Experience the Adventure, Discover the Magic!

Everyone's Hero

Discussion Guide
About the Film

In *Everyone’s Hero*, a young boy named Irving finds himself at an extraordinary crossroad. He has a chance to be a hero and to make a difference against incredible odds. Or, he can play it safe. Teaming up with a talking baseball, he courageously sets out on a daring, and often hilarious, cross-country quest. In the process, he restores his family’s honor, befriends the world’s biggest sports superstar, and reveals the hero in himself.

Featured in the film are the voices of Rob Reiner, Raven-Symoné, Brian Dennehy, William H. Macy, Mandy Patinkin, Dana Reeve, Robert Wagner, Richard Kind, Joe Torre, Jake T. Austin and Whoopi Goldberg. *Everyone’s Hero* was the dream and vision of Christopher Reeve. This heartwarming animated feature was directed by Christopher Reeve, Daniel St. Pierre and Colin Brady. Screenplay by Robert Kurtz and Jeff Hand. Based on a story by Howard Jonas.

About the Discussion Guide

*Everyone’s Hero* is a film for children and adults. It provides opportunities to discuss subjects that impact everyone. How God uses imperfect people for His purpose, why we shouldn’t give up on our dreams, and the importance of believing in our God-given abilities, are all themes portrayed in the film, and why we have created this Discussion Guide. With this booklet, you or any other leader can utilize the messages in *Everyone’s Hero* as a group discussion tool.

The lessons are supplemented with movie clips you’ve either received or downloaded online. These clips were specifically selected to help you set the tone and furnish the context for your discussion or Bible study. There are also suggested scriptures for your group to study in depth, and we’ve provided several discussion provoking questions based on the different scenes. This guide is an easy-to-use way to start meaningful discussions in your group, and it works even if your members haven’t seen the film. If the movie is currently in theaters or available for rent or purchase, it is recommended that you announce your intentions of using the film clips ahead of time. This will allow your members the opportunity to view the film themselves (in theaters, rent or purchase the DVD) if they so desire.
NOTE: Since some of your group members have likely not seen the film, it is a good idea to provide them with the context of the clip before watching it. This can be found in the italicized text that precedes the questions and scripture references for that particular clip.

THERE ARE NO FOUL BALLS

Clip: Nobody Wants Me
Screwie is a talking baseball that only Irving can hear. Irving finds Screwie in a sandlot by the baseball field after a really bad day of playing ball with the neighborhood kids. In this scene, Screwie tells about his past in baseball and how he ended up as a foul ball that no one cared to look for.

Questions:

After Screwie gets a good scrub in the tub, he comes clean about his past the next day, remembering his “glory days” in baseball. What does Screwie tell Irving is the reason he ended up alone and forgotten in the sandlot?

Being a neglected foul ball has affected the way Screwie looks at the entire game. What does he say that shows he is resentful and has a bad attitude? If someone were to tell Screwie that he would be in baseball again someday, do you think he would believe them? Why or why not?

Discussions:

In an effort to help you reinforce the themes and messages of Everyone’s Hero, we have chosen clips from the film that you can show to your group. These clips can be downloaded online at www.foxfaith.com or shown through a specially made DVD that you can request at the same website. These DVD clips are followed up with questions and scripture found in the Discussion Guide. The questions should draw your group members into a conversation about what they have just seen. It is not necessary to tackle these topics in a row, or all in one session. If you would prefer just to cover one or two, feel free. It is all up to you.

First, introduce the discussion by saying something like this: “We’re going to talk about some topics from the film Everyone’s Hero. These include; how God uses imperfect people for His purpose, why we shouldn’t give up on our dreams, and the importance of believing in our God-given abilities. We have some scenes from the movie that we are going to look at and then analyze to see what we can learn from them.”

Next, give a brief overview of the film. Then, play the clip you have selected. Once the clip plays, open the floor for discussion by using the questions and scriptures that are provided, or use some of your own. To finish, you can close each session by giving
Lesson To Learn:
Irving has been rejected by his teammates after he strikes out in the neighborhood ballgame. They throw words at him like “you stink” and “loser.” So, after the game, he’s feeling angry and sad. But, then he discovers an old baseball in the sandlot near the ball field. Irving is surprised when he finds out that Screwie, the baseball, can talk.

Screwie makes some unkind observations about Irving’s baseball skills, and it becomes obvious that Screwie is bitter about something. It turns out, that at one time, he was in baseball with a bright future ahead of him. But, he fouls out of the ballpark and no one comes looking for him. For years, Screwie has lain in the sandlot underneath a rusty car, along with other castoff garbage. His thoughts have been focused on all he has missed and how he is of no use to anyone anymore. But, when Irving finds Screwie, he doesn’t look at Screwie as a foul ball, but as a special “new” ball.

