

Taylor Firth

Rob Mayes

ICE CASTLES

Special Appearance by
Michelle Kwan

"AN INSTANT
ROMANTIC CLASSIC"

-Joel D. Amos, SheKnows.com

Take your chance.
Find your strength.
Live your dream.



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 *Ice Castles*. 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 in the small town of Windsor, Iowa, against the backdrop of the amateur figure skating circuit, *Ice Castles* tells the story of Lexi Winston (played by figure skater Taylor Firth), a skating prodigy who aspires to greatness despite the adversity she encounters during her meteoric rise. Given the remarkable chance to develop her ability, Lexi forges into the world of competitive skating, but after a tragic accident, she faces a crushing despair that threatens to destroy her. With determination and the support of her friends and family, Lexi perseveres in a tremendous way, realizing her dreams with a greater understanding of herself and of love.

Toward the beginning of the movie, Lexi's aunt (Jane, played by Eve Crawford) challenges the young skater to test her ability by entering an upcoming junior tournament in Cedar Rapids. Lexi, though content to categorize herself more as a hobbyist than a competitor, is reluctant to compete, until she discusses the matter with her boyfriend Nick (Rob Mayes), who convinces her to try. Soon after, the group – including Lexi's father, Marcus (Henry Czerny) – heads to the event where Lexi performs flawlessly and wins over the crowd. Unfortunately, her overall routine lacks polish and intricacy, and her efforts don't earn a competitive score.

While Lexi's performance doesn't garner a win, it does catch the eye of Aiden Reynolds (Morgan Kelly), an Olympian-turned-coach, who sees great potential in the young skater and invites her to join his elite program. Once in Boston, Lexi trains with Aiden and his assistant Melissa (Tattiawna Jones) as she works tirelessly to develop her ability, transform her image and become skating's new sensation. But as Lexi's fame increases, so does her alienation from her peers and from Nick, and she turns to Aiden for comfort. After a startling confrontation with Nick, Lexi realizes that she's lost sight of herself in the fame and flattery that surround her. Escaping the pressure, she returns to her home – the ice – for a skate that would change her life.

(Warning – spoilers mentioned below.)

One night, at a lavish party, Lexi leaves the crowded room and takes to the ice. As she attempts to land a jump, she falls and smashes her head against the ice, resulting in a condition that leaves her all but blind. With her Olympic hopes dashed, Lexi retreats to Windsor, becoming a recluse as she withdraws into the safety of her home and her self-pity. Eventually, in a burst of concern and tough love, Marcus forces Lexi out of the house and into her skates. Though she protests, Nick steps in and patiently coaches her, and she's soon skating once more. After much deliberation, Nick, Marcus, and Jane help Lexi claim her nationals spot, and the former Olympic hopeful achieves the impossible as she completes her routine and stuns the crowd.

CREW OVERVIEW

Donald Wrye (Director)

Donald Wrye (Writer: teleplay)

Gary L. Baim (Writer: teleplay/story)

Karen Bloch Morse (Writer: teleplay)

CAST OVERVIEW

Taylor Firth (Lexi Winston)

Rob Mayes (Nick Peterson)

Henry Czerny (Marcus Winston)

Morgan Kelly (Aiden Reynolds)

Tattiawna Jones (Melissa)

Eve Crawford (Aunt Jane)

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THEME ONE: IDENTITY

Guiding Scripture: Ephesians 2:10 (NLT): “For we are God’s masterpiece.

