

Brainstorming Summary for Faith in Film

February 2020 – Season of Epiphany

2020 theme: 2020 Vision

Monday, January 6, 2020

Members present: Jim Post, Karen Post, Roger Richmond, Dave Booth, Marie Kordecki, Carole Koch, Pastor Mary, Lynne Richmond, Larry Jorgenson, Betty Kinney, Barb Gripton, Linda Rousell, Bonnie Jorgenson, Michael Boersma, Vicki Zuker, and Karen Booth

Though our faith in Jesus Christ is grounded in Scripture, the arts, including literature and films, profoundly influence how we think about and understand God. When characters long for something or yearn for something, when they celebrate, all of these moments can be viewed through a lens of prayer even though the character may not address God directly. (Larsen) Travis Scholl says, “Even if God is never mentioned, nearly every film contains an implied theology (the study of the nature of God and religious belief).”

Stories connect to the human experience and help us to grow in our faith. We’ll look at four films in this season of Epiphany when we celebrate God coming in Jesus to bring salvation for all of the world. **Each of them includes the following themes: understanding ourselves (identity) in light of God’s love for us, the power of relationship and/or mentoring, and forgiveness and reconciliation.** How do those themes challenge us to pay closer attention to our overall theme of “2020 Vision?”

General discussion points: 1) Michael’s college professor said even truth (with a small “t”) can be found in secular media. We need to look for God’s Truth (with a capital “t”). 2) Identity – Who am I? Related song: “Who Am I” by Casting Crowns. Loosely related TV show: “Scrubs” and the tacking Alzheimer’s patient (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kx7tgkjbjo>). 3) As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. - Proverbs 27: 17.

Ideas for the series:

Send out a survey to our congregation via E-mail and Facebook with the question:

What film has changed how you see yourself?

What film has changed how you see others?

What film has taught you something about forgiveness and grace?

Who are the mentors in your life?

Resources:

- [Movies Are Prayer: How Films Voice Our Deepest Longings](#) by Josh Larsen. "Movies are our way of telling God what we think about this world and our place in it. . . . Movies can be many things: escapist experiences, historical artifacts, business ventures, and artistic expressions, to name a few. I'd like to suggest that they can also be prayers." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78Vq6aZeWrM> (Might make a good series intro) <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/32284329-movies-are-prayers> (This review breaks the prayers into 10 categories and gives movie titles and scripture passages to go with each.)

- God in the Movies: A Guide for Exploring Four Decades of Film and Finding God in the Movies by Catherine M Barsotti & Robert K. Johnston.

Visuals: We'll need to ask the people listed below if they will lend their props again.

- Movie reels (Mary Scott), Oscar, Posters
- Director's clapboard and chair
- Popcorn and popcorn maker (Mary Scott, Myke's church, Jack Heethouse). Boxes of candy.
- Tickets
- Marquee (chalkboard with string of 25 globe lights)
- Big display: "Now Showing" and "Coming Attractions"
- Video previews. Could the **middle school class** help create their own version of a Star Wars preview in the style of "Good Sam"? Props: BB8 robot, light saber phone app
- Movie countdowns
- Specific items for each movie - costumes, props, etc.
- Movie Award Show touches: Red carpet (or runway lights?); interviewer with a microphone asking, "Who are you wearing?"
- Theater seating

Publicity: "See You on Sunday!" and February Harbor Light

February 2, 2020: "Be with Me!"

"Star Wars: Episode IX - The Rise of Skywalker" (Dec. 2019) After Palpatine mysteriously returns, the Resistance faces the First Order once more in the final chapter of the Skywalker saga. While the First Order continues to ravage the galaxy, Rey finalizes her training as a Jedi. But danger suddenly rises from the ashes as the evil Emperor Palpatine mysteriously returns from the dead. While working with Finn and Poe Dameron to fulfill a new mission, Rey will not only face Kylo Ren once more, but she will also finally discover the truth about her parents as well as a deadly secret that could determine her future and the fate of the ultimate final showdown that is to come.

Scripture: Ephesians 6: 10-18 (NIV) "The Armor of God"

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Synopsis: “Be With Me” - These words are a prayer for God's presence. Even though we're assured that God is with us always, repeating this prayer reminds us to seek God's guidance, direction, and vision no matter what we face.

