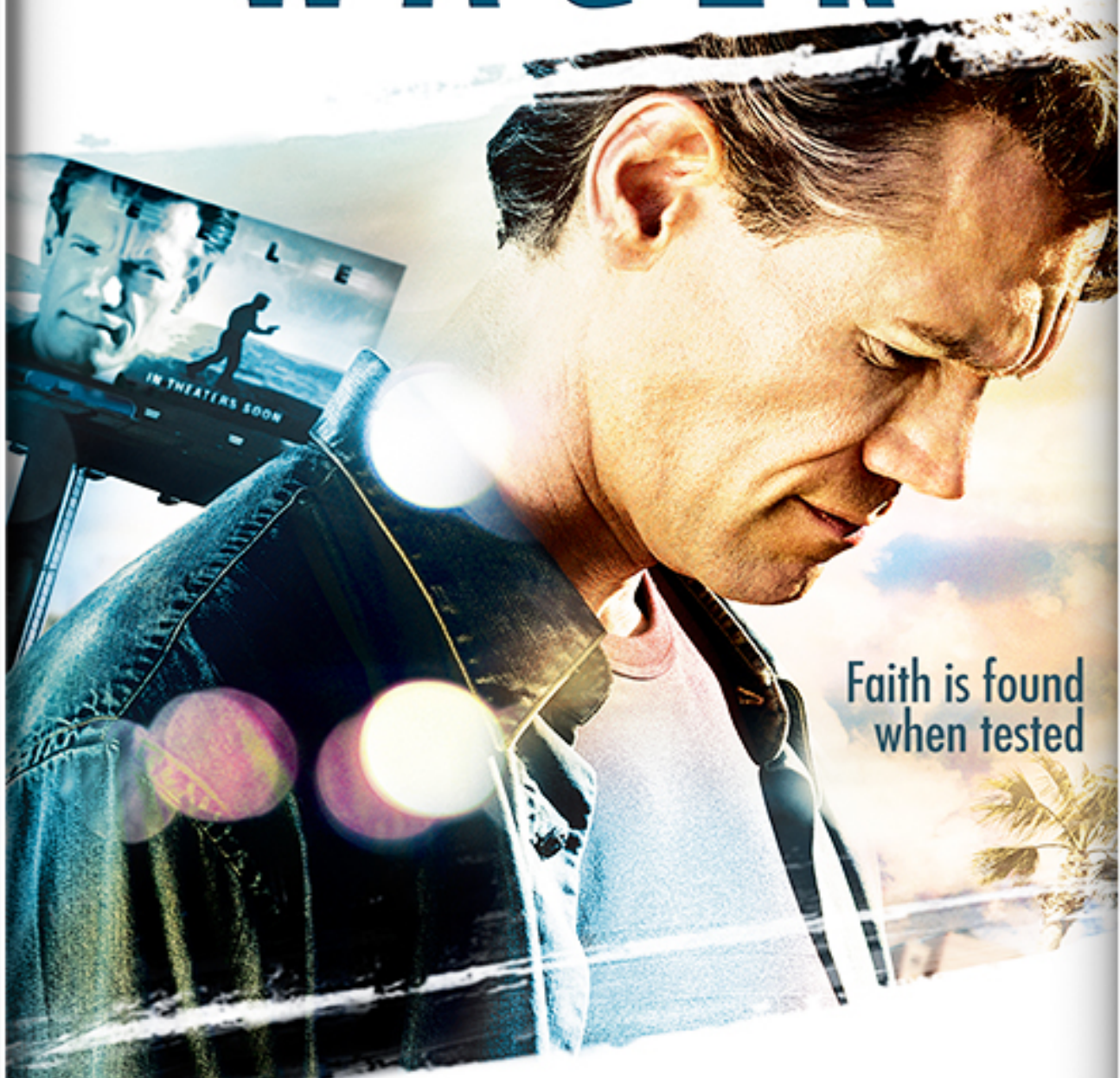


# DISCUSSION GUIDE

R A N D Y T R A V I S

THE

# W A G E R



Faith is found  
when tested



Awarded Dove Foundation's  
Family Seal of Approval.  
Ages 12+

From Best-Selling Author Bill Myers

# PURE FLIX

# THE WAGER

## **About The Wager**

The Wager is the adaptation of best-selling author Bill Myers' acclaimed novel by the same name. It is appropriate for teenagers and adults. The Wager follows Academy award nominated actor Michael Steel through his turbulent adventure after finding himself the subject of a wager between God and Satan. Is he strong enough to live the truth no matter the consequences?

