

“Saturdays at the Sculley’s” - “The Truman Show” starring Jim Carrey, Laura Linney, & Ed Harris, 1998, PG, 103 minutes

Major themes:

- Exploitation
- Search for truth
- Fear & guilt
- Manipulation
- Voyeurism
- Freedom vs. “safety”

Major Characters:

- Truman Burbank
- Christof
- Meryl
- Marlon
- Lauren / Sylvia

Interesting info:

- This film was directed by Australian Peter Weir, who also directed *“Picnic at Hanging Rock”* 23 years earlier – the themes common to these two movies are described as *“enclosed, restrictive, or repressive social milieus”*
- Dennis Hopper was originally cast in the role of Christof, but walked off the set after only one day on the job (due to “creative differences”). Although Ed Harris was a last-minute replacement, he won a Golden Globe for his performance and was nominated for an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor.

Scriptures:

John 8:31 – 32, 44 (NLT) – *“Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” . . . For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

Luke 17:1 – 2 (NLT) – *“One day Jesus said to his disciples, “There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. So watch yourselves!”*

Galatians 5:1 (NIV) – *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

2 Corinthians 2:11 (The Message) – *“We don't want to unwittingly give Satan an opening for yet more mischief—we're not oblivious to his sly ways!”*

2 Corinthians 10:5 (NLT) – *“We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”*

2 Corinthians 11:14 (NLT) – *“Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”*

Luke 18:17 (NLT) – *“I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”*

Mark 4:14 – 20 (NLT) – *“The farmer plants seed by taking God’s word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”*

Discussion points:

1. How is Christof similar to Satan as the master of deception?
2. Christof says Truman could discover the truth if he were “absolutely determined” to do so. Can a person discover the spiritual truth of the gospel without being deeply determined? What does the Bible say is required?
3. Discuss the messages on Truman Show merchandise:
 - a. “Love him, protect him”
 - b. “How’s it going to end?”
4. An essay published in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis analyzed Truman as “*[A] prototypical adolescent at the beginning of the movie. He feels trapped into a familial and social world to which he tries to conform while being unable to entirely identify with it, believing that he has no other choice (other than through the fantasy of fleeing to a far-way island). Eventually, Truman gains sufficient awareness of his condition to ‘leave home’ — developing a more mature and authentic identity as a man, leaving his child-self behind and becoming a True-man.*”

5. Parallels can be drawn from Thomas More's 1516 book *Utopia*, in which More describes an island with only one entrance and only one exit. Only those who belonged to this island knew how to navigate their way through the treacherous openings safely and unharmed. This situation is similar to The Truman Show because there are limited entryways into the world that Truman knows. Truman does not belong to this utopia into which he has been implanted, and childhood trauma rendered him frightened of the prospect of ever leaving this small community. The people in Truman's world are like-minded in their common effort to keep him oblivious to reality.

6. We often sense a reality beyond what we see and experience, but must overcome the obstacles of complacency and deception Satan throws our way. How is Truman like individuals described in the parable of the sower?

7. How did the producers prey on Truman's fears, and how did that keep him from becoming anything more than what they had planned for him? Consider the subtle messages crafted to undermine Truman's self-confidence. Discuss the ability of the media to manipulate people's emotions.

8. Discuss Peter Weir's statement, *"I think there's a kind of image virus.*

Images are so manipulated now. You can't be sure what you're looking at.

Is it a re-creation? Is it actual? Is it fiction? Does it matter? Children see

violence on TV so much that they don't know what's real or unreal." A news

item this past week said that an advertisement for Lancome makeup

featuring Atlanta-born Julia Roberts has been banned in Britain for being

too digitally manipulated and therefore misleading.