Felt need: To trust in the Holy Spirit to guide us - and to trust in others to be with us

Visuals: Light sabers, costumes, toys

Hands-on item:

Media: Film trailer. Here are three different possibilities:

- Final trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Qn_spdM5Zg
- Version we watched in September <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6pbl9niN4k>
- Another option <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pu4-pBVtKco>

Related info:

- <https://www.christianpost.com/voice/star-wars-the-rise-of-skywalker-reminds-us-of-the-true-story-of-good-vs-evil.html>
- <https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2019/12/27/what-rise-skywalker-gets-right-about-redemption-and-wrong-about-force>
- <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2019/12/star-wars-the-rise-of-skywalker-rey-origin-palpatine-nobody-nowhere>
- <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/religionprof/2019/12/the-rise-of-skywalker-my-review.html>
- <https://www.syfy.com/syfywire/the-last-jedis-message-of-spirituality-over-religion-is-a-much-needed-shift-in-the-star>

Activities: Holy Communion, Souper Bowl of Caring (Super Bowl Sunday)

Music: Here I Am, Lord (UMH 593), God of Grace and God of Glory (UMH 577), God of Love and God of Power (UMH 578), Goodness Is Stronger than Evil (FWS 2219), Abide with Me (UMH 700)

Discussion points: 1) We're just coming off of our “Star Words” series. 2) “The Force” = “The Spirit.” This is one reason evangelicals came out against the first movie in 1977. 3) We've used “The Armor of God” passage before with a Star Wars movie. 4) Rey's prayer about the force: “Be with me.” She seeks guidance and direction to overcome evil. 5) Why is the Star Wars series important for so many people?

- It is a classic good versus evil story where the good guy/hero wins; the Harry Potter series fits this bill as the new classic.
- Excitement, sound effects, music, thrill of the chase
- A kid from nowhere (underdog) is the hero. Related bible quote: Could anyone good come out of Nazareth?
- Relationships with friends and teachers are important. Related quote: “We had each other. That's how we won.”
- Conflict – even Hallmark movies have conflict.

6) What are some possible take home items? 7) Rey has to decide to not be hateful and to forgive Kylo Ren. Kylo Ren is Han and Leia's son. 8) Notable Princess Leia quotes with

spiritual overtones: “Nothing is impossible.” “Don’t be afraid.” “Don’t be afraid of who you are.” 9) Had the fall never happened, there would be no hero stories. – Michael. 10) Implied theology: Trust the Spirit. We are not the ones who save, but point to the one who does. We know we need saving. Our hope is in knowing that good will triumph.

February 9, 2020: “Growing the Fruit of the Spirit”

“**A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood**” (Nov. 2019) Tom Hanks portrays Mister Rogers in *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, a timely story of kindness triumphing over cynicism, based on the true story of a real-life friendship between Fred Rogers and journalist Tom Junod. After a jaded magazine writer is assigned a profile of Fred Rogers, he overcomes his skepticism, learning about empathy, kindness, and decency from America's most beloved neighbor.

Scripture: Galatians 5: 13-26(NIV)

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Scripture: Luke 15: 11-32 (parable of the Prodigal Son) - use as a reference

Synopsis: “*Growing the Fruit of the Spirit*” - Our witness to God’s grace requires constant attention to our relationship with God and to the world around us. God calls us to forgive as we’ve been forgiven and to seek reconciliation when possible - always leading us back to the truth of God’s love for us and showing us glimpses of God’s grace.

Felt need: To experience the power of forgiveness and reconciliation in our lives



Visuals: Mister Rogers sweater and/or shoes

Hands-on item: https://origin-flash.sonypictures.com/ist/abeautifulday_resources/ABDITN-KindnessDeclaration.pdf printed on 5.5"x8.5" cardstock. Print larger posters for the upstairs and downstairs hallways and the sanctuary.

