

the lost & found family

study guide





About The Film

The Lost and Found Family is a heartwarming movie about the power of God's love, focusing on a family committed to serving children in the foster-care system. Foster care is a reality of life that is often overlooked, especially in movies. This story reminds us that God brings out the best in us when we show His compassion to those in desperate need of love.

The film's cast includes Lucas Till, who starred in *Hannah Montana: The Movie*; Jessica Luza, who is known for co-hosting "The Hills: Fashion Wrap-Up;" and Ellen Bry, who starred in "St. Elsewhere."

Barnet Bain, the director **The Lost and Found Family**, wrote the most-watched movie in history: **Jesus**, a film that has been translated into more than 1,000 languages, been shown in more than 200 countries, and has been seen by billions of people.

How To Use This Guide

The Lost and Found Family provides the ideal setting for this video-driven, five-part small group or personal study. To use this study:

- Download this eight-page booklet (if you're using this with a group, be sure to print enough copies for every member)
- Use the DVD time code on each study to load that particular scene from the movie
- Then, read the key passage, followed by the study
- Answer the questions, beginning with the icebreaker, in a notebook or aloud with your group

Putting Others First

Scene: Ester gives away her dolls (1:16:17-1:17:38)

Key Passage:

“Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)

Throughout the movie, we see a slow transformation in Ester Hobbes. Her life has seemingly always revolved around her needs, her wants, herself. Even as she arrives at the house she owns, she's more focused on what's happening in her life rather than the impact her arrival is having on Tony, Ramona, and their foster kids. Yet as Ester gets to know them and see them as individuals and as a family, her heart starts softening.

She starts making the family breakfast; she is concerned about Justin when he is injured; she tries to figure out how the family can stay in their home. But perhaps the best example of her growing heart comes in this simple scene where she gives her beloved dolls to Jasmine and Crystal. As Crystal noticed upon her arrival, the dolls' names are an acronym for LOVE. Ester's gift to the girls is a shining example of her love for them.

In the key passage, Jesus compresses the entirety of the commandments to these two seemingly simple tasks: Love God and love others. Of course, it's never that simple. People in our lives can be unlovable—as can we!

But the amazing thing is that when we truly love God, He gives us the heart to love others. And as Ester Hobbes discovers, that can lead you to a kind of love you never even knew existed.

Discussion Questions

1. Polls indicate most Americans cannot name the 10 Commandments. How about you? Which ones can you name?
2. Name another movie where you watch the transformation of a character. Was the change believable? Why or why not?
3. Is there a difference between transformation and change? If so, how would you differentiate the two? Would you say transformation is the correct word to use for Ester's life? Why or why not?
4. Do you believe people can be transformed? Why or why not? Share an example of how this has happened in your life or the life of someone you know.
5. Why is it so hard to “love your neighbor as yourself”? Do you have any “neighbors” you should be doing a better job of loving? What could be a first step in doing so?



Mismatched China

Scene: Ester talks about the foster kids with the Judge
(1:21:54-1:23:40)

Key Passage:

“Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.” Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)

The Lost and Found Family. It's a title that catches your attention. But more than that, it captures the heart of foster care families, like the one depicted in this film. Tony and Ramona have opened their home—and more importantly, their hearts—to a divergent group of kids. They have nothing in common, other than that they all have become wards of the state.

Early in the movie, Ester sees what Tony and Ramona are trying to do. She explains to Max that their home is a “pit stop,” just like the kind racecars need when things aren’t going well in a race.

As she draws nearer to these kids, Ester starts to see them as unique individuals with great potential. When she visits the pawnshop, the mismatched china cups jump out at her, becoming an inspiration analogy for the kids.

“It was as if they were sitting in that pawnshop window, mismatched pieces,” she says. “And Tony and Ramona see them as beautiful.” According to the key passage, that’s how God sees us. The love of the foster parents is a reflection of the love that God has for us, “even before he made the world”!

Call it the ultimate salvage operation. Ester acknowledges that wasn’t always a word she appreciated. But now, “it reminds me of salvation.” Sounds like a lost and found family.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a collection of items? What's in your collection? Are there items in it that could be described as mismatched?
2. Which of the foster kids in the film did you most relate to? Why?
3. Have you ever opened your home as a pit stop for someone in need? If so, was that a good experience or a difficult one (or both!)? If not, are you willing to? Why or why not?
4. Ester understands that no matter what the outside world sees, Tony and Ramona see their foster kids as beautiful. How does that tie into the key passage?
5. What does it mean to you knowing that “God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family”? Do you live as an adopted child of God? If not, why? If so, would others know you’ve been adopted by God? How does your “adoption” impact your life?

One Step at a Time

Scene: Ester tells Ramona that the house has been purchased (48:05-50:14)

Key Passage:

“Do not despise these small beginnings ...”
Zechariah 4:10

In this scene, Ester goes to Ramona's favorite “unwinding” spot to share some unfortunate news: the house is now in escrow. As the women struggle with how that will affect their lives, Ester shares that she “thought Franklin left me this house for a reason.”

Initially, Ester believed the house was left for its financial value. But she soon learns that while as a house it might not be worth much, as a home, its value is limitless. It's one of the first steps Ester takes toward understanding the bigger picture of the importance of caring for kids in the foster system.

“One small, insubstantial step at a time.” While that is her answer to Ramona's question about what she will do next, it also is a good description of Ester's journey toward God. When we are willing to take small steps toward Him, God is ready to run toward us (see the story of the Prodigal Son for a great illustration of this).

