

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Kevin  
Sorbo

Kristy  
Swanson

Debbi  
Ryan

and John  
Ratzenberger

# What if...

What if God  
gave you  
a second chance?



★★★★★  
Awarded Dove Foundation's Family  
Seal of Approval with 5 out of 5 Doves.  
All Ages

“★★★★! Extremely well made,  
funny, heartwarming...”

—Movieguide

## PURE FLIX

# What if...

## About The Film

What If ..., from Pure Flix Entertainment, follows the journey of Ben Walker (Kevin Sorbo), a rising star in the business world, who gets a rare opportunity to find out what his life would have been like if he had taken a different path. He finds out what would have happened if he had married his college sweetheart, Wendy, (Kristy Swanson) and pursued a career in the ministry.

Ben is having the best day of his life. After securing the takeover of another company thanks to his keen business acumen, he was made a partner in an investment banking firm. He then proposes to his glamorous girlfriend with an eye-popping diamond ring and purchases the car of his boyhood dreams. But the maiden voyage in his new wheels takes him on an unexpected trip where he has an encounter with a no-nonsense, straight-talking angel/tow truck driver named Mike (John Ratzenberger.) Mike shows Ben what his life would look like had he followed his true calling, God's design for his life, instead of his own plan. Ben becomes an instant family man with a wife and two daughters, including a boy-crazy teenager! He finds in this alternate reality that he is also the new pastor in his hometown about to make a crucial first impression with his inaugural sermon.

Ben wants to make a hasty exit and return to his previous life of luxury, but Mike tells him he has to figure it all out for himself first. Ben must learn the value of love, family and the role faith plays in his life. Ben needs to get his life back on track, even if he thinks it's perfect as is.

## ABOUT THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

In What If... Ben Walker's life is the embodiment of the so-called "American Dream." He truly has it all. He is a cocky, savvy business executive who receives a big promotion and major bump in salary. He has a beautiful fiancée who is quite eager to be his trophy wife. Before leaving for a romantic weekend trip to Paris, he purchases an expensive toy for himself, a new Mercedes, but his first joy ride doesn't go as expected. Instead of living it up in Paris, he winds up in a detour to his hometown, Clearville. Ben's journey in What If ... is not one of distance measured in miles, but one measured in the true meaning of love and faith and the necessity of finding a true calling.

To use this guide effectively, we suggest that you watch the film in its entirety, and then follow along with the discussion and suggested Bible readings. Related scriptures are provided for a more in-depth study of the themes. Also included are thought-provoking questions based on key concepts from the film. Use these conversation-starters to further enhance your discussion time.

As Ben learns the lessons of "The Great What If" for himself, we can see parallels in our own lives. As he reclaims his faith in God and belief in God's plan for his life, we can examine our own choices and life paths. Have we heard God's calling and followed his design for us and how are we serving Him?

## LESSON 1 “ACCORDING TO MAN’S PLAN”

Ben Walker has done really very well for himself. To the outside world, he is the picture of success. He's got money enough to buy anything he wants, a beautiful woman on his arm, an enviable career. He even calls himself “the Best” and compares himself to Julius Caesar. In his element, he is comfortable, suave, a man on top of the world. But Mike the angel sees through this facade. “Whatever happened to you? You had such potential,” he says. At this point, Ben believes he has fulfilled that potential and has to learn that there is more of a point to living a full life.

“My life is great. People envy me. I get what I want,” he tells Mike at a later point. But is it his life that is great or just the outside appearance, his lifestyle that he is referring to? What does make a life great? In Ben's view, it's what you do to earn a living and what you have to show for it, while according to God, it's what you do for others and how you are inside that truly counts.

While delivering his first sermon as Pastor Ben Walker, his discomfort in the role shows. His message is short and to the point and he relies on his life experience instead of relying on Bible lessons.

“Things are important,” he says. “God wants us to have what we need. God wants us to have money, be happy.” To many, that is what life is all about. They value the material over true values and feel happiness is something that can be attained by having a big house, new cars in the garage, and a wallet filled with ready cash. Ben feels money is the key to happiness. He has good intentions and doesn't mean to hurt anyone when he offers his daughter's potential beau money to not date her. He believes throwing money at a problem is the best way to get it to go away, but his methods prove to have repercussions and damage his relationship with his daughter.