Media:

- Film trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8U_UGC0sMw
- 1997 Daytime Emmy Awards when he asks people to take 10 seconds to remember people who have helped them <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Upm9LnuCBUM>

Related info:

- <http://resources.abeautifulday.movie/#resources> (There is a 5-part discussion guide that could be used for a short-term class.) **Comments:** Offer a short term class in February.
- Original article <https://classic.esquire.com/article/1998/11/1/can-you-say-hero> Note: Karen Booth copied this 11 page article into a Word document and will share it with worship.
- <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a29871607/tom-junod-mister-rogers-a-beautiful-day-in-the-neighborhood-true-story/>
- Muskegon Chronicle subscribers can access these articles:
 - "Won't You Be My Neighbor," Tuesday, December 3, 2019, page B2
 - "How Mister Roger's faith shaped his idea of children's television," Thursday, November 7, 2019, page B4. Quote: "I want to be a vehicle for God, to spread his message of love and peace." – Fred Rogers
 - "Tom Hanks Is Mister Rogers," *Parade Magazine*, Sunday, November 17, 2019, page 8
- Wall Street Journal subscribers can access: "The Child-Rearing Wisdom of 'Mister Rogers' Neighborhood'", Saturday, November 23, 2019 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-child-rearing-wisdom-of-mister-rogers-neighborhood-11574465919?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=2>

Activities:

Music: It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood, There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (UMH 121), Just As I Am (UMH 357), Fruit of the Spirit (kids' song) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rezg4jYFoj0>; "Us for Them" by Gungor; "It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood"

Discussion points: 1) The film is inspired by true events. 2) Fred Rogers was a pastor ordained specifically for television evangelism. It was important to him that television had programming specifically for kids. 3) One favorite scene in the movie: Junod's wife asks him to not spoil her childhood by being mean to Mr. Rogers. 4) Tom Junod wrote for Esquire magazine. His assignment was to write a 400 word story about different heroes. 5) Like "The Case for Christ," the writer was transformed by researching and writing the story. He mentions that he had forgotten how to pray. Fred Roger shows him how. 6) We are reminded that a good witness is not over the top or preachy. Rogers was genuine, caring deeply about Junod and his family. 7) Favorite scene: Junod asks Joanne Rogers what it is like being married to a saint. She says don't call it that. "Saint" implies something unattainable. Fred works very hard at being the way he is. Related information: Rogers rose early, swam, read the bible, prayed, wrote letters, and phoned people, etc. on top of his regular work obligations. 8) The Fruit of the Spirit takes time and effort to cultivate. 9)

Junod to Rogers: Is it a burden to carry other people's problems? Rogers: No. Not if you learn to deal with feelings. 10) Grief: To die is to be human. This movie reveals Junod's grief. Pastor Mary uses pamphlets written by Rogers for children who are grieving. 11) Much to his surprise, Junod was mesmerized by Rogers' puppets. 12) Was Mister Rogers a character? No, he was genuine. "Mrs. Doubtfire" is a good example of a character. 13) Ask Jerry Scott to reprise his role as Mister Rogers.

February 16, 2020: "Don't Look Back"

"Overcomer" (Aug. 2019) Life changes overnight for Coach John Harrison when his high school basketball team and state championship dreams are crushed under the weight of unexpected news. When the largest manufacturing plant shuts down and hundreds of families leave their town, John questions how he and his family will face an uncertain future. After reluctantly agreeing to coach cross-country, John and his wife, Amy, meet an aspiring athlete who's pushing her limits on a journey toward discovery. Inspired by the words and prayers of a new-found friend, John becomes the least likely coach helping the least likely runner attempt the impossible in the biggest race of the year.

Date to show movie at church:

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 1-10 (Ephesians 1-2) "Made Alive in Christ" (CEV)

¹In the past you were dead because you sinned and fought against God.

²You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil. He rules the world, and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God. ³Once we were also ruled by the selfish desires of our bodies and minds. We had made God angry, and we were going to be punished like everyone else.

⁴⁻⁵But God was merciful! We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive with Christ, and God's wonderful kindness is what saves you. ⁶God raised us from death to life with Christ Jesus, and he has given us a place beside Christ in heaven. ⁷God did this so that in the future world he could show how truly good and kind he is to us because of what Christ Jesus has done. ⁸You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. ⁹It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about. ¹⁰God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Christ to make us what we are.

Scripture: I John 5: 1-5 "Faith in the Son of God" (CEV)

¹If we believe that Jesus is truly Christ, we are God's children. Everyone who loves the Father will also love his children.