He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

SCRIPTURES REFERENCED:

- Romans 8:17 (NIV): “Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”
- Romans 8:28 (NIV): “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”
- 1 Corinthians 12:20, 27 (NLT): “Yes, there are many parts, but only one body...All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.”
- 2 Corinthians 1:21–22 (NLT): “It is God who enables us, along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything he has promised us.”
- Ephesians 2:10 (NLT): “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”
- Philippians 1:6 (NIV): “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”
- Philippians 4:13 (NIV): “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”
- Colossians 2:9–10 (NLT): “For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.”
- 2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV): “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”
- James 1:17 (NIV): “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”



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SCENES TO REVIEW

- Junior Championships (00:07:27 – 00:14:01)
- Rising Celebrity (00:38:35 – 00:41:57)
- Alone at a Party (00:52:29 – 00:56:50)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Ephesians 2:10 (see Scriptures Referenced) says that those who have accepted Christ are “God’s masterpiece.” The verse further adds that God has “created us anew in Christ Jesus,” giving us a rebirth and a uniqueness rooted in the Son of God. Yet, even with this amazing assurance, we can still struggle with identity. Because the concept of identity includes questions of place, purpose and ability, it can be difficult to understand how all the pieces fit together.

Such is the case with Lexi. Even though a large portion of her identity involves her innate skating ability, she struggles to understand its place in her life, especially when she feels compelled to care for her dad and to support Nick in his professional pursuit. But when she performs at the junior championships in such a way as to catch a talent scout’s eye, Lexi receives an incredible offer complete with the chance to explore the different facets of her identity.

SCENE TO REVIEW: JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (00:07:27 – 00:14:01)

- Toward the beginning of the scene, other skaters mock Lexi. How does this derision demonstrate the way that people’s opinions can threaten someone’s sense of identity?
- How does Lexi’s performance show her passion for skating? Are people’s passions usually indicative of their identities or personalities? Why or why not?

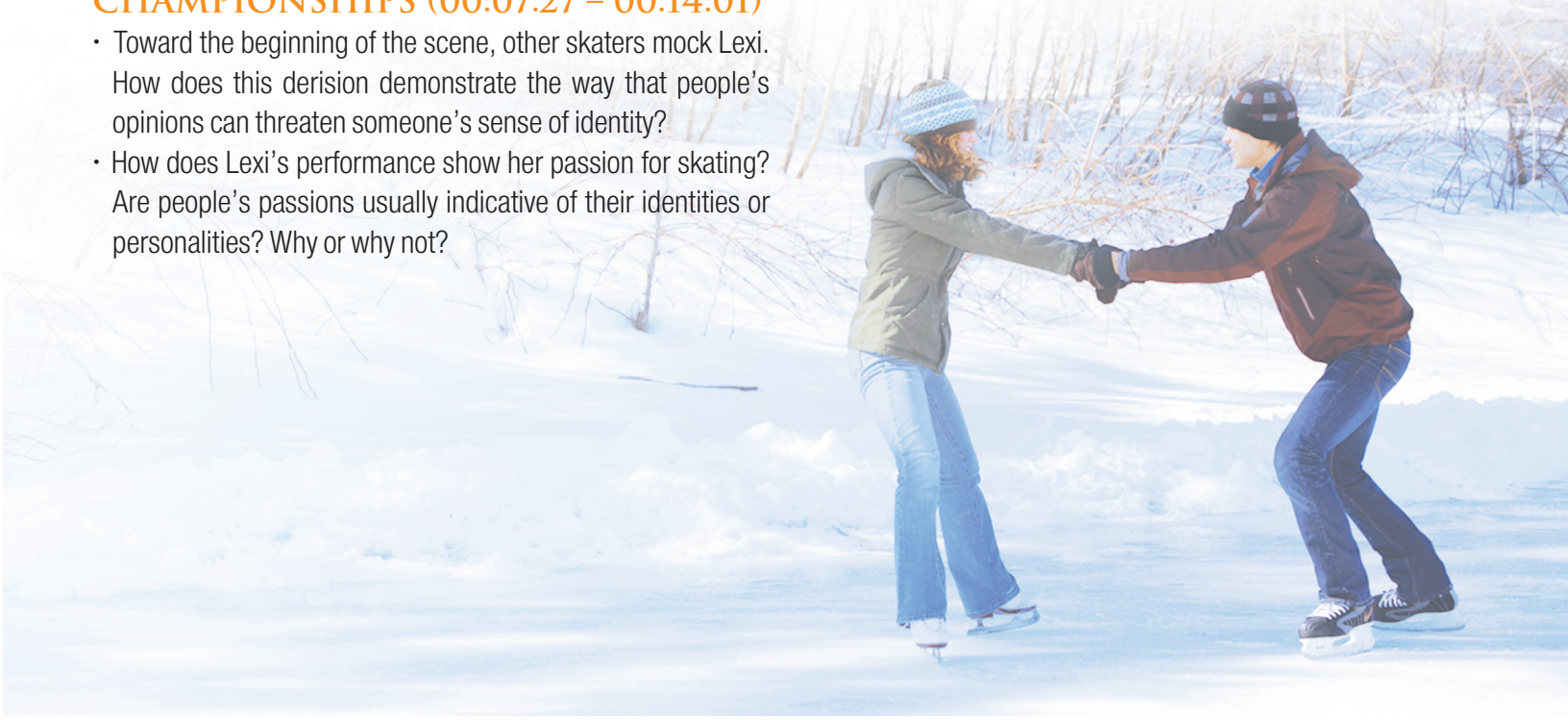
- Even though the judges give Lexi low scores, how does the crowd’s response serve to boost the young skater’s confidence and restore her sense of identity and purpose?
- What are your thoughts on Aiden’s visit? What does his acknowledgment of Lexi’s talent mean for her? With Aiden’s offer on the table, what tough decisions does Lexi face?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:20, 27 AND 2 TIMOTHY 1:7

(SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- How does the Corinthians passage relate to this theme discussion? What is at the core of believers’ identities? How does this core contribute to the unique nature of a Christian?
- According to the Timothy passage, what attributes does God bestow? How can these qualities come to our aid when outside forces threaten to shake our identity?

As Lexi transitions from Windsor to Boston, she faces more than just a change in location. Outwardly, nearly everything about Lexi transforms – style, hair, makeup – as Aiden and Melissa add the glamour component to Lexi’s formidable profile. And with her proven talent, Lexi’s career skyrockets. Soon, she’s a media darling, garnering coverage and amassing a following. Amidst the whirlwind though, one person confronts Lexi’s changing lifestyle.



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SCENE TO REVIEW: RISING CELEBRITY (00:38:35 – 00:41:57)

- How are Lexi’s new lifestyle and appearance symbolic of all the recent changes in her life? What might these changes add to a discussion of Lexi’s struggle with identity?
- Does Lexi seem comfortable in her new role as America’s media darling? Why or why not? How could the instant celebrity be detrimental to Lexi’s understanding of herself?
- How does Lexi’s passion for skating help to sustain her as she enters this new life and faces future uncertainties? Can ability be a source of comfort in difficult times? How so?
- During their heated talk, Nick essentially accuses Lexi of becoming a different person. Do you agree with Nick’s assessment? What are his reasons for making such a comment?

TAKE SOME TIME TO READ PHILIPPIANS 1:6 AND 4:13 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- What does Philippians 1:6 suggest about faith as an ongoing process? How might this message be applicable to the concept of identity and its similar development?
- How does Philippians 4:13 offer a great message of hope to those who are in the midst of uncertainty? What does the verse say about relying on someone greater than yourself?

At a party following her winning sectional performance, Aiden navigates Lexi through a crowd of network executives and unfamiliar admirers. Throughout the event, Lexi is obviously uncomfortable with the lavish attention, and she finds a quiet place to call her father. During the conversation, it’s clear that Lexi misses her home and family, so perhaps fame and fortune haven’t answered her questions, and perhaps she still wonders about the girl from Windsor.

SCENE TO REVIEW: ALONE AT A PARTY (00:52:29 – 00:56:50)

- Describe Lexi’s responses and reactions to the strangers in the room. Does she seem comfortable with all the accolades and attention? Why or why not?

- What do you make of Lexi’s success to this point? Has her fame contributed to a greater understanding of her identity and purpose? Why or why not?
- How does Lexi’s demeanor change when she’s talking on the phone with her dad? What does this transformation reveal about her heart and her desires?
- At one point, Lexi asks her father, “Do you think I’m all right?” What do you think the question really means? How is it indicative of her struggle with identity?

