIES OF SIN

## Story 1

My parents are really lame. I mean, they are always bugging me, checking up on me. "Have you done your homework? Put away your iPod for dinner. Where are you going tonight?" Jeez, why can't they just leave me alone! I mean, it's my life. I'm passing in my grades. I'm not doing anything to get arrested. Well . . . I've never been arrested, at least. They act like I'm a felon. I just don't get it.

Last night, check this out, they were all on my case about, about, oh, I don't know. They wanted me to clean my room or something. I was busy, so I told them to hang on. And a little later they asked again, but I was on the phone with a friend. I called her about a school project. But, you know, eventually we were talking about soccer practice. And, of course, that's when they walk in, and they got so upset! One just yelled my name. The other threatened to ground me. So am I gonna be nice back to them? No way!

They've been on my case for years now, so how am I expected to treat them? I don't think I'm being unfair; I just don't put up with their junk. Probably they would say they're looking out for me. They love me, or something like that. Forget that. It's just their way to try to control me. So, I'm fighting back.

## Story 2

OK, so I have this friend, and he's been a friend since, well, forever. We grew up together, best friends. He taught me a lot about myself. But lately, well, lately he's been kind of a dork.

Here I am, last week at lunch, sitting with my friends, my other friends, my, you know, cooler friends. And my old buddy comes up, wanting to sit down. I sort of hesitate, because I know that this table, they don't really want to hang out with him. But I let him sit down. And immediately, I mean immediately, he says something totally nerdy. So I kind of make fun of him, nothing mean, just a little burn. Everybody laughs; we keep eating lunch. OK, right? Well, a few minutes later, he tries to be funny, tells a stupid joke I've heard, like, a hundred times. So I pick on him again. And he just up and leaves! Like he's gonna cry!

Listen, I'm no jerk, but I have a reputation. Some people are cool; some aren't. That's not my fault.

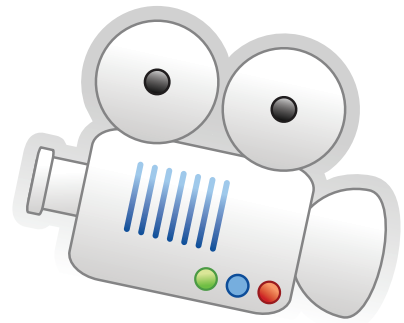
## Story 3

I'm not the kind of person who parties every night. I don't even get invited to all the parties. But, yeah, every once in a while, I like to go out with friends, have a little fun, get a little crazy . . . if you know what I mean :)

Friday, I had a little too much fun. I don't want to talk about the details; I don't remember all the details. It, uh, well, it's probably something I shouldn't talk about at church anyway. It's not like I'm the biggest sinner in the world. I'll bet half of you have done worse!

But . . . it still makes me feel, well, awkward. No, awkward isn't enough. I feel like, like, well, you know. It's like I'm embarrassed to be me, like I keep waiting to be punished.

You know what's the worst part? Not how I feel about last Friday. No, the worst part is that I'll probably do it again. I'll try to be good, whatever that is. But let's face it, I'm a teenager, kids party, stuff happens. I wish it didn't have to, but what can I do?



## FILM QUESTIONS

Reflection Questions for *The Green Mile*:

- How did the Wild Bill character (Sam Rockwell) make you feel?
- What one word describes him best?
- How did the John Coffey character (Michael Clarke Duncan) make you feel?
- Of whom in the Bible does he remind you?
- In that strange, evil-inhaling scene, what did John do to Wild Bill?
- How is that similar to or different from how Christ forgives us?
- If Wild Bill had lived longer, would he have become a better person? That is, could forgiveness have changed him?
- Can forgiveness change you? How?
- Imagine this is a true story—would Wild Bill go to hell, or would forgiveness have saved him?
- How do sin and forgiveness affect your eternal salvation?

*Note to Parents or Caregivers:* *The Green Mile* includes sensitive images and references. Although the message is hopeful and an allegory of the Christian story, a few scenes are absolutely not appropriate for younger children.

