



LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Guide and Bible Study

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Leader's Guide developed by:

Reel Spirituality

**An Institute of the Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts at
Fuller Theological Seminary**

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Dear Friends of Reel Spirituality:

Film has become our culture's primary storytelling medium. Ask a group of people how many have seen *Schindler's List* or *Shrek* and almost everyone will raise their hands. Such movies not only entertain, they educate, helping us see what we might otherwise miss. Of course, there are movies that are poorly done and others that survive on adrenalin alone. But many more help us explore life and its meaning through their honest portrayals and engaging narratives. Movies invite conversation and even communion. After watching a movie together with others, many find the film serving as one more "person" in the group, a guest who has sought truth and shared vulnerably. Having sought life at some more central region, movies encourage a similar searching, openness and vulnerability from their viewers.

To help you in this movie conversation, we at Fuller Seminary's Reel Spirituality Institute are publishing study guides of selected, soon-to-be-released films. We trust you will find these guides helpful in your personal reflections, informal conversations, and ministry settings. Why not take a group of neighbors or friends to the cineplex and then discuss the film over coffee? You will get to know each other better and you may be surprised to find yourself in God's presence.

Happy viewing,

Rob Johnston and Barry Taylor
Codirectors, Reel Spirituality: An Institute for Moving Images

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is a resource for Christians who wish to lead their families, friends, small group and/or church through a thought-provoking post-screening conversation of the film *Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story*. It is not primarily intended to give answers to the spiritual questions raised by the film. Rather, it seeks to identify and highlight them. By articulating these questions and putting them into dialogue with scripture, the hope is to help you, as the leader, facilitate meaningful dialogue with your group.

BEFORE THE FILM

If you are planning to create an event to see the film as a group, Group Ticket Sales are available for your church or youth group through the Dreamworks website, www.DreamWorks.com/groupsales. Also, you can download a photo from the gallery at www.DreamWorks.com/dreamer to make a poster announcing the group viewing.

The key to leading a viable post-screening discussion is good preparation. As the leader, it is recommended that you review this study guide and make notes prior to seeing the film and leading your discussion. Feel free to customize it to your liking. Additional research, reviews, and background material for *Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story* are available for your use on the Internet Movie Database site, www.imdb.com.

AFTER THE FILM

Choose a place to gather that is relaxing and not too noisy. Bring pencils as well as the pieces of paper described in the first section below. Your role as the leader is to facilitate the conversation and show respect for each person's interpretation of the film and response to the questions. You are not required to do all the talking.

The first section of this study guide considers the theme of *family*. It is intended as a section that will help you break open the film and get everyone talking. Of course, you may find it more appropriate to begin and end your discussion elsewhere. You also may want to focus on certain sections more heavily than others, depending upon the interest and energy of the group. There is no conclusion to this guide. The hope is that your group will reach its own conclusions. But you may want to think through how you will close your time together, whether that be through a review of the conversation, creating action-steps, or prayer.

FOR INFO ON DREAMER GROUP TICKET SALES
PROGRAMS FOR YOUR CONGREGATION OR YOUTH GROUP,
PLEASE CALL 1-877-370-1122 OR LOG ONTO...

WWW.DREAMWORKS.COM/GROUPSALES



Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story tells the story of a father who, for the love of his daughter, sacrifices almost everything to save the life of an injured horse and bring the promising filly back to her former glory. The film stars Kurt Russell (*Miracle*), Dakota Fanning (*War of the Worlds*) and Kris Kristofferson (*Lone Star*).

Ben Crane (Kurt Russell) was once a great horseman whose gifts as a trainer are now being wasted on making other men's fortunes. Soñador—called Sonya—was a great horse whose promising future on the racetrack is suddenly cut short by a career-ending broken leg. Considered as good as dead to her owner, who also happens to be Ben's boss, Sonya is given to Ben as severance pay, along with his walking papers. Now, it will take the unwavering faith and determination of Ben's young daughter, Cale (Dakota Fanning), to bring these two damaged souls together in a quest for a seemingly impossible goal: to win the Breeders' Cup Classic. However, the true miracle might be that, in helping this injured horse, what they are actually healing is their own family.

The strength of *Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story* is its ability to weave a portrait of healing into an exciting, family-friendly, and crowd-pleasing story. In watching the Cranes and Sonya struggle to gain strength and overcome obstacles, we the audience are offered the opportunity to consider the struggles and obstacles in our own lives. What keeps us from pursuing healthy relationships with our own family? How can we get better at communicating? What obstacles prevent us from having faith in God, ourselves, and others? Such spiritually charged questions (and more!) are raised by *Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story*.

THEMES

Although *Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story* has many themes, this study guide will consider:

- Family
- Communication
- Faith
- Social Issues

FAMILY

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.

-Colossians 3:18-21 NRSV



Icebreaker

Write the names of Ben/Dad, Lilly/Mom, Cale/Daughter, Pop/Grandfather on pieces of paper, repeating as needed, and give one to each person present. Ask the group to take a few moments and imagine themselves as that character in the film. Let each person share what he/she liked or didn't like about that person and why.