Ester isn't the only one who finds herself taking shaky, yet meaningful small steps. Later on, as Tony and Ramona are trying to decide if they can celebrate seeing a slight positive change in their two oldest foster kids, Tony reminds his wife of what the Bible says in the key passage: “Do not despise these small beginnings. ...”

Discussion Questions

1. Do you tend to see life as a journey or a destination? Why?
2. Think back to a time when your future looked bleak or muddled. What were the circumstances? Were you optimistic or pessimistic about your future at that time? How did it turn out?
3. Ramona tells Ester she doesn't find it at all strange that there is a “reason” for the house being what Franklin left his wife. Do you tend to look for a “reason” for why things happen in your life? Do find that to be a healthy exercise or a frustrating one? Why?
4. What does the phrase, “Do not despise these small beginnings ...” mean to you? Why is it often easy to look past initial steps?
5. What is a small beginning you are feeling called to take? Are you willing to take that first step? What's been holding you back?

Seeing Yourself How God Sees You

Scene: Ester gives Teri the antique butterfly locket (1:07:19-1:10:02)

Key Passage:

"In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost." Matthew 18:14 (NIV)

In the aftermath of Teri having stolen (and hocked) Ester's jewelry, Ester realizes she has something no one can take: an understanding of her self-worth. It has definitely been challenged by the death of her husband, her forced relocation to Georgia, and her indoctrination into the world of foster families.

Eventually, though, Ester discovers that with God's help, she's stronger than her circumstances. When Ester goes to the pawnshop where Teri had sold the jewelry, the one piece she makes sure to get back is her grandmother's broach. But not for her own pleasure or sentimental reasons.

No, Ester realizes that because of her circumstances, Teri has never received a blessing like the one that Ester's Grandmother bestowed upon her. Until now.

Ester tells the teen of how her Grandmother gave her not only this beautiful broach, but more importantly, a sense of her own beauty. Decades later, that one gift is still giving.

"It was if I could see myself through her eyes; through the eyes of someone who loved me so much that her very last thought was for me."

Ester goes on to compliment Teri on her fashion sense and her ability to see beauty in her dark world. She paints an image of her that Teri has never seen in herself.

Then, Ester gives her most precious heirloom to Teri.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the most memorable gift you were ever given? What made it so special? Do you still have it?
2. Did you ever receive a blessing like the one Ester bestows on Teri? If so, how did it impact your life? If not, did you feel a hole or a wound as you watched this scene?
3. What is the most meaningful thing you have given someone? Describe the circumstances.
4. Earlier in the movie, Ester is deeply hurt that Teri had stolen the jewelry. Name a time you were able to not only forgive someone that hurt you, but to then bless them?
5. Do you have a gift that you could share with someone? It doesn't have to be an heirloom; it could be as simple as a handwritten letter. Who is the person? What is the gift?

Invest Your Life

Scene: Ester, Tony, and Ramona talk about the future (1:14:35-1:16:10)

Key Passage:

"To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away." Matthew 25:29 (NLT)

Ester Hobbes has come a long way. From a Chicago socialite to a small-town Georgia landlord, she has had quite the journey. So with her house now saved, what's next? She tells Tony and Ramona that she would like to find a way to continue impacting the lives of foster children.

Tony's response: "Are you sure that's what you want to spend your life doing?" It's a fair question. Foster parenting is not an easy or a glamorous role. But instead of directly answering the question, Ester focuses on the phrase Tony used: "spend your life."

"That's such a strange phrase," she says. "It's as if time were currency you were doling out." She talks about the options we have; we can spend time doing something meaningful, or doing something meaningless. Whichever way we chose, we all eventually run out of time.

"And when you're done spending, you'll have spent your life on nothing ... or something worthwhile."

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells of people who have wisely invested what God has given them, and of those who haven't. We see the results for both in the key passage.

Through the magic of filmmaking, we get to jump ahead 15 years and see the impact that Tony, Ramona, and Ester have had by spending their lives on something worthwhile. The birthday party/family reunion gives them—and us—pause to celebrate time well spent.

Discussion Questions

1. In actual distance, what is the longest journey you have ever been on? What was that trip like for you? Does remembering it make you want to travel again ... or stay home?
2. Have you thought much about the phrase "spend your life"? What do you think about Ester's take on it? What are your thoughts about the phrase?
3. What is one time-spender you would like to curtail or eliminate from your life? How can you make that change happen?
4. If you could fast-forward your life 15 years, what would you want it to look like? Why?
5. No one wants to be known as having spent their life on nothing. What are you currently doing that is worthwhile? Are there other worthwhile elements you'd like to add to your life? How could you make that happen?

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A True Family Film

Five guarded and confused foster children. Two loving, but weary, foster parents. One grieving former socialite. Put them all under one dilapidated roof and you get eight unique individuals in a house.

Or maybe, just maybe, it could become the family they've all been longing for.

The Lost and Found Family is a touching story of hardship, change, and the faith that God can make things better, no matter how difficult the situation appears. It's a great reminder that God brings out the best in us when we show His compassion to those in desperate need of love.

Starring

- **Ellen Bry** ("*St. Elsewhere*")
- **Lucas Till** (*Hannah Montana: The Movie*)
- **Jessica Luza** ("*The Hills: Fashion Wrap-Up*")

"This story is about discovery, compassion, hope, and love."

Dove Foundation Review - Dove Family-Approved



AVAILABLE ON DVD ... OWN IT TODAY!

lostandfoundfamilymovie.com

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MUSIC BY NUNO MALO EDITED BY ELLEN GOLDWASSER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BRIAN GUNTER PETER BENISON EDITOR DAVID HARSHBARGER WRITTEN BY TERRY COLLIS JEFF ROSS ANNA WATERHOUSE
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