READ ROMANS 8:17 AND 8:28 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- What does Romans 8:17 say about our identity in Christ? What does it mean to be “co-heirs” with the Son of God? How can we find encouragement in this promise?
- How does Romans 8:28 promise that, despite uncertain circumstances and tough choices (such as Lexi’s struggle), God will bring all things to fruition at the proper time?

As you conclude this theme discussion, take a moment to read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Colossians 2:9-10; and James 1:17 (see Scriptures Referenced) and discuss how these verses contribute to the concept of identity. If you’ve struggled with finding your place and purpose, take comfort in knowing that God has already prepared the way, and his Word is detailed map.



THEME TWO: LOVE

Guiding Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7–8 (NIV)

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud...It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

SCRIPTURES REFERENCED:

- Proverbs 3:11–12 (NIV): “My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”
- Matthew 22:37–39 (NIV): “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.’”
- Romans 12:10 (NLT): “Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.”
- Romans 13:10 (NIV): “Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”
- Romans 14:19 (NIV): “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”
- 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7–8 (NIV): “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud...It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”
- Ephesians 5:2 (NLT): “Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.”
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV): “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

- 1 John 4:16 (NIV): “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 him.”

SCENES TO REVIEW

- Encouraging Lexi’s Dreams (00:04:17 – 00:07:26)
- Returning to the Ice (01:05:25 – 01:10:21)
- Nick’s Plea (01:19:20 – 01:21:42)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As 1 Corinthians 13 (see Scriptures Referenced for a sampling of the chapter) so beautifully expresses, love is multifaceted. It possesses a range of qualities – patience, kindness and hope to name just a few – and it’s often manifested in a variety of ways, most commonly found in the Greek trio of *agape* (unconditional), *phileo* (brotherly or familial), and *eros* (romantic).

In *Ice Castles*, love certainly takes on the aforementioned attributes and forms in the ways that Marcus, Nick and Jane show their devotion to Lexi. In a sequence toward the beginning of the movie, Jane and Nick both express their love for Lexi by encouraging her to take a chance on an upcoming competition. Their passion for Lexi’s talent drives her decision to give it a try.



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SCENE TO REVIEW: ENCOURAGING LEXI'S DREAMS (00:04:17 – 00:07:26)

- How does Lexi respond to Jane's suggestion that she enter the competition? Why is Lexi hesitant to skate competitively at all, despite Jane's solid ideas for the program?
- What reasons does Nick give as to why he thinks Lexi should compete? How does he eventually convince her to give her talent a fair shake at the junior championships?
- How does this scene demonstrate Jane's and Nick's love for Lexi? In what ways do they show encouragement and support, and how do these characteristics relate to love?
- Have you experienced a similar situation in your own life? Can you think of a time when someone encouraged you to pursue a passion or dream? If so, what happened?

TAKE SOME TIME TO READ ROMANS 12:10 AND 1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- What are some of the ways that Jane and Nick live out Romans 12:10? Why is the act of honoring someone an authentic manifestation of love for that person?
- Why might it be important to adhere to the mandate in the Thessalonians passage? What are some practical ways that people can “build each other up”?

As Marcus watches his daughter succumb to the depression that so steadfastly surrounds her following the accident, he decides to take action. In a heart-wrenching example of tough love, Marcus pulls Lexi from the safety of her room and forces her to acknowledge the outside world. He laces up her skates and pulls her along the ice, inch by agonizing inch, until Nick arrives and delivers his own version of the tough love that is sometimes necessary.

SCENE TO REVIEW: RETURNING TO THE ICE (01:05:25 – 01:10:21)

- Immediately following the accident, Marcus treats Lexi in a fairly tender manner. Eventually though, he realizes that a timid advance may not be the answer. Why?
- Why does Marcus confront Lexi's self-pity? How can his actions be interpreted as a form of tough love? Why do some circumstances call for more extreme measures?
- What is Nick's initial approach with Lexi and how does his attitude change over the course of their interaction? What are some of the issues he's dealing with?
- Put yourself in Lexi's place for a moment. How would you feel about your situation? Would you see Marcus' and Nick's actions as forms of love? Why or why not?



