

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SARAH DREW SEAN ASTIN PATRICIA HEATON AND TRACE ADKINS

MOMS' NIGHT OUT

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?



MOMS' NIGHT OUT 2014

CREW OVERVIEW

Andrew Erwin (Director)

Jon Erwin (Director; Writer: screenplay)

Andrea Gyertson Nasfell (Writer: screenplay)

CAST OVERVIEW

Sarah Drew (Allyson Field)	Robert Amaya (Marco)
Sean Astin (Sean Field)	Kevin Downes (Kevin)
Patricia Heaton (Sondra)	David Hunt (Cabbie)
Trace Adkins (Bones)	Alex Kendrick (Pastor Ray)
Andrea Logan White (Izzy)	Sammi Hanratty (Zoe)
Abbie Cobb (Bridget)	Harry Shum Jr. (Joey)

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USING THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Intended for use after viewing the film, this study guide provides catalysts for biblically based discussion of various themes found in *Moms' Night Out*. The guide features three themes from the movie and is structured in such a way that groups can choose to discuss the entire guide at once or can focus on one or two themes at a time.

FILM OVERVIEW/NOTE TO GROUP

Set against the backdrop of greater Birmingham, Alabama, the family comedy *Moms' Night Out* tells the story of Allyson Field (played by Sarah Drew), a stay-at-home mom overwhelmed by the constant, demanding responsibilities of motherhood. Despite having a devoted husband (Sean, played by Sean Astin); three amazing children and a lovely home, Allyson is unhappy – and guilt-ridden for it. To change things up, she and her friends take a much-needed moms' night out. But, when everything goes incredibly (and hilariously) wrong, Allyson realizes that life and parenting are beautifully messy, that it is possible to find joy amid the chaos and that she is exactly where God wants her to be.

The film opens at dawn on Mother's Day. Allyson is awake, hoping in vain that her creative juices will flow as the aspiring mommy blogger searches for pearls of wisdom to share with her four – make that three – followers. The words are stuck, though, and she is further

distracted by her obsessive-compulsive drive to clean the house. When Sean calls from the airport, Allyson is neck-deep in her kids' chaos and mess, and she promptly voids any celebration of Mother's Day. After an exhausting morning and stressful church service (due to an incident involving her youngest and a toilet seat), Allyson takes solace in her closet – along with a bag of chocolates – too spent to function. There, Sean finds his bedraggled, tearful wife, who falls asleep in his arms.

At Sean's suggestion that Allyson should do something for herself, she plans a moms' night out with her pals Sondra (Patricia Heaton) and Izzy (Andrea Logan White). Sondra, wife of Pastor Ray (Alex Kendrick) and mother to a feisty teen, Zoe (Sammi Hanratty), jumps at the chance for a rare evening out. Izzy, busy with young twins and a comically fearful and timid husband, Marco (Robert Amaya), needs a break from the norm, too. It's settled: during the moms' night out, the husbands – plus Sean's immature childhood friend and video game devotee, Kevin (Kevin Downes) – will watch all the kids and make sure things run smoothly on the home front.



What could possibly go wrong?

Everything, and almost immediately. After a confrontation with a restaurant hostess from another world dashes the ladies' hopes of fine dining, Allyson spontaneously tries to salvage the evening with "unplugging" (confiscating all cellphones) and bowling. When Sean's half-sister Bridget (Abbie Cobb) finds out her baby is with some unsavory characters this unanticipated turn of events sends the women on a wild goose chase that includes an eccentric Cabbie (David Hunt); a seedy tattoo parlor, a loveable biker named Bones (Trace Adkins); a car chase; a trip to jail; and a taser.

Despite the chaos of the evening (including a hospital visit for Sean), the moms, dads, bikers and police band together and find baby Phoenix. After such a memorable and startling moms' night out, Allyson gains new perspective on her own situation. She is thankful for the partnership she shares with her supportive and kind husband; she is excited to find the joy and purpose in the sometimes chaotic world of motherhood; and, most importantly, she is ready to let go of feeling like a failure, instead opting to begin a new journey, one in which she grows in understanding of the person God created her to be. And He doesn't make mistakes.

THEME ONE: MOTHERHOOD

Guiding Scripture: Proverbs 31:25–30 (NLT): She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness. She carefully watches everything in her household and suffers nothing from laziness. Her children stand and bless her. Her husband praises her: "There are many virtuous and capable women in the world, but you surpass them all!" Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised.