²If we love and obey God, we know that we will love his children. ³ We show our love for God by obeying his commandments, and they are not hard to follow.

⁴Every child of God can defeat the world, and our faith is what gives us this victory. ⁵No one can defeat the world without having faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

Scripture: John 16: 33 (CEV)

³³I have told you this, so that you might have peace in your hearts because of me. While you are in the world, you will have to suffer. But cheer up! I have defeated the world.

Scripture: Hebrews 12: 1-3 (NLT)

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us.

²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.[£] Because of the joy[£] awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. ³Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people;[£] then you won't become weary and give up.

Synopsis: "Don't Look Back" - Runners and their coaches say to keep on looking forward because looking back only slows us down. When we have a relationship with Jesus, the past can inform us, but it doesn't define us. God's love transforms us and reminds us that we are beloved children of God.

Felt need: To claim our identity in Jesus Christ

Visuals: Running shoes

Hands-on item:

Media: Film trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=BGyieGVn4P4

Related info:

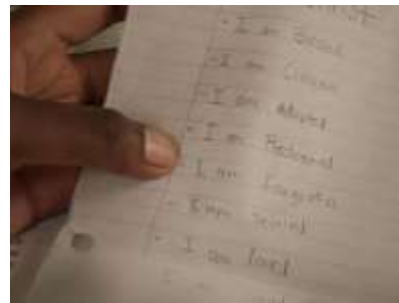
- <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/9851/choose-to-be-an-overcomer>
- <https://erickrheam.com/2013/06/11/never-look-back-running-life-lesson-10/>

Activities: Noisy offering, Use creed that Hannah Scott creates based on Ephesians 1-2, right. *I am blessed, chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, loved, saved, God's child...*

Music: Jesus Loves Me (UMH 191), I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (FWS 2129), You Say (Lauren Daigle), Who You Say I Am (Hillsong); "Who Am I?" by Casting Crowns

Discussion points: 1) This is the only movie that is specifically billed as faith-based although all four movies speak of faith.

2) Boundary issue: The coach and his wife go behind the back of Hannah's grandmother at one point. 3) Pastor Mary doesn't like running, but does see how it is a good example of perseverance. Michael said it can be cleansing if you stick with it long enough. 4) Don't look back: The past can inform us, but does not define us. 5) We are called to claim who we are as children of God. 5) Big questions: What do people have to overcome? How does discipline play a role in overcoming? When we say we will pray for someone, do we do it? 6) Notable quotes: For someone who says he knows the Lord, you don't act like it. 7) Identity is tied to the heart. 8) Noisy offering: Collect money for Shoes for Shores. 9) Statistic: 1 in 80,000 runners die in a marathon. Loosely related: In 1980 Rosie Ruiz was declared the female winner of the Boston Marathon. She was later stripped of the title when it was discovered she jumped in the race close to the finish line. 10) Not sure how this is related – film – "Run, Fat Boy, Run" and a blister scene.



February 23, 2020: "Same God"

Transfiguration Sunday

“The Best of Enemies” (April 2019) Civil rights activist Ann Atwater faces off against C.P. Ellis, Exalted Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan, in 1971 Durham, North Carolina over the issue of school integration.

Date to show movie at church:

Scripture: I John 4: 7-21 (NIV) “God’s Love”

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Scripture: Galatians 3: 26-29 (NIV) “Children of God”

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Synopsis: “Same God” - Our desire to box people in or separate ourselves from others on the basis of gender, race, and other categories is sin and denies us the opportunity to see God’s grace in others and God’s love for the whole world. God calls us to form a beloved community where social distinctions do not stand within the Body of Christ.

