

Mary Poppins Returns

Good morning! My name is Shelli Mosteller. I'm the Creative Arts Pastor and I'm so glad you've joined us for our first week of Summer at the Movies. During this series, we pick a few favorite movies and search for God's truths in them. We do this because we believe in the power of a story, and we know we can find God wherever we look. He's not just something we talk about on Sunday at church; he's part of our everyday life

I chose Mary Poppins Returns because I have an ongoing mild obsession with Mary Poppins. The first movie came out before I was born, but it was re-released when I was six years old. I watched it every time it was on the Wonderful World of Disney.

(Album pic) I had this album with a giant storybook. Anyone else have this? I had the whole thing memorized. I even climbed on top of our van and tried to fly with my umbrella. It didn't end well. But I was a believer. So, I was really excited when Mary Poppins Returns came out. If you haven't seen it yet, go home and watch it today. It's on Netflix.

I'm assuming everyone here has seen the original Mary Poppins. You've had 55 years to do it. So you probably know the basic story and characters. In Mary Poppins Returns, Jane and Michael Banks are all grown up. Michael is a father and has three children. Mary Poppins only goes to families in need. The situation that brings her to the Banks family this time is grief. Michael's wife died a year ago and the family is struggling. So that's the premise of the movie, which sounds really sad. But, believe it or not, it's filled with hope and joy, and you can take so much encouragement from it.

What Mary Poppins does best is help people change the way they think. She helps them see things clearly or differently. One way she does this is by turning ordinary things into fantastic adventures.

Can You Imagine That clip (leave lights down afterwards)

Can you imagine? Oh to celebrate the sheer wonder and joy of imagination. Now I want to show you another really short clip that you may not have seen.

Bathtub clip

How cool is that? They just dreamed that up and created something magical with a slide, some PVC pipe and foam. I read in an interview that Emily Blunt said the kids wanted to go down the slide a million times. They got to go down feet-first or head-first. If you noticed, she had to go down backwards! How fun is that? Can you imagine?

We underestimate how important imagination really is. We often think it's mainly for children and maybe artists. But it's not considered an important skill or trait; it's not something you need to work on or practice. You either have it or you don't. People come up to me all the time and say, "I'm not creative. I don't have a good imagination." We're gonna have to agree to disagree. Because you, my friend, were made in God's image. You're made to look, act and think like Him. **The most creative being in the universe left his fingerprints all over your DNA.**

Scientists estimate there are roughly 9 to 10,000 species of birds. Birds! So you tell me— ya think imagination is important to God? That same God who dreamed up all of creation, wired your brain. Just sit with that for a second. I think God puts a high value on imagination. I think he expects us to use it daily. Paul writes,

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.” (Phil. 4:8-9)

Fix your thoughts on things that are true and pure, and lovely... God wants you to daydream! I used to get this on my report card all the time—Shelli is a delight to have in class, but she talks too much and she daydreams. Well guess what? I turned that into a career. God wants you to imagine, to think on things. You can use your imagination to lift you up from where you are.

Let’s practice for a minute: **(IMAGINE)** Think about people you love. Imagine their faces. See their smiles. Hear their laugh. Think how they’ve changed you, because people we love always change us. Think about the most beautiful place you’ve ever been. What did the sky look like? What was under your feet? God gave you a gorgeous imagination. You can choose to fill your thoughts with all sorts of good and lovely things. **Your imagination can even help you dream of new ways to love God and love people.**

Imagination is incredibly important.

Mary Poppins is great at subversively getting people to use their imaginations. She’s also really good at helping people see things from a different perspective. In the movie, the children accidentally break their mother’s china bowl. They’re devastated. Mary and her friend Jack, take the children to Mary’s cousin Topsy, so she can fix the bowl. But there’s a problem, because it’s the second Wednesday of the month and that’s when Topsy’s world

literally turns upside-down. Watch as Mary helps her gain some perspective.

Turning Turtle clip

How important is the way we think? Well, it affects everything we do or say, so I'm guessing it's kind of a big deal. Sometimes life really does turn upside-down and it's easy to get overwhelmed and discouraged. It can be tempting to shut down and say, "Nope. Not fixing any china bowls today." And sometimes that's okay. Sometimes we have to rest our wings and heal. And sometimes, we need to look at things differently, to reframe our situation, to change our minds.

Listen to this: **"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2)** God can transform us into new and better people, by helping us change the way we think. That's incredible. Maybe you're going through something right now and you need to flip it upside-down and look at it from a different angle. Ask God to help you gain perspective. It could change everything. Fixing our thoughts and changing our minds can help us become better people.

Another thing Mary Poppins is good at, is letting people stumble onto the truth themselves. Watch as she lets the children lead the way.

(TripLittleLight clips)

The children are literally and metaphorically walking in a fog. But Mary Poppins doesn't take them by the hand and drag them over to a streetlight. She lets them realize they need the light first

and then she lets them follow it. Isn't that the way it is sometimes? We get so focused on our problems, our past, we don't realize we're lost until we stop and look up.

"Trip the light fantastic" sounds like some hippy phrase from the 60's, but it's actually really old. It means to dance nimbly. The song is full of this amazing choreography and Mary Poppins joins in and dances. But remember, she's not there to frolic. She's there to help the family work through their grief, to find hope and joy again. She never loses sight of her mission.

Most of us want to follow the light and we're grateful for it. But did you hear part of what Jack sang? "A leerie's job's to light the way, to tame the night and make it day. We mimic the moon, yes that's our aim. For we're the keepers of the flame." That's us as well. **"They stumble because they do not obey God's word, and so they meet the fate that was planned for them. But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light."** (1 Peter 2:8-9) **We're followers of the Light and keepers of the flame.**

When we're fixing our thoughts, changing our minds, following the Light—it changes us and it shows. We become light and we can help someone else who's stumbling through the fog. It may be as simple as listening, or checking in on someone. Shining even a little light may help someone make it to the next lamppost. The children started that night, lost in a fog. They ended it carrying their own flames.

Eventually, the children help their father find a little light and hope of his own.

Nowhere to Go But Up clip

It's a choice; it's always a choice. Imagining a life full of joy and wonder. Fixing our thoughts on what is pure and lovely. Changing our minds. Giving into the dark, or tripping the light fantastic. **We choose how we fill our minds every single day; it's up to us. Choose carefully.**

Let's stand and sing one last song together. Our prayer team will be down front if you need them. My prayer for you this week is that your thoughts are filled with hope, wonder and possibility.