SCRIPTURES REFERENCED

- Psalm 78:5–6 (NLT): For he issued his laws to Jacob; he gave his instructions to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them – even the children not yet born – and they in turn will teach their own children.
- Psalm 127:3 (NIV): Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.
- Psalm 139:13 (NIV): For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- Proverbs 22:6 (NIV): Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.
- Proverbs 31:25–30 (NLT): She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness. She carefully watches everything in her household and suffers nothing from laziness. Her children stand and bless her. Her husband praises her: "There are many virtuous and capable women in the world, but you surpass them all!" Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised.
- Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 (NLT): Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.
- Isaiah 49:15 (NLT): "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!"
- Isaiah 66:13 (NIV): "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."
- 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (NIV): Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
- Galatians 6:2 (NIV): Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
- Colossians 3:23 (NLT): Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.
- 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV): Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

DVD SCENES TO REVIEW

- The Beautiful Mess of Motherhood (00:00:42–00:06:56, Chapter 1)
- Community (01:20:17–01:27:28, Chapter 17)
- "Your job is important." (01:29:37–01:31:42, Chapter 18)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Moms' Night Out is a love letter to and a celebration of moms. The film is also honest about the extremes in motherhood – the utter joy of certain moments and the absolute frustration of others. Psalm 127:3 says, “Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him” (NIV), and Proverbs 22:6 tells us, “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it” (NIV). These verses remind us of the magnitude of parenting and its responsibilities, and they reflect the beautiful complexities of caring for and raising children.

The beginning of the film offers a glimpse into Allyson’s daily life as a stay-at-home mom. And it’s no wonder that she could use a moms’ night out. From trying her hand at blogging to compulsive cleaning (followed by more cleaning once the children are awake) to making sure her kids’ needs are met to barely getting herself put together for the day’s excursion ... Allyson is overwhelmed. When each moment is more challenging than the last, it can be difficult to see the beauty in being a parent. Yet, this is motherhood: ups and downs gorgeously entangled, repeated.

SCENE TO REVIEW

The Beautiful Mess of Motherhood (00:00:42–00:06:56, Chapter 1)

- How does this first scene of the film establish the beautiful mess called motherhood? What would Allyson’s job description look like given this scene?
- Being a mom to young children is often referred to as being “in the trenches.” How does this opening scene lend credence to that saying? Can you point to specific examples?
- If you are a mom, can you relate to what Allyson is trying to convey in her blog post? That, at any particular time, she is distracted, stressed or about to have a “moment”?
- Despite the mayhem, where do you see elements of beauty? How do the children – in their innocence and sweetness – show Allyson that they love her and want to please her?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7; Colossians 3:23; and 1 Peter 5:7 (see Scriptures Referenced).

- Given that motherhood (and parenting in general) provides ample opportunity for building character, what guidance is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and Colossians 3:23?
- When panic, anxiety or fear tries to take hold, what does 1 Peter 5:7 tell us to do? Have you ever made a point of giving your anxiety to the Lord? If so, what happened?

Every mom – whether she’s stay-at-home or has a full-time job or any combination of these – needs community, especially during those moments when motherhood feels lonely and isolating. Community offers support, gives

strength and bears burdens. For Allyson, community is found with her husband and friends. For Bridget, the single, working mom, community takes on various (and sometimes unexpected) forms: Sean and Allyson; Joey (her son’s father, played by Harry Shum Jr.); ladies from church; a biker gang; and a police squad. Whatever the form, community reminds us that we don’t journey through life alone.

SCENE TO REVIEW

Community (01:20:17–01:27:28, Chapter 17)

- During the brief conversation in the jail cell, how do Allyson’s words of encouragement transform Bridget’s demeanor? How does Allyson give Bridget a sense of community?
- Even though this scene is definitely comical in nature, what are some of the underlying (and more serious) messages about motherhood and community?
- How does the scene relate to the saying, “It takes a village to raise a child”? Is parenting more manageable within community? Why or why not?
- Sondra tells Bridget, “We love you, Bridget. We love your family. We always have.” How is this statement made more powerful by the group’s actions to help Bridget?
- Even though Allyson fears the worst when she learns that Kevin is watching her kids, what does she learn about unexpected community when she gets home that evening?