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READ PROVERBS 3:11–12 AND ROMANS 13:10 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- What does the Proverbs passage say about self-imposed prisons? Why might an inability to handle discipline and rebuke lead to an inability to receive love?
- How does the Romans passage address the issue of “tough” love? Though tough love is sometimes necessary, why do we need to be mindful of wielding it carelessly?

For Nick, a young man who sometimes abandons difficult situations, it takes a good deal of strength to commit to Lexi during her recovery period. He’s declared his love in the past, but Lexi’s new circumstances give Nick the opportunity to really show how he feels. Equipped with a new outlook, Nick chooses the difficult path, and his voice becomes Lexi’s champion.

SCENE TO REVIEW: NICK’S PLEA (01:19:20 – 01:21:42)

- Despite the pressing edge to Nick’s argument, how is his advocacy of Lexi’s well-being an example of his love for her? What do his comments reveal about his feelings?
- Nick tells Lexi to give herself a chance to prove “that it was all worth it.” What does he mean? How does his comment convey his love for her and for her dreams?

- How does Nick’s passion conquer Marcus’ overprotective nature? What do you think of Nick’s point that Lexi will become a hermit if she doesn’t start challenging herself?
- As the four of them gather on the ice, what does their unified front say about their endeavor? What must it mean to Lexi to have such support and encouragement?

READ MATTHEW 22:37–39 AND ROMANS 14:19 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- One of the commandments in the Matthew passage is to love your neighbor as yourself. How does Nick’s support for Lexi represent that commandment?
- The Romans passage asks us to make every effort to do what leads to mutual edification. Do you believe that this scene is a display of that principle? Why or why not?

At the close of this theme discussion, read through the following verses: 1 Corinthians 13:4, 7–8; Ephesians 5:2; and 1 John 4:16 (see Scriptures Referenced). Discuss the various characteristics and types of love as presented in the Bible, and take some time to evaluate love in your own life and among the relationships with which you’ve been blessed.



THEME THREE: PERSEVERANCE

Guiding Scripture: Isaiah 41:10 (NIV):

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

SCRIPTURES REFERENCED:

- 1 Chronicles 16:11 (NIV): “Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.”
- Psalm 46:1 (NIV): “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”
- Psalm 138:8 (NIV): “The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O Lord, endures forever – do not abandon the works of your hands.”
- Isaiah 41:10 (NIV): “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
- Isaiah 58:11 (NIV): “The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”
- Romans 5:3 (NLT): “We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.”
- Romans 12:12 (NIV): “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”
- 2 Corinthians 12:10 (NIV): “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

- James 1:2–4 (NLT): “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”
- 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT): “Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.”

SCENES TO REVIEW

- The Accident (00:56:52 – 01:01:25)
- Practice, Practice, Practice (01:10:22 – 01:15:41)
- A Triumphant Return (01:24:16 – 01:32:00)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

At times, it may seem that life is brimming with unwelcome opportunities to demonstrate perseverance. Whether the obstacles we face are relatively small or overwhelmingly large, we can find encouragement and instruction in God’s Word. As Paul so powerfully writes, “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Romans 12:12, see Scriptures Referenced).

Near the pinnacle of her success, Lexi comes face-to-face with tragedy. One moment, she’s a celebrated Olympic hopeful; the next, a quickly fading memory. As the events of the accident play out, it becomes clear that Lexi now faces a most difficult decision: Will she overcome this recent adversity or will she allow her newfound despair to reign freely?



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SCENE TO REVIEW: THE ACCIDENT (00:56:52 – 01:01:25)

- According to the doctor, what is Lexi’s diagnosis? What does the diagnosis mean for her skating career and for Aiden’s role in her life, at least as far as Lexi is concerned?
- What does Lexi face in the days to come? How can she go about returning to her life, knowing that the accident has changed nearly everything for her?
- When does the process of perseverance begin? Does it begin at the moment of adversity or does the act of perseverance make its debut at a later time? What are your thoughts?
- Consider yourself for a moment. When you face various obstacles, how do you respond? Do you tend toward optimism or pessimism? Can you share any experiences?