Sometimes, we may feel like a “foul ball.” When we make a mistake or fail at something, and we focus on our problem, we can feel badly about ourselves. For instance, we may let our sports team down by making a mistake that causes the team to lose a big competition. Or, we may “strike out” on a test in school by getting a bad grade. It is easy to lose confidence in ourselves, or feel like we aren’t important, when we make mistakes.

Focusing on what we’ve done wrong, rather than what we do right, is typical of human nature. It is good for us to acknowledge our shortcomings, and work on our weaknesses, but, a problem begins when we constantly think about how we’ve failed. This kind of thinking makes us feel like we can’t do better next time or that we are worthless. This can make us feel like Screwie, who doesn’t believe he will ever do anything “great” again.

But the Bible tells us that we don’t have to be perfect in order to do great things. In the Bible, God uses imperfect people in very special ways. One example is Jonah. He ran away when the Lord asked him to go to Nineveh. But, God gave Jonah a second chance to “play ball” and do the right thing. As a result, Jonah’s preaching changed the lives of people in an entire city. Another instance of God using someone who had done some awful things in his past is Paul, but God used Paul to change history by spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Isn’t it amazing how ordinary people like the lowly shepherds, or people who messed up, like Jonah and Paul, can still be used for great things?

God says he made us in His image. He didn’t make “foul balls.” Even though we may have made some mistakes, we can still make “home runs” for Him. So, if you’re sitting on the sidelines of life, afraid to get back in the game, remember that God has big plans for you. He isn’t thinking about what you can’t do, but what you can do. Keep your heart and mind focused on your Father above and remember that, unlike Screwie in the sandlot, you haven’t been forgotten. God is always thinking about you.
NEVER STOP SWINGING

Clip: Don’t Swing?
Clip: Swing That Bat

Irving is the youngest kid in the neighborhood and only gets picked to be on the baseball team when no one else is available. The older kids are mean to him, but Irving is optimistic and is always encouraging his pals. In this scene, he is up to bat, but his team tells him not to swing at the ball because he “has no strike zone.” In the second clip, Irving’s dad helps him see why he shouldn’t give up.

Questions:

When Irving gets picked for the team, he’s enthusiastic and anxious to hit the ball. But he finds that his teammates want him to let the ball go by without ever swinging. Why does Irving want to keep swinging?

Will Irving ever get better at baseball if he’s never allowed to swing?

One thing Irving has learned from his dad is that he shouldn’t quit swinging.

And he’s watched enough games to know that even when a team loses, they keep right on practicing. What happens to Irving when he keeps on swinging when he is up to bat in the neighborhood game? After striking out, how does he handle his disappointment in not hitting the ball? Even though he’s discouraged, what should Irving do if he wants to be a good baseball player?

Irving has a dream to be a great hitter like Babe Ruth. God has given each of us a dream—a special purpose. Is there something that you daydream about doing, but it seems almost impossible? What are some things that you dream about? Now, read Psalm 37:4. What does God promise us in this verse?

To accomplish a goal, it takes faith. Read Hebrews 11:1 and Matthew 17:20. Can you explain what it means to have faith, based on these scriptures? How do these verses apply to achieving your dream? Or Irving’s dream?

The Bible talks about many people who had a lot of faith. One is the Canaanite woman who asked Jesus to help her. Read Matthew 15:21-28. How many times did the woman ask Jesus to heal her daughter?

Why did she keep on trying even when the disciples wanted to send her away? What does this tell you about her faith?

All things are possible when our faith and trust is planted firmly in Jesus Christ. Read Matthew 7:24-27. In this story, whom does the rock represent? After the storm, which house is still standing and why?

Lesson To Learn:
Irving is a 10 year-old with a dream in his heart. He imagines that someday he will hit the ball just like Babe Ruth. Irving has faith in his dream, thanks to his dad who encourages him. From his dad’s perspective, there’s only one way for Irving to achieve his goal, and it is to keep trying. We have a father in heaven that loves us even more than Irving’s father loved him. We can trust that the Lord wants to bless us and that He has a unique purpose for us to accomplish. For Irving, his dream is to be a great hitter someday. For you, your dream may be to become a great writer, or a political leader, or an astronaut who will make the next big discovery in outer space.

Whatever our dream may be, the path to achieving it isn’t always easy, especially if friends or family members are telling us not to swing, reminding us that our goal is too big to even consider. They may tell us that it is better not to even try. But, instead of doing nothing, keep the faith! There are many examples in the Bible where faith has been the key to victory. One is the woman who desperately wanted Jesus to heal her daughter. She believed He could and she persistently pleaded for Jesus’ help until He did.

Our faith should be in God and what He can do in our lives, not in our own power or a belief in a mystical religion or a lucky charm. We need to be like the wise man in the parable who built his foundation on the rock—Jesus Christ. When we put our faith in Him, we can achieve far more than we can even imagine.