- Whether you're a parent, mentor, aunt, uncle, sibling or other guardian in a child's life, have you experienced moments in which you realize that the journey is "so worth it"?

Take a moment to read Isaiah 49:15 and 66:13 (see Scriptures Referenced).

- Why do you think God likens Himself to a mother in these two verses? What does this comparison suggest about the love and bond that a mother shares with her child?
- How do these verses – and any others that come to mind; feel free to find more – help mothers understand the importance and enormity of their role in their children's lives?

As you conclude this theme discussion, read Psalm 78:5–6; Psalm 139:13; and the Guiding Scripture for this section, Proverbs 31:25–30 (see Scriptures Referenced). Each of these passages addresses various aspects of motherhood; spend some time thinking about and discussing them. Pay special attention to the list of attributes in Proverbs 31, which provides an outstanding guideline for producing godly character in women, mothers, mothers-to-be and mentors. As you review these traits, are there any areas in which your character or faith could be further developed? If so, end with a prayer asking the LORD to teach and guide you in this endeavor.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 and Galatians 6:2 (see Scriptures Referenced).

- What does Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 say about community? How does it relate to the theme of motherhood in general and to this scene (re: finding baby Phoenix) in particular?
- Galatians 6:2 tells us to fulfill the law of Christ by carrying each other's burdens. What are some tangible, practical ways you can reach out to mothers who need help?

At the end of the film, Allyson comes to a greater understanding of her role as mother, and she knows that she wouldn't trade motherhood for the world. Certainly, parenting has its challenges, and those challenges have the potential to wreak havoc if left unchecked. But, with a little perspective, some supportive community and the knowledge that God has a plan for each and every mother and each and every child, motherhood becomes a privilege and an honor. As Allyson says in the last scene, "It's so worth it." Indeed, the beautiful mess is so very worth it.

SCENE TO REVIEW

"Your job is important." (01:29:37–01:31:42, Chapter 18)

- How do those special moments – for instance, Allyson watching her children laughing – give meaning and purpose to the challenging or difficult moments in motherhood?
- Why is a mother's job important? What role does a mother play in a child's life? How have you been influenced by someone who holds/held the role of "mother" in your life?
- Even though the film is a celebration of mothers, why are fathers important as well? In the film, how does Allyson and Sean's partnership influence and support their parenting?



THEME TWO: PERSPECTIVE

Guiding Scripture: Philippians 4:8 (NIV): Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

SCRIPTURES REFERENCED

- Proverbs 3:5–6 (NIV): Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
- Proverbs 14:1 (NIV): The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.
- Proverbs 17:22 (NLT): A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.
- Isaiah 26:3 (NLT): You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!
- Matthew 11:28 (NLT): Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”
- Romans 12:2 (NIV): Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- Romans 12:12 (NLT): Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.
- Galatians 5:22–23 (NLT): But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!
- Ephesians 4:31–32 (NIV): Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

- Philippians 4:6 (NLT): Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.
- Philippians 4:8 (NIV): Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.
- James 1:2–4 (NIV): Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

DVD SCENES TO REVIEW

- Hiding With Chocolate (00:13:46–00:16:51, Chapter 3)
- Finding Meaning in the Chaos (00:39:41–00:42:36, Chapter 8)
- A New Day (01:27:29–01:29:35, Chapter 18)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you begin this theme discussion, take a moment to read Philippians 4:8 (see Scriptures Referenced). This passage is also the Guiding Scripture for the section because it speaks to the theme of perspective in a tremendous way. Rather than focusing on the negative, the Bible instructs us to think on worthy things. Though life is challenging – and downright difficult at times – perspective has the potential to make a huge difference in how we respond. And by taking the time to cultivate a posture of thanksgiving and joy, we can glorify God in all we do.

Allyson is weary and worn. Before she has a chance to recover from the latest incident (whatever it may be), a new problem or issue takes its place. She feels stuck in a perpetual cycle of frustration, her perspective on life and motherhood growing increasingly pessimistic and depressing. After a particularly trying Mother’s Day, Allyson decides to hide in her closet with a bag of chocolate, seeking comfort in a live video stream of an eagle caring for her young. This is where Sean finds his wife, and the scene speaks volumes about Allyson’s current perspective.