READ ROMANS 5:3 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 12:10 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- In the Romans passage, why are problems and trials opportunities for growth? Why do the trying times in our lives lead to such qualities as endurance?
- In the 2 Corinthians verse, Paul writes, “For when I am weak, then I am strong.” What are your thoughts on this seemingly paradoxical statement? How is it possible?

After a startling wake-up call from Marcus and a subsequent meeting with Nick, Lexi decides to give skating another chance and returns to the ice. What ensues are additional steps in the process of perseverance – claiming small victories, struggling with setbacks and weathering attitude changes. Yet, despite the difficulties, these battles are important to Lexi’s continued healing.

SCENE TO REVIEW: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE (01:10:22 – 01:15:41)

- Despite a few moments when Lexi is frustrated with herself, how does this scene reflect a change in Lexi’s attitude toward the positive? Can you point to specific examples?
- What are some of Lexi’s small victories in this scene? How

can those small victories be a huge encouragement to a person who may be in the midst of enduring hardship?

- How do some of Lexi’s actions represent her growing desire to be independent? Why might this pursuit of independence be an example of Lexi’s success in perseverance?
- What part does Nick play in her recovery? Describe the approach he takes with Lexi and how it evolves over the period of time in which they work on Lexi’s rehabilitation.

READ PSALM 138:8 AND JAMES 1:2-4 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- According to Psalm 138:8, God will fulfill his purpose for us. How does this verse offer a message of encouragement and hope for those who are in the midst of a trial?
- James urges us to consider troubles as opportunities for great joy. What does this verse mean when applied to life? What are some real ways that we can find joy in adversity?

After a grueling training period, Lexi finally returns to competitive skating. In a celebration of the power of perseverance, she gracefully executes her routine, revealing her strength of character for having endured such hardship and having emerged victorious. Even though a traitorous stumble at the end reveals her secret, her accomplishment is one that cannot be tainted.

SCENE TO REVIEW: A TRIUMPHANT RETURN (01:24:16 – 01:32:00)

- How is Lexi’s performance a witness to the power of perseverance? What does her accomplishment mean to her and to her friends and family?
- During the performance, the crowd is unaware of Lexi’s blindness. How does her decision to keep her blindness a secret show her strength of character?
- What do you think of the moment when Lexi stumbles over the flowers and falls? What purpose does this scene serve and how does it relate to the ending?
- How about you? Can you recall a time(s) when your perseverance came to fruition? What did it feel like to endure and overcome adversity? What did you learn about yourself?

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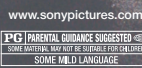
TAKE SOME TIME TO READ ISAIAH 41:10 AND 58:11 (SEE SCRIPTURES REFERENCED).

- How does Isaiah 41:10 give us the courage and strength to endure adversity? What does the verse say in relation to the concept of perseverance?
- What promises are found in Isaiah 58:11? How do these promises address the idea of perseverance? What do you think of the verse’s image of gardens and springs?

As you conclude this theme discussion, read through 1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 46:1; and 1 Peter 5:7 (see Scriptures Referenced), and think about how these verses – and any others that may come to mind – relate to the concept of perseverance.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Music plays an important role in the movie whether featured in a skater’s routine or used in the background. How does the film’s use of music enhance the overall story?
- What does the storyline tell us about Lexi’s mother? In what way does her absence impact the relationship between Lexi and Marcus and the decisions each of them make?
- How is Nick’s relationship with hockey indicative of his relationship with Lexi? What do his choices say about him? Does he mature in the movie? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the world of competitive skating as portrayed in the movie? What are your thoughts on the role that Aiden Reynolds plays in Lexi’s success?
- How does the film change (in terms of lighting, cinematography, costumes, etc.) when the story transitions from Windsor, Iowa, to the training center in Boston, Massachusetts?



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