1. What is the first thing that occurs to you about the Crane family as the film unfolds? What kinds of problems is the family having? Why do these problems exist?
2. Is Cale happy at the beginning of the film? Why or why not? How does she change from the beginning to the end of the film? What makes Cale change? Why is she so drawn to Sonya? What does having a “dream” like Sonya mean to her?
3. At the beginning of the film, Ben is an unhappy man and so is his father, Pop. They seem to provoke one another. If you could give them any advice about how to get along better, what would you tell them? How do they change from the beginning of the film to the end? What does Sonya, as a symbol of their hopes and dreams, mean to them?
4. What lessons do the characters teach each other? What does Cale teach Ben? Ben teach Cale? Pop teach Ben? Lilly teach Cale? Etc.
5. In what ways is the Crane family similar/different from your own family?



6. Read Philippians 4:8-9 together. The apostle Paul is describing virtues—those good actions that become habits. As a group, brainstorm and list 10-15 possible virtues. Then ask the group to take their papers with their character's name on it and to write two or three virtues that their member of the Crane family expressed in the movie. Invite everyone to share what they wrote and why.

COMMUNICATION

Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

-1 Timothy 4:12 NRSV

1. How would you compare Ben's communication skills with Cale's? Who better exemplifies the above passage?
2. Does Cale set an example for the adults in the film? How? Do you really think that young people can set examples for adults? Why or why not? Can you think of an example from your youth when you set an example for an older person?
3. When family members communicate in positive ways—through speech, email, letters—strong relationships are built that can last generations. How did Ben and Lilly communicate? Do you think they loved each other? Why? How did Ben and his father communicate? What do you think happened that caused Ben and Pop to stop communicating in positive ways? Do they still love each other? How do you know?
4. How did the family's way of communicating grow stronger throughout the film? Between Ben and Lilly? Ben and Pop? Ben and Cale? Etc. What catalyzed this change? How did Sonya's presence contribute to this change? Can you think of a specific scene where Sonya played a role in improving the family communication? What would need to happen in your own life to improve your family communication?
5. Where is the value of listening articulated in the film?
6. The trainer Palmer uses speech that is harsh, unkind, and racially demeaning to Balon and Manolin. Is this kind of speech un-Christian? What does it say about the kind of man Palmer is? Can you think of areas in your own life where your speech could use more love, faith, and purity?



FAITH

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance....

-Romans 5:1-3 NRSV

1. Religious faith is belief in things unseen, the conviction that God will keep His promises made to us through His revealed word. Human faith is the belief that trusted ones will come through for us when we need help. There are many examples of faith in *Dreamer: Inspired by a True Story*. Can you think of any? Which characters display faith?

2. What event(s) led to Cale's transformation from a quiet, sad child to a confident horse owner? What do you think gave her the confidence to step in front of the Breeders' Cup selection committee and say, when asked if she could pay the entry fee, "The check is in the mail." Or to answer Prince Sarid when he questions her, "Do you think your horse will beat my brother's horse in the race," with the response, "My horse will beat any horse that shows up." Did her confidence have anything to do with faith? If so, what kind of faith?



3. One example of faith occurs when Cale and her dad are talking in the barn in front of Sonya's stall about her chances to win the Breeders' Cup. Cale asks her dad, "Do you think Sonya can win?" Her dad responds, "Yes." "Say 'I think she can win,'" Cale tells her dad. "I think she can win," he replies. Cale says, "Good, she needed to hear you say it." Why was this particular conversation so important to all of them? When in your own life has having faith been important?
4. Another example of faith is when Cale tells Manolin that he will be Sonya's jockey. After he fell off the horse and got hurt, he believed the dreams he had at night were God's way of telling him that he was supposed to do something else with his life other than be a jockey. Now that he is preparing to be Sonya's jockey for the race, he has a different dream that he believes to be a sign from God, too. But of what? What do you think of Manolin's faith? Do you believe that God could communicate with him in such a way? Through signs, dreams, etc.?
5. How is the mix of human and spiritual faith of the Crane family, Balon, Manolin and Prince Sarid rewarded? Do you think that Sonya could sense their belief in her?

6. Why do you think this film is called *Dreamer*? And who is the real dreamer in the film? (Is there more than one?)

SOCIAL ISSUES

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...



-Genesis 1:26-27 NRSV

1. When Palmer tells Ben at the beginning of the film to take the injured Sonya and "those Mexicans" with him, what do you think he was saying about his opinion of people who were different from him? How does Ben show that he believes that Manolin and Balon are his equals? How do you typically respond to people when they treat you or others harshly because of race, creed, or social status?

2. What did you think of Palmer when he approached Ben and Cale to buy Sonya back once he realized she might win? How did he try to use his status to get what he wanted? Why do you think Ben and Cale were so opposed to the idea?
3. Prince Sarid and his brother are obviously very rich. They are also very competitive--each wants his own horse to win. Do you think their competition with each other was healthy? Why or why not? At what point does competition begin to violate the basic human dignity of others?
4. Cale is given a great deal of responsibility and power when her father puts Sonya's ownership papers in her name? Did Cale handle this power well? Did she ever abuse it? How would you have handled such power similarly/differently? What did Cale's handling of her power say about her value of others?
5. Do you believe that all people are equal? How would the above passage support/oppose your belief?