SCENE TO REVIEW

Hiding With Chocolate (00:13:46–00:16:51, Chapter 3)

- Describe Allyson’s perspective (or outlook) in this scene. What has prompted her to hide in the closet with a bag of chocolates while suffering from stress paralysis?
- Why do you think Allyson is drawn to the video of the eagle? What would compel her to watch another mother care for her offspring if she feels inadequate in caring for her own?



- At this point in the film (and based on what you know about Allyson’s personality and daily routine), why is she struggling to create and maintain a positive perspective?
- How do you respond when life serves up discouragement after discouragement? Do you find it hard to keep a good perspective, or do you persevere with a positive attitude?

Take some time to read Proverbs 14:1 and 17:22, and Matthew 11:28 (see Scriptures Referenced).

- After reading the two verses from Proverbs, discuss ways that you have seen these words of wisdom come to fruition in your life. How do these Proverbs address perspective?
- In Matthew 11:28, what does Jesus say regarding weariness and discouragement? How does His promise provide comfort when life is overwhelming and we need a shelter?

When Allyson and Sondra have a chance to talk at the bowling alley, Sondra encourages her friend to seek and find the meaning, joy and purpose amid the chaos rather than fixating on the chaos itself. Isaiah 26:3 confirms this: “You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!” (NIV). When our thoughts are fixed on God and His character, our perspective cannot help but follow suit, enabling us to see beyond current circumstances and trust in His sovereignty with an ever more transformed point of view.

SCENE TO REVIEW

Finding Meaning in the Chaos (00:39:41–00:42:36, Chapter 8)

- Allyson describes the eagle as being “peaceful” and “happy,” cautiously revealing her confusion and discontent. Why does Allyson seem to feel guilty about her confession?

Sondra responds, “[Life] is not about God taking away all our problems and making everything perfect. It’s about finding the meaning and the joy and the purpose in this – in all the chaos and the crazy. And it’s knowing that God is with you on the good days and the bad days. Does my faith give me that? Yes, it does. Am I always happy? No. That’s a fantasy.”

- How does Sondra’s response help to put things in perspective, especially where faith is concerned? Why is a relationship with God vital in finding meaning, joy and purpose?
- Why is it important to remember that God does not eliminate our problems, but rather teaches us – through His example and His Word – how to nurture a positive perspective?
- In what ways does the Christian journey lead to a greater understanding of perspective? Have you experienced a change in your point of view as you’ve grown in your faith?

Read Ephesians 4:31–32 and Philippians 4:6 (see

Scriptures Referenced).

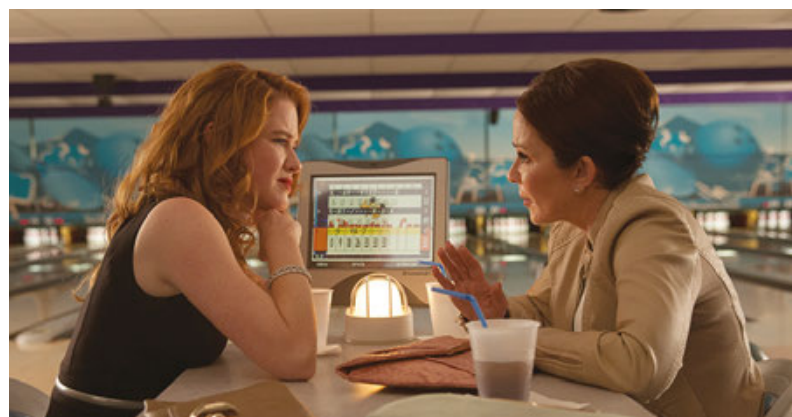
- What instruction does Ephesians 4:31–32 give regarding conduct and perspective, and how does that instruction eliminate sinful, wasteful behavior in favor of righteousness?
- Why is the practice of gratitude (as noted in Philippians 4:6) essential in shaping perspective? How does thankfulness serve as a barrier (or protection) against negativity?

After a moms’ night out for the record books, Allyson gains new perspective on her life, her identity as both a mother and a child of God, her family and her pursuits. She also realizes that her transformation is just beginning, and she allows herself the grace to take things slowly. Whereas before she met each day – perhaps each moment – with trepidation, she now hopes to meet each day as it arrives, with new and varied opportunities to find beauty amid the mess.