Ben has been in a superficial, selfish existence for many years and has no experience being a husband or father. Wendy recognizes the change in her husband's behavior and so do his daughters. They immediately turn to God for help and solace. Wendy remains strong in her support of Ben and her love endures. She and their younger daughter, Meghan, turn to God in prayer asking for guidance, telling Him their concerns for Ben. Meghan prays openly for her father and even consoles him. “Don't worry, it's all going to work out,” she tells him, confident in knowing that God is hearing her prayers and keeping His promises.

### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

*PROVERBS 19:21 (NIV)*

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

### Discussion Points:

- Can you identify any “What if” moments or situations in your life?
- Do you see elements of your own life in Ben's fast-paced, money- and possession oriented life? Do you want people to envy you and your life?
- In Ben's life, money can buy happiness and is the quick and easy solution to problems. Have you found that to be the case in your life or in the lives of others? What role does money have in your life?

# What if...

- Do you ever feel that you can do it all by yourself and get by without God's presence? What happens when you don't include God?
  - What does Mike mean when he says, "Humans never want to do what's good for them?"
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## LESSON 2 "ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN"

"Everything in life boils down to this," Mike explains to Ben. "God loves you so love other people. God sacrificed everything to be with you so sacrifice everything." It seems so simple, yet it isn't. Is that really easy to say and hard to live out? Ben is not accustomed to truly loving other people and, in turn, to be loved by them. It is Wendy's steadfast love for him and faith in God and His plan for her family that reassures him. Ben's birthday present--a DVD filled with family memories that are actually all new to him-- gives him the chance to see what he would have lived and to experience the love of family. He sees his wedding and his daughters over the years and experiences an appreciation for what living with love and faith. Ben had previously said he never looked back, but in this case, looking back is what leads him to his future.

Ben opens his Bible for the first time in years and begins to study with earnest fervor. He discovers that it is not just an old, outdated book, but is truly the Word of God and has applications in daily life. Wendy is encouraged by his renewed enthusiasm for the Lord and thankful for answered prayers. Her faith in God, his design and the gifts God gave her husband never waver.

The sermon Ben delivers is noticeably different from the one he gave just weeks before. He preaches about Moses listening to God's plan for his life and questioning how he could accomplish it, but God knew how he would use Moses. "Your greatest weakness is my greatest strength and I will be with you," God tells Moses and gives him the strength to persevere. God chose Moses and Moses accepted God's decision knowing He was with him always. It is a message we all need to hear and take to heart.

Ben has now come around to understanding the meaning of surrendering to God. He does not see it as a defeat, but as achieving the ultimate victory. Life with God is filled with security, love and assurance because He is always with you.

### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

*JEREMIAH 29:11 (NIV)*

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"*

### Discussion Points:

- Read Proverbs 16:9. Do you think you're following God's plan for your life? Do you feel you've ever done anything to break his heart?



# What if...

- How did you recognize and answer God's call? In what ways, do you listen to Him? Have you had times when what you wanted and what God had in mind for you differed? What ultimately happened?
  - Why do you think people have a difficult time following or even believing in God's plan for their lives? What does it mean to you to surrender to God's will?
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## LESSON 3 "SERVING THE LORD"

Joshua 24:15 is a recurring theme in the film. Wendy inscribes the final sentence of the scripture in the Bible she gives Ben and Ben gives Wendy a plaque bearing the inscription as a gift as they are reconnecting. The final shot shows how Ben and Wendy have displayed the plaque in front of the family home to show the world. Instead of showing off any worldly achievements, Ben and his family choose to live their lives serving the Lord. Ben has realized that is the point of life.

When Ben visits the dying man he tells him the parable of the vineyard owner to illustrate that it doesn't matter to God at what point in his life a person accepts His love or what he has done in his life. All will be forgiven and God will welcome any person who chooses God, who totally surrenders to Him and believes in His Word. What does the parable tell us about our own lives, about the lives of people we know and how we can serve the Lord?

Ben sees the parallel with the life he had been living and realizes he wants to stay where he is and live out his new life. "There wasn't any life in it," he proclaims. "I spent years thinking I was happy, but I didn't know what happiness meant." But Ben can't just stay where he is with Wendy and the girls. He must go back and change his direction to get on the right path. That is part of God's plan, too. It's just now Ben is aware that he is following it.

### SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

*JOSHUA 24:15 (NIV)*

*"But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."*

### Discussion Points:

- Do you live out Joshua 24:15? Could you follow Ben's lead and display it on your house for all to see?
- Read Joshua 1:9. What does the verse tell you? Does it offer you encouragement knowing that God will always be with you as you face the trials and tribulations of life?