God knows the skills and abilities that He has given each of us. He has made us just the way we are and he has equipped us to carry out His purpose for our lives. Always remember that God has a wonderful reason for giving you the big dream in your heart. So, the next time someone tells you to give up or to do nothing, don’t listen. Just keep on swinging!

GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

Clip: You Can Do It

After a long and challenging journey to find Babe Ruth and return his bat, Irving senses failure. He finds himself at the mercy of the devious baseball team owner, Napoleon Cross, who
leaves Irving locked in the rival team’s private viewing room above the stadium. Trapped and discouraged, Irving finally decides to give up. But, Screwie is there to remind him of his good points, and encourage him to “keep on swinging”.

**Questions:**

1. Irving is usually a positive, determined boy. But, trapped in the room high above the stadium, he is ready to “lay the bat down.” What does Screwie say that makes Irving remember that he’s a winner with an important purpose to accomplish?

2. Even though Irving and Screwie are small, they overcome a lot of difficulties on their adventure to return Babe Ruth’s bat. Even when the task seems too big and no one else believes in him, Screwie encourages Irving to “keep on swinging.” Have you ever been in a situation where you needed help or encouragement? Was someone there to encourage you?

3. Irving had a key task to perform, but he was very young. In the Bible, there’s a story about a young shepherd boy named David who had an important job to accomplish, too. Read 1 Samuel 17:17-21, 26 & 31-33. What did he want to do besides deliver lunch to his brothers? Who didn’t believe that David could face the giant, Goliath? What reason did King Saul give?

4. What proof does David have for King Saul that he is tough enough to fight the giant? Read 1 Samuel 17:34-35 for the answer. Although the king agrees to let David face Goliath, Saul wants him to do it his way. Read 1 Samuel 17:38-40 and describe King Saul’s war plan. Why was David’s method for fighting better, even though he wasn’t trained to be a soldier?

5. The Bible tells us that we have a friend who is always with us, even in tough situations. That friend is the Lord. Read Joshua 1:9, Psalm 46:1, and Psalm 121:1-2. What does God promise us in these verses? Who should we look to for help and encouragement when we are in a difficult situation? Talk about how these verses can help you when you are up against a “giant” of a problem.

**Lesson To Learn:**

Irving has been on a difficult journey to Chicago. He has been chased, rained on, hungry, and sleepless at times. Just when Irving thinks he will reach his goal to return the bat named Darlin’ to Babe Ruth, he ends up held against his will by the devious baseball team owner, Napoleon Cross. All of this has contributed to his discouragement. But, it’s Screwie who encourages Irving and reminds him of his true purpose—to save his dad’s job and clear his name of any wrongdoing.

Irving had forgotten the real reason he wanted to give Darlin’ back to Babe Ruth until Screwie helps him remember the “big picture.” Like Irving, it’s important for us to stay focused on what is important in life and where we’re heading and why. Sometimes we can get discouraged and weary along the way and feel like quitting. It’s moments like these that can challenge us and make us forget our ultimate goal—to be the person that God wants us to be.

That’s why it’s important to have friends or family who will encourage us and remind us of our strengths and abilities. That someone may be a teacher who mentors us, or a parent who will listen, or even someone our own age who sees our good qualities. With God, we can overcome any problem, no matter how big it is— or how small we feel in comparison. Just like Irving, David was young, but he was also very determined. When his brothers, other soldiers, and even the king of Israel told him that he couldn’t complete the task he set out to do, it must have been tempting for him to just give up. But, David draws his strength and encouragement from God. Through his faith in God, he doesn’t back down. He wins the battle with Goliath and the victory for Israel. David truly wins a “home run” for his team.

The best friend and encourager you will ever have is Jesus Christ. No matter what challenge you face, He wants you to do the right thing everyday and to grow up to accomplish the purpose God has specifically given you. Remember, He will help you do it, just like He did with David. The Bible says I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (NIV) So, when life throws you a curve ball, don’t give up. Remember, with God on your side, all things are possible!
In *Everyone’s Hero*, a young boy named Irving finds himself at an extraordinary crossroad. He has a chance to be a hero and to make a difference against incredible odds. Or, he can play it safe. Teaming up with a talking baseball, he courageously sets out on a daring, and often hilarious, cross-country quest. In the process, he restores his family’s honor, befriends the world’s biggest sports superstar, and reveals the hero in himself.

The Discussion Guide draws out the themes in the film such as how God uses imperfect people for His purpose, why we shouldn’t give up on our dreams, the importance of believing in our God-given abilities, and more. Each topic is complete with thought-provoking questions, related scriptures, and helpful lessons. To supplement the lessons, clips from the movie have been offered as a visual aid. These clips are available for download at www.foxfaith.com or may be shown through a specially made DVD that you can request at the same website. These clips and the guide, used in Sunday school classes, other small groups, or by parents, will provide you with an opportunity to initiate discussion.

For more information and additional Church Resource material, go to www.foxfaith.com.

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