SCENE TO REVIEW

A New Day (01:27:29–01:29:35, Chapter 18)

- Allyson writes that her life hasn’t changed much, but she has. In acknowledging this, how is Allyson beginning to initiate a change in her perspective?
- Think back through the film and describe how Allyson has grown and matured. Where did she begin? Where is she now? To whom or what does she credit this progression?
- What does Allyson’s journey in the film suggest about the power of perspective? How do our attitude and perspective have the ability to influence nearly everything we do?



- What other characters in the film experience a change in perspective? Can you point to any specific scenes that demonstrate this change(s)?

Read Romans 12:2 and James 1:2–4 (see Scriptures Referenced).

THEME THREE: EXPECTATIONS

Guiding Scripture: Hebrews 13:21 (NLT): ... may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.

- How does Romans 12:2 relate to this scene and Allyson's change in perspective? Why is it unwise to conform to the "pattern of this world"? What should we do instead?
- Even though we face challenges and difficulties, what does James 1:2–4 say about the power of persevering through adversity? How does that process shape our perspective?

In completing this theme discussion, read Proverbs 3:5–6; Romans 12:12; and Galatians 5:22–23 (see Scriptures Referenced) and consider the important messages that these verses contribute to the conversation about perspective. Then, take some time to reflect on the following questions as they pertain to you: How would you describe your outlook? Does your faith influence your perspective? Why or why not? If you're struggling to develop a better perspective, what are some ways that you might begin to take steps – even small ones – in that direction? What role does thankfulness play in this process and how might you practice gratitude? Take these matters before God and ask for His help and strength to grow in these areas.



SCRIPTURES REFERENCED

- Exodus 15:2 (NLT): "The LORD is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. This is my God, and I will praise him – my father's God, and I will exalt him!"
- Proverbs 11:23 (NIV): The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath.
- Isaiah 40:31 (NIV): ... but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.
- Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV): "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
- Micah 6:8 (NIV): He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
- Romans 12:6–8 (NLT): In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 (NLT): There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.
- 2 Corinthians 9:8 (NLT): And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.
- 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT): For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.
- Hebrews 13:21 (NLT): ... may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him. All glory to him forever and ever! Amen.
- 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV): Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.
- 1 John 4:4 (NIV): You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

DVD SCENES TO REVIEW

- Artwork and Childhood Dreams (00:19:03–00:22:33, Chapter 4)
- Zoe: The Pastor's Daughter (01:13:18–01:15:38, Chapter 15)
- Bones' Pep Talk (01:15:39–01:20:16, Chapter 16)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For all its lightheartedness and humor, *Moms' Night Out* also explores several serious aspects of parenting, one of those being the concept of expectations, or unrealistic expectations, as the case may be. The theme manifests itself in two distinct ways: the tension that lives between reality and idealism (e.g., how Allyson becomes discontented when comparing her actual life with what she previously envisioned), and the pressure we place on ourselves and others – even inadvertently – to attain specific standards (e.g., how moms may feel like they've failed).

Toward the beginning of the film, Allyson tells Sean that, even though she has achieved many of her childhood dreams – to be a mother, to marry a wonderful man, to have a nice home – she is unhappy and unsure as to how to fix it. Sean encourages her to do something for herself, which is a supportive and excellent idea, but Allyson's frustration, in part, stems from her realization that former expectations have confronted current reality – with different results than anticipated.

SCENE TO REVIEW

Artwork and Childhood Dreams (00:19:03–00:22:33, Chapter 4)

- Define expectation. In your opinion, are expectations good or bad or both? Why? When was the last time you held expectations for something or someone? What happened?
- Explain why Allyson is frustrated as she tells Sean about her dreams and current inability to be happy. What is the difference between her childhood dreams and her life as is?

- What is the danger in playing the comparison game between how things actually are and how we think things should be? How do reality and fantasy differ from each other?
- In terms of God's Word and salvation in Jesus Christ, make a list of things that we can expect with confidence. Why is it safe to trust that God will fulfill His promises?

Read Proverbs 11:23; Isaiah 40:31 and Jeremiah 29:11 (see Scriptures Referenced).