## **How to Use this Guide**

This free Bible Study Resource can be used to enhance discussions of divorce, persecution, tests of faith and how the Bible can help us understand them.

It is preferable that the film be viewed first. However, you may also use this guide for Sunday School classes and small group studies by watching the clips and discussing the issues addressed. The individual clips are available on the official website (<http://wager-themovie.com>) or on a specially prepared DVD.

Information is provided on a number of topics addressed in the film. Bible verses corresponding to the situations are included. They are followed by thoughtful questions designed to make participants delve deeper into the issues, the characters and foster discussions on these controversial issues.

A study leader can choose to focus on one, several or all of the topics. The first group of general questions – listed as The Wager Themes – can be used when all the group members have seen the film. The rest of the questions have accompanying clips and deal with specific topics that are addressed in The Wager.

## ***The Wager* THEMES**

### **Discussion Points:**

What were the main themes of the movie?

With whom did you identify and why?

Which issues addressed in the film are important to you?

What does the film say about listening to God? Do you listen to God in this way?

What does the film say about marriage and divorce?

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## About the Filmmakers

Judson Pearce Morgan is a triple threat: actor/writer/director. He made his Broadway debut in the original cast of *The Graduate* alongside Kathleen Turner, Jason Biggs, and Alicia Silverstone. He makes his writing and directorial debut with *The Wager*.

In addition to *The Wager*, Bill Myers' work includes the *Soul Tracker Trilogy*, *The Face of God* and *Blood of Heaven*.

Pure Flix Entertainment, LLC (PFE) produces, acquires, markets, and distributes Christian and family-friendly film properties. The company unites some of the most respected and successful members of the Christian film community. Their objective is to position PFE as the industry leader for the production and distribution of high-quality, inspiring movies and television programs, while doing so with integrity. Other Pure Flix projects include *Hidden Secrets*, *The Cross and the Towers* and *Hugglers*. For additional information, go to <http://www.pureflixstudio.com>

For more information, visit *The Wager* official website at <http://www.wager-themovie.com>

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## LESSON 1 "UNDERSTANDING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT"

Sometimes we read passages in the Bible and do not understand them. They do not speak to us at that moment. Yet other times, those same words can pierce our hearts and lead us to grow in Christ.

The first clip shows Michael humbly requesting help in understanding the Sermon on the Mount. Along with Annie, he recalls how his father heard the messages about the Sermon on the Mount but did not live it. Michael has also heard them before, but to win the wager he must now live the word he has heard.

Play Clip #1. Clip length is 1:07

### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

MATTHEW 5:1-12 (NIV)

*Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

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## Discussion Points:

How would you answer Michael's question about being less of a Christian since he is not weak or persecuted?

Do you find the Sermon on the Mount difficult to understand? If so, which parts?

Does God talk to you? In your dreams? A voice in your head? What kind of things does he say?

How can you live out the word you hear?

Do you feel Christians are different people the rest of the week? If so, why do you think that happens and how can you help?

In what ways can you put the Beatitudes in action?

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## LESSON 2 "OVERWHELMED"

From dawn to dusk we busy ourselves with a variety of tasks. If you took a step back to gain perspective from the Bible, do you think all your tasks would be deemed "necessary"? Although the Bible advises us to not be idle and that hard work is good, maybe God has something else in mind. Michael, despite his best efforts, finds himself in a storm of activities. All seem good and desirable. Most importantly to Kenny, the tasks bolster Michael's appearance as important and demanding. While they may be good, they may also be missing the mark.

Play Clip #2. Clip length is 1:17

### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

MATTHEW 6:25-34 (NIV)

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*



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*Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)*

*As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

## **Discussion Points:**

What do you think of the phrase: "It's not who you are, it's who you look like you are?"

Does "busy"-ness compete with your time for God and your time for family?

Of all the activities we can choose, which activities have the highest pay-off? Which are most satisfying?

What can we learn from Mary and Martha?

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## **LESSON 3**

### **"MORAL CHARACTER ON THE JOB"**

Some workplaces sorely lack moral standards. There are people who will make fun of us for our beliefs and those who will do anything to succeed.

