



Based on a true story

For Love's Sake

No family is beyond hope.

Special Appearance by Bruce Marchiano



S T U D Y G U I D E

Study Guide to Accompany the DVD *For Love's Sake*

For Love's Sake aims to explore in an honest and open way themes of death, suicide, mental health, and broken homes within a Christian context. It presents real, 'broken' people trying to come to terms with a double tragedy—death within their family and mental breakdown.

It explores the issues of different beliefs within an extended family. It also deals with what happens to children when people, who hold beliefs contrary to those that they've been taught, take care of them.

This study guide contains six sessions, each with a reading from the book of Psalms, a section of the movie to watch, and some questions for leading a group discussion. You will notice the readings are less topical and more thematic in nature. We hope these readings from the Psalms will serve as a reminder that feelings of both despair and deliverance are valid in our walk with God. We also hope they will provide an additional connection to the emotions of the characters in *For Love's Sake*. You don't have to use all the questions. You can use just a few or you can use this guide as a springboard to develop your own questions and discussion topics. We hope it encourages open discussion about issues that are rarely spoken about.

The more honest you are in discussion, the more value you will find in these studies.

The logo for 'For Love's Sake' features the text 'For Love's Sake' in a bold, brown, serif font. The text is centered within a light-colored rectangular area that contains several overlapping, semi-transparent circles in shades of orange, yellow, and brown, creating a decorative background for the title.

For Love's Sake

SESSION 01

Truth and Honesty

Watch from the start of the movie until the boys travel to the National Children's Home (chapters 1-4).

Reading – Psalm 31

The Walkers are described as a Christian family, but it appears, even before tragedy, that their home life is somewhat dysfunctional. The filmmaker regards this as an honest presentation of Christian parents who are born again yet also broken. Do you agree? Watch how the characters in the movie struggle with honesty and truth and how facts are hidden to protect the boys. Do you think the approach of the characters was the best response under the circumstances?

Questions about the film

- Is Mary a Christian?
- What do you make of Mary's state of mind at the beginning of this story?
- What does Peter Walker do that shows good parenting? What are things he could have changed to make him a better parent? Should Peter have done more to explain the gospel to James?
- Does James become a Christian as a result of his prayer?
- What good did Peter's faith do for him and his family?

Questions for your study group

- What does the ideal Christian look like?
- Do you think people have a Christian facade at church?
- Are you able to be yourself at church?
- How honest should people be with one other about their struggles?
- Is telling a partial truth the same as lying?
- Should children be told the whole truth about adult problems?
- What are ways that Christians can deal with depression and help others who are struggling with it?
- What are good and helpful ways for society to deal with grief and bereavement?
- How can family and church support one another during tragedy?

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SESSION 02

Influences

Watch the section from the National Children's Home until the children are sent home (chapters 5-6).

Reading – Psalm 13

Out of necessity, Paul and James are taken out of the family home and placed into the local authority care system. There, they are exposed to new ideas and new ways of living. Mary and Nana Walker have opposing views on where it would be best for the children to live. Nana says, “Mary attempted suicide. I hope you think of that, too, when you consider her beliefs.”

Questions about the film

- What do you think would be best for the children?
- Where would you send the children? With Mary, to the children's home, with Nana and Grandad or somewhere else?
- Do you think Mary was right to ask for her children back?
- At Carol's funeral Paul says, “Everyone knows suicides don't go to heaven.” How would you respond to Paul's statement?
- How would you discipline a child who steals?
- Would you allow your child to be friends with someone like Martin?

Questions for your study group

- Who has an influence over your children?
- How much control should we place upon our children's social life and friends?
- If you have family members who aren't Christians, how should you treat them? Would you let non-Christian relatives care for your children if you weren't capable? Where would you draw the line? Never? Babysitting? Day trips? Holidays? Short term? Long term?
- What causes people to attempt suicide?
- How can you support people who attempt or are affected by suicide?



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SESSION 03

Despair

Watch from the children arriving back home until they are sent to their grandparents' (chapters 7-8).

