



# It's A Wonderful Life Bible Study

Gethsemane Lutheran Church  
11/11/2020

Welcome

# Trivia

- 1) In what year was *It's a Wonderful Life* first released?
- 2) Who produced, financed, directed, and co-wrote the screenplay of *It's a Wonderful Life*?
- 3) What actor was first slated to play the male lead in *It's A Wonderful Life*?
- 4) What 3 female actresses turned down the female lead in *It's a Wonderful Life* before it was offered to Donna Reed?
- 5) *It's a Wonderful Life* was Jimmy Stewart's first film after returning from what significant event?

# Background

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- Based on the 1943 short story *The Greatest Gift*, by Phillip Van Doren Stern.
- Nominated for 5 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Actor, and Best Director.
- In 2006, the American Film Institute named this film as #1 on its list of most inspirational American films of all time.
- In 1974, a clerical error at the company who owned the rights to the film resulted in the copyright not renewing properly. As a result, television stations hungry for free programming began airing the film frequently during the Christmas season. As a result of the repeated exposure, the film came again to be popularly known and a perennial holiday favorite, enjoying a devoted following far exceeding the film's original popularity.





# Session 1: Character

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- When George Bailey is a boy, what is his ambition?
- And after he has graduated high school, what is his ambition?
  - *“I know what I’m gonna do tomorrow, and the next day, and the next year, and the year after that. I’m shakin’ the dust of this crummy little town off my feet and I’m gonna see the world. Italy, Greece, the Parthenon, the Colosseum. Then I’m comin’ back here to go to college and see what they know. And then I’m gonna build things. I’m gonna build airfields, I’m gonna build skyscrapers a hundred stories high, I’m gonna build bridges a mile long.”*

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## Session 1: Character

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- And how does George set about to achieve those goals?
- What does this say about the character of the young man?



# Session 1: Character

- Scene 1: Plans derailed



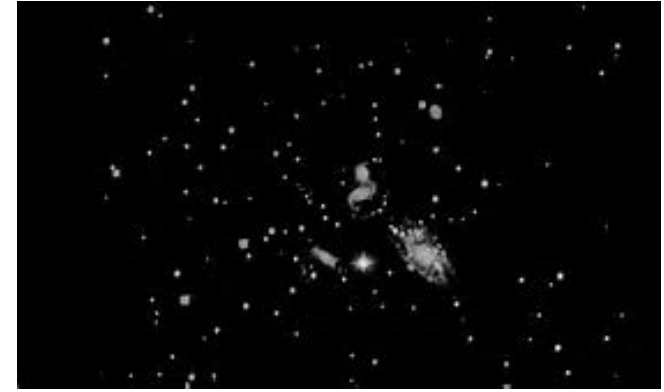
# Session 1: Character

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- What has occurred in this scene?
- And what does the Board want of George?
- Is this a “character” decision for George?
- What must he weigh?
  - His personal ambitions and goals
  - The family business—What becomes of the Building & Loan if George walks away?
  - The well-being of the town
    - Does the town need the Building & Loan?
    - What will be the effect on the townspeople if George walks away?



# Session 1: Character



- What does George decide?
  - Clarence: *I know, I know. He didn't go.*
  - Joseph: *That's right. Not only that, but he gave his school money to his brother Harry, and sent him to college. Harry became a football star—made second team All American.*
- What does George's decision say about his character?
- Did George need to give his school money (that he had just spent the last few years working diligently to save) to his brother Harry?
- Why did he do that? George was already giving up enough by choosing to stay. What does this “over and above” sacrifice say about George's character?

# Session 1: Character

- Scene 2: Honeymoon derailed

# Session 1: Character

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- What has occurred in this scene?
- In the beginning of this scene (while they were still in the cab), how did Mary react to what was happening?
- If we were in that position, would it be tempting to just keep driving?
- What motivated George to stop and confront the situation?
- What significant action did Mary take?
- What does this tell us about her character?
- What did George and Mary sacrifice, and why?
- Were George and Mary's actions inspiring to others?



# Session 1: Character

- What other scenes do you recall which gave us glimpses of George's character?
  - Jumping in the water to save Harry when they were children
  - His handling of the situation when Mr. Gower nearly accidentally poisoned someone (and never telling a soul about it)
  - Steering Sam Wainwright's company to purchase the factory in Bedford Falls, creating many steady jobs for the town
  - Giving money to Violet Bick to help her with her fresh start
  - Shielding Uncle Billy when the \$8,000 was missing
  - What else?

# Session 1: Character

- How do you define character?
- Merriam-Webster:
  - The main or essential nature, especially as strongly marked and serving to distinguish
  - Moral excellence and firmness (i.e. a person of sound character)

# Session 1: Character

- Character could be described as the quality of one's moral fiber. Persons of a deep character (while still flawed humans) live lives marked by integrity, honesty, and concern for others above themselves.
- But from where does true character come?
  - Where did George's character come from?
  - What does the scripture say?
    - *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate in hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup> And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:1-5*

# Session 1: Character

- What are tribulations? And how do they result in strengthening our character?
- Tribulations/Trouble → Perseverance → Proven Character → Hope
- Do trials/tribulations always result in perseverance (and ultimately character and then hope)?
  - *“...everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*  
Jesus—Matthew 7:24-27

# Session 1: Character

- In Jesus's analogy, both men endured trouble. The rain and winds beat on both houses alike. What caused one house to stand strong while the other fell with a great crash?
- The foundation! One house "had its foundation on the rock", while the other house was built on sand.
- What is the foundation, according to Jesus?
  - Hearing these words of mine and putting them into practice
- Because the house was built on the solid rock, it was able to persevere when the winds and rain were beating against it.



# Session 1: Character

- Tribulations/Trouble → Perseverance → Proven Character → Hope
- Trees are strengthened by the wind...if their root system (i.e. foundation) is strong enough. Similarly, when our foundation is built on the solid rock of Christ, our perseverance serves to deepen our character.
- But Paul tells us that this character ultimately manifests in hope. Hope in what?
  - *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we celebrate in **hope of the glory of God.** <sup>3</sup> And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; <sup>4</sup> and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; <sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:1-5*

# Session 1: Character

- Hope that God will deliver from trouble. Hope that He will deliver us from sin, death, and the pain of this world. Hope that He will be glorified through it all and above all.
- And this hope will not disappoint. We've read the end of the book. We know how this story ends. Christ will return and set all things right. And the task before us is to remain anchored on the rock of Christ, that we may persevere with and for Him, for His ultimate glory.

# Closing Thoughts/Comments