Michael takes heat for opposing Colin's artistic approach. When Michael stands up for his beliefs, Colin attacks his "archaic moral ideology" and accuses Michael of harboring a "narrow minded religious agenda." Michael does his best, but Colin eventually wears down Michael's patience.

Play Clip #3. Clip length is 4:17

## **SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES**

*MATTHEW 5:43-48 (NIV)*

*You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

## ROMANS 12:17-19 (NIV)

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

### Discussion Points:

What did Michael do well? Where was he weak?

Who or what challenges your morals in the world?

Have you been mocked for your beliefs? How did you respond?

Do you feel you are out of touch with the "real world?"

What do you think of Colin?

What can Michael do to be prepared for another similar encounter?

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## LESSON 4 "DEALING WITH PERSECUTION AND SLANDER"

Due to a misunderstanding, Michael's reputation takes a beating in the press. The façade Kenny has worked hard to erect comes close to crashing down in a matter of hours. Reporters with more of a hunger for drama than facts have taken an appearance and twisted it for their own gain. Michael does not want to fight about mere appearances, but if he does not, the media could destroy his career.

Fortunately, God supports us in times of trouble. He promises he will comfort and rescue us.

Play Clip #4. Clip length is 2:39

### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

MATTHEW 5:11-12 (NIV)

*Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

PSALMS 72:4 (NIV)

*He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor.*

PSALMS 37:39-40 (NIV)

*The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.*

## **Discussion Points:**

Why didn't Kenny ask Michael if it was true?

How important is image?

What are biblical ways to respond to slander and persecution?

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## **LESSON 5**

### **"THE SOURCE OF DIVORCE"**

Divorce has become a common option these days. You probably know someone who has been through one. Instead of facing the possible difficulties, some choose to not marry at all. According to God, marriage is sacred.

The fire has gone out from Michael and Tanya's marriage. Every tender moment is interrupted or accompanied with a fight. Staying together seems worse than separating. What should Michael and Tanya do?

Play Clip #5. Clip length is 1:19

## **SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES**

MATTHEW 5:27-32 (NIV)

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*

*"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce. 'But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.*

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## Discussion Points:

Do you think Tanya has a legitimate reason to ask for divorce?

Does she have a biblical case for divorce?

Is it rude for Michael to not sign the divorce papers if that is what Tanya wants?

If not divorce, what options do they have?

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## LESSON 6 "PRAYING TO GOD"

God desires our prayers and our praises. They are a vital part of our walk with Him. Even while walking with him, life throws us curveballs. We can rely on our Father for forgiveness and for showing us the right way.

In the first clip, Michael takes hold of humility and meekness as he pours his heart before the Lord. Having been pushed beyond his own strength, he reaches for the Lord's forgiveness, strength, and guidance.

However in the second clip, with his marriage coming to an end, the recent death of his sister, and his career on the brink of destruction, he falls back into his own strength and bitterness. Claiming defeat in the spirit, he latches onto the hope that winning again in the natural will save his life.

Play Clip #6. Clip length is 3:55

### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

*PSALMS 4:1-3 (NIV)*

*Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer. How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods? Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call to him.*

*MATTHEW 6:5-15 (NIV)*

*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*



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*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

*PSALMS 32:5-6 (NIV)*

*“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ — and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.”*

## **Discussion Points:**

When Michael prays for forgiveness, his life doesn't improve right away. In fact, his sister dies. How did he respond? How would you respond? Biblically, how are we instructed to respond?

What lessons can we learn from Annie's life?

How do you pray?

How important is prayer in your life?

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## **LESSON 7**

### **“TRUSTING GOD”**

A personal relationship with God, built up by faith, leads to trust. Trusting God is particularly important when he calls us to action beyond our knowledge. When God leads Michael to Charlie's house, Michael trusts God by faith more than he trusts Kenny and Tanya's logical advice.

In the face of scathing disapproval, Michael chooses to will and act according to God's good purpose.

Play Clip #7. Clip length is 2:40

## **SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES**

*2 TIMOTHY 2:20-21 (NIV)*

*In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

*PSALMS 9:9-10 (NIV)*

*The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

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PROVERBS 19:21 (NIV)

*Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 (NIV)

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

## Discussion Points:

Why did Michael leave the limo?

Has God put you somewhere for a reason?

Have you ever had to do something even though you didn't know why?

How is obedience better than praises of men?

Who won the wager?

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