Reading – Psalm 107:1-32

Mary tries to mend her situation at home. She finds help from a friend, but ultimately, she fails in a big way. Her mental breakdown is great. The children are emotionally hurt, and they move to their grandparents' home.

Questions about the film

- How much is Mary to blame for her situation?
- Why does Mary hide in the bathroom? Is she wrong to do so?
- Why do you think the Walker family is not attending church?
- Would you consider the witness of Joyce and Heather Seville in the Walkers' lives as appropriate and clear?
- Why does James run away?
- How would you guide James and Paul at this difficult time?

Questions for your study group

- What is mental illness? How should the church respond to it?
- How can we show God's love to people with mental illness?
- Where do you put your trust when problems come?
- Does it matter how we behave when Grace covers our sin?
- How can we cope with grief?
- How can we love one another when we are at our worst, when we are most tired, vulnerable, and hurting?

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SESSION 04

Grace and Faith

Watch from the children arriving at their grandparents' home until they leave (chapters 8-10).

Reading – Psalm 22

The scars of the tragedy continue to affect Paul and James' behavior. James has to come to terms with the truth about his mother, while both his brother and his grandparents challenge his thoughts about God.

Questions about the film

- Where is God in the boys' situation?
- Why do the boys fight? How would you control them?
- James believes his Dad is in heaven, but he has no answer when his grandparents say he's just dead and buried. Why?
- James goes on to say, "There is no God." Why? Has he lost all hope?
- Why do the grandparents fail?

Questions for your study group

- How do we know if a loved one is in heaven?
- Is atheism a religion? Is Christianity a religion?
- Are atheists evil? Are Christians good?
- How sure are you about what you believe?
- Have you ever doubted your own salvation?
- Have you ever doubted whether God is real?
- What do you find helpful in times of doubt?
- How can we help one another when having faith is tough?

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SESSION 05

All Things Work Together

Watch from the children being sent to an assessment center up to the beginning of the tribunal (chapters 10-11).

Reading – Psalm 121

James and Paul learn to love each other. Mary finds the strength to fight for her children. Help is provided in their struggle by the psychiatrist, Dr. Lloyd, and the lawyer, Christina Grace. God works in the Walkers' lives.

Questions about the film

- Before we know the end, how easy is it to have confidence that all things will work out for good?
- How important to the final conclusion of the movie is the focus upon family working together?
- Do you think the care workers are right to stop Mary from seeing her children?
- Do you believe Mary is better? Why?
- Where does Mary find her strength?
- How important was Dr. Lloyd in Mary's recovery?
- How important was Christina Grace in fighting for the care of Mary's children?

Questions for your study group

- How can we encourage one another to trust in God?
- Do you believe that God uses bad things in our lives to make us better people?
- Have you seen examples of this in your own life?
- Do we love ourselves as we should?
- Do we love our families as we should?
- Do we love each other as we should?
- How does God renew our strength?
- What kind of strength does God give us?



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SESSION 06

Chance and Purpose

Watch from the beginning of the tribunal to the end of the movie (chapters 12 – end credits).

Reading – Psalm 116

Mary fights for her children, and through God’s providence the children return home. The boys place their trust in Jesus to help them. God demonstrates His power and purpose, but do we acknowledge it as such?

Questions about the film

- Does this film present serendipity (or coincidence) or the power of God?
- James says that when he prayed about being a Christian, he didn’t really understand it, but now he thinks he does. What do you think this means?
- Is James a Christian at the end of the movie?
- When do you think James became a Christian? Does it matter?
- What evidence is there of Christ working in James’ life through the film?
- Why do you think Paul prays?
- In what ways do you see Mary as a good parent? Where does she need to grow as a parent?

Questions for your study group

- Do you really believe that prayer is powerful?
- Does it matter how often we pray or how much?
- Do you pray well?
- In what ways does God answer our prayers?
- How can we help our families share a closer walk with God?
- Where is the evidence of our faith in God?
- Where is the evidence of God working in our lives?
- If we can’t feel or see any evidence of God, should we still have faith?
- What are the marks of a believer?
- How does a person become a Christian?



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