Felt need: To recognize our prejudices, repent, and seek to look at one another as God’s beloved children

Visuals: small white Bible

Hands-on item:

Media:

- Film trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKM6fSTs-AO>
- Show picture of Atwater and Ellis together

Related info:

- <https://religionnews.com/2019/03/25/best-of-enemies-real-faith-and-racial-reconciliation-on-the-big-screen/>
- <https://www.christianpost.com/news/the-best-of-enemies-actors-share-how-christian-faith-of-civil-rights-activist-changed-kkk-leader.html>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtHk903FQvU> (contains clip of Atwater and Ellis)

Activities: prayer of confession that addresses racism

Music: Amazing Grace (UMH 378), Help Us Accept Each Other (UMH 560), God of Grace and God of Glory (UMH 577), The Servant Song (FWS 2222)

Discussion points: 1) The film is inspired by true events. 2) The KKK prayed together and claimed to be a “Christian” organization/brotherhood. 3) Atwater’s white bible is an important symbol in the movie. 4) Definition: A **charrette** is an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers. More importantly, it allows everyone who participates to be a mutual author of the plan. 5) Atwater and Ellis toured together after the charrette. The man who led the charrette was from Pennsylvania which was much different than being in the south. 6) The NAACP intervenes after the Durham city council blows off complaints against a slum lord and an elementary school has an electrical fire. We found it hard to imagine this was still happening in 1971 and still see some disparities today. 7) Atwater and Ellis’ relationship issues are particularly hard to resolve since they are both so angry. 8) The positive relationship between Trombley (the white hardware store owner) and his black manager touched Ellis. They served in Viet Nam together. Trombley said that he only trusted two people, his wife and this manager. 9) Ellis’ wife had a kind way of pointing out problems. 10) While touring the burned out school, Ellis met Atwater’s daughter. He noted that she looked at him like he was some kind of monster. 10) The Ellises’ oldest son was in a psychiatric hospital – not an easy thing for any family. 11) Separation, even though it is unintentional, still happens. Example: Kids in Mona Shores and Muskegon Heights are just a few miles apart and have markedly different educational opportunities. 12) Changes that haven’t helped families: Schools that aren’t allowed to take disruptive kids out of the classroom or fail those who are failing. The increase in single parent families. Loss of tax bases as businesses leave. 13) Parents want the same good things for their kids. Here is an article from the January 3, 2020 *Muskegon Chronicle* by John Archibald.

A Look Within: Here’s something that no one wants to hear

Despite our differences, we have more in common than we think.

We talk a lot about the things that make us different. Race and religion and cultural experience. Income and politics and what we believe is right and true and just. We are miles apart on all that, of course.

We think a lot about what we stand for, and what we are willing to stand without making a peep. We talk about what we will fight for, and who we have to fight to get to it. We think of all the things we deserve, and sometimes we even think of what others might deserve from us. Sometimes.

We talk a lot – I know I do – about the ways in which we are different. But we still have more in common than we don’t.

We all want freedom, though we may use it in different ways. We want safe schools for our children, if we have children, that will help prepare them for success. We want jobs that let us feed ourselves and

our families, and we dream of one that is a personal mission, that fuels us and fulfills us and makes us feel better about ourselves and our place in the world.

We want respect. We want to be seen for who we are, recognized for what we do. We want to be taken seriously. We want people to treat us like we matter, if only to prove to our darkest doubts that we do. We want to feel important, that the world would be poorer without us in it.

We want to laugh. We want to have fun and to be fun, in the million different ways that can be true. We want to find a way and dream of a day when we won't have to worry. About money or health or pain or loss or failure. We want to think we are pretty good folks.

We want to be remembered. With a smile or a tear or just a little fondness. We'd like to have the things we want. We'd hope to want the things we have. We want someone to want us.

Yes, we have a lot in common even if we don't always want the same things or have the same opportunities to get them.

We all want to open the fridge and find something satisfying inside. We want the house to stay dry when the rains fall, and the faucet to run clean and wet when we turn the knob. We want a blanket when it's cold and a cool breeze when it's hot. We want to believe – foolishly, perhaps – that we understand our purpose in the universe.

We want to be liked, no matter how much we say we don't care, and we want to be loved. We want people to know we are tough, and strong, and smart, and brave. Especially in the moments we fear we are not. We want to hide those things about ourselves that show weaknesses or faults, which are not always the same thing.

We want a fair shake. We want to be happy, though we seldom fully appreciate the times we are. We want to be confident, even if we have to fake confidence long enough to find it.

We want to be treated by others the way others would hope to be treated by us. We don't, often, fulfill our end of that bargain.

We have a lot in common, for good or ill. The hard part, these days, is seeing it.

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