- According to Proverbs 11:23 and Jeremiah 29:11, what expectations does God set before His children (aka the righteous)? What expectations does He give the wicked?
- Isaiah 40:31 ends with "... those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength." Are the words hope and expectation interchangeable? Why or why not?
- In many ways, the idea of expectation directly relates to faith. Can you think of any people from the Bible who expected great things with equally great faith? If so, who?

One of the relationships in the film that most deals with expectations is the mother-daughter dynamic of Sondra and teenage Zoe. Throughout the story, the two bicker over issues common to the teen years: dating, modesty and money to name a few. Because Sondra is the pastor's wife, she feels pressure to conform to certain expectations that go with her role. And because Zoe is the pastor's daughter, she feels similar pressure to represent the family in a positive light. When the two finally talk (in jail), they realize how expectations – both perceived and self-imposed – have prevented them from connecting with each other in a meaningful way.

SCENE TO REVIEW

Zoe: The Pastor's Daughter (01:13:18–01:15:38, Chapter 15)

- Zoe says, "I'm the pastor's daughter. I should be perfect." Why would a pastor's child feel pressure to be perfect? Is this expectation self-imposed, perceived or actual?
- How does Sondra respond to Zoe? How might Sondra's desire to protect Zoe have given her daughter the impression that she had to be or act a certain way?
- What does this scene demonstrate about the power of speaking with one another openly and honestly? Also, what does it say about taking time to listen to others?
- Has miscommunication (or lack of communication) ever caused you to live under the burden of unhealthy expectations? If so, what happened?

Read Micah 6:8 and 2 Timothy 1:7 (see Scriptures Referenced).

- No matter who we are or what we do for a living, what does Micah 6:8 tell us about the expectations that God has for His people? What is required of us according to this verse?
- 2 Timothy 1:7 further establishes the spirit that God has given us. What characteristics does the verse list and to what degree are these traits present in your life?

Whether influenced by culture or peers, many moms tend to hold themselves to an unattainable, perfect standard of parenting. And when they fall short, which they are bound to do, they feel like failures, allowing their broken ideals to cause further defeat. In a touching and surprising turn of events, Bones waxes philosophical and shares deep insight with Allyson regarding motherhood. He encourages her to let go of perfection and embrace the mother and woman that God intended her to be. In doing so, he reminds Allyson that God's standard is the one and only.

SCENE TO REVIEW

Bones' Pep Talk (01:15:39–01:20:16, Chapter 16)

- Why does Allyson feel like a failure? When she says, "I'm just ... I'm not enough," what does she reveal about the expectations and standards to which she holds herself?
- Why do you think many mothers feel pressure to be perfect? What responsibilities do mothers have that could potentially promote unhealthy or unrealistic expectations?
- What part of Bones' dialogue stood out to you the most? Why? Perhaps it was something you needed to hear as well? Can you relate to the way Allyson reacts?
- How has God equipped you to be exactly who you are meant to be? What gifts or strengths has He given you in order to be present and effective with your family?

Read Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; and 1 Peter 4:10 (see Scriptures Referenced).

- How does the Romans passage encourage us to use the gifts that God has given? How can using our gifts well help us avoid discouragement in areas where



we are weaker?

- According to 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, who is really doing the work through us when we use our God-given talents? In 1 Peter 4:10, what is the purpose of gifts?
- Compare and contrast societal expectations and biblical expectations in terms of motherhood and parenting. How do these standards play out in your life?

In bringing this theme discussion to a close, first take some time to read and think about the following verses: Exodus 15:2; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Hebrews 13:21; and 1 John 4:4 (see Scriptures Referenced). These passages provide marvelous assurance that we need not conform to the pressure and expectations of this world; rather, we can place our faith in God, trusting that He not only equips us with exactly what we need, but He also sustains us when we fall or feel inadequate. These verses further remind us to live according to God's standard – which is the best standard we could ever hope for – and the only one worthy of our allegiance and obedience.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- *Moms' Night Out* is a family-friendly comedy to its core. Why is humor a great vehicle for exploring a film about parenting?
- Are there any moments in the film that reflect your own experience as a mom, a dad, a family member or someone who works with children?
- With which character do you most identify and why?
- What do you think of the film's soundtrack? How does the music enhance the storyline overall? Is there a specific scene that you remember more because of the music?
- What additional themes do you notice in the film?

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GREAT FOR THE **WHOLE FAMILY**”

- Brianna Hope Beaton, KidsFirst.org



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