



## Finding Nemo

### What this film is about

*Finding Nemo* is a Disney animated film. Set in the ocean off Australia, it begins with two clownfish, Marlin and Coral laying and fertilising their eggs in a coral reef. A predator fish, however, attacks the family, eats Coral and destroys all the eggs but one. Marlin dedicates his life to his one remaining offspring: Nemo.

Once Nemo is born, Marlin becomes suffocatingly overprotective, refusing to allow Nemo to have any independence or freedom from restriction. Eventually Nemo defies his father, leaves the safety of the coral reef and heads out into the open ocean where he is captured by a diver. Nemo ends up in a tank in a dentist's consulting room, dreaming with the other captive fish of a return to the open ocean. Meanwhile, Marlin sets out to find his son and rescue him.

The story then has two parallel strands. Marlin is trying to get to Nemo and Nemo wants to get back to Marlin. Marlin embarks on an odyssey into unfamiliar waters finding enemies can really be friends and helpers. He meets sharks who have renounced their predatory ways (almost), he is swallowed by a whale who releases him, and a pelican who shelters him in his beak. He is further helped by a devoted companion, Dory, who has little memory and who is apparently largely useless, but without whose help, Nemo cannot be rescued. He is helped by wise sea turtles (aping their teenage mutant ninja (and surfing) brothers), in a fellowship of sea creatures against the most serious predator, - human beings.

Meanwhile, the captured Nemo must undergo an initiation ceremony and receive a new name 'Sharkbait' to join his fellow captives in their vision to escape the tank and go back to the ocean. There is an urgency about this task, since a horrible little girl is due to arrive to take Nemo away as a pet. They are kept in touch with their dream through the friendly pelican, but each escape attempt goes wrong. Finally, after hearing that his father is out there looking for him, Nemo makes it out of the tank and back to the ocean via the toilet, where, although he is nearly captured in a net, he is finally reunited with his father. The rest of his friends also finally make it out of the tank and into the sea, - in sealed plastic bags....

### Major themes of the film

Loss, separation, exile, capture, friendship, hope and despair, relationships, parental and filial love, co-operation, human beings as predators and abusers of the natural world.

### Excerpts from the film to watch

Nemo's disobedience and capture

The shark therapy class

Marlin and Dory being swallowed by the whale

Nemo's initiation ceremony

The escape of the school of fish from the net





### Some general issues for discussion

What does the Bible teach us about being children of a loving father?

What does it mean to be God's children?

How does the story of Jonah resonate with this film?

What does the Bible teach us about obedience and disobedience?

What does the Bible teach us about exile and homecoming?

What is the significance of our own initiation ceremonies such as baptism?

What kinds of things ensnare us today and what do we have to do to escape such snares?

How does this film help us to see human beings in a different light?

### An activity: wet and dry

You will need some cheap decorative shells, either the sort you get in a net from seaside shops, or just ordinary shells picked up on a beach, some pebbles, some paper towels and a bucket or bowl of water.

**The purpose of the activity** is to interact with the objects in a way that opens up some of the themes and issues of the film.

#### 1. dry remains: imagining

Each person is given a dry shell to handle and to think about. The leader may then invite each person to imagine:

What kind of creature originally inhabited the shell

Where and how it lived

What its life and death was like

How human beings have come to be in possession of the shell

If this is done in silence, or if people have trouble concentrating and visualising, it may help to have some ocean sounds or other suitable music as background, or some visual scenes such as part of the *Blue Planet* series playing on a TV without the commentary.

After 15 minutes, the leader can gather up thoughts and impressions from the group.

#### 2. getting wet: telling stories

Each person, or group can be invited to talk about what it is like to swim or to get wet. What's the difference between getting soaked in the rain and having a long soak in the bath? Is swimming a releasing or invigorating experience, or do people hate getting wet? Why? To facilitate thinking about this, people can be invited, if they choose, to put their hands in the water and to dry them on the paper towels. Individual stories can be shared and affirmed.

#### 3. water as transformation: envisioning

Each person can be invited to put a dry pebble into the bowl of water and to notice the colour changes and the way stripes and patterns emerge. The shells can then be added on top of the stones. How has the water made a difference to what we see? What is the true colour of the stones and shells, the dry colour or water colour, or both?





*Finding Nemo* is a story told from an alien environment, one in which human beings cannot live easily. Does changing the perspective help us to approach familiar issues differently?

### Passages from Scripture:

Nemo's disobedience and capture  
*Turning away from God's love*  
Jeremiah 14. 7-10  
Amos 9. 2-6

The shark therapy class  
*Rising above our nature*  
Luke 4.1-4  
Romans 8.1-8

Marlin and Dory being swallowed by the whale  
*Out of darkness we emerge into life*  
Jonah 2 . 1-10  
Psalm 23

Nemo's initiation ceremony  
*Joining the fellowship*  
Acts 8. 35-40  
Mark 1 16-20

The escape of the school of fish from the net  
*Rising above despair*  
Judges 16.28-30  
Acts 11. 19-26

The reuniting of Nemo and Marlin  
*God wants us to come home*  
Isaiah 43. 1-7  
Luke 15. 4-7

Can you find other images, news or magazine stories which fit these scenes?

For example, stories about how people become captured by addictions, poverty or other kinds of social deprivation. How can they be released and set free?

Stories about ecological concerns and what we can do about the damage we are inflicting on the planet.

Stories about those who campaign for their missing relatives, the disappeared, those held in prison without trial, or who try to expose injustices against people they hold dear.





Stories of good news: people who are rescued from impossible situations such as earthquake disasters, missing people or hostages who are released or returned.

Are any of these stories relevant to the local community?

How can we make sense of such stories through our Christian faith?

### **What the Church teaches:**

The Church provides us with rich resources to engage people through the themes in Finding Nemo.

*Disobedience and separation from God:* Human beings can't help falling into sinful ways, but God is always waiting and hoping for us to turn back. There is no human condition that cannot be transformed by the power of God's love, but it takes all of us to co-operate to make the power of that releasing love a reality for others.

In sharing our faith with others, what can we do to make this real for people and what practical help can we give to those who are enslaved through poverty or other difficulty.

#### *Rising above our nature*

We live in a society which stresses the right to instant gratification and fulfilment. We are all aware of what we want to gratify our immediate sense of pleasure. The Church asks more of us though, we should remember our neighbour, deny ourselves in favour of helping others, learn to give up what we don't really need and turn aside from greed and idleness, so that we can join in God's desire for a renewed and redeemed world.

What can we do in practical terms to show this to others in our daily lives?

#### *Out of darkness we emerge into life*

The Church teaches that in committing ourselves to Christ we die and rise with him. For many Christians that involves a conversion experience, or a sense of repentance and a turning around away from the direction life was leading in.

How does our spiritual journey reflect times of darkness and emerging into life? What stories do we have that we can share to show how God can be with us even in the darkest and most difficult times? How can we help people to trust God's power and faithfulness in a society like ours?

#### *Joining the fellowship*

The Church teaches that we are the Body of Christ. Part of the self-understanding of the Church is that Christians join together to worship God and build up the community of faith.

As Christians committed to worshipping God with others, how do we help people understand that coming together as a corporate, united body is important in a society that tells people to find their own way. How does our witness as a *church* demonstrate the importance of the Body of Christ and how can we make it attractive to people?

#### *God wants us to come home*





The Church teaches that God loves every human person and delights in them. But God also longs for those who turn their back and rejection the divine invitation.

Our witness should demonstrate our joy that we are God's people, but does it? How can we remind people that God longs for them and is waiting for them?

### Prayers and reflections

O Lord our God,  
From whom neither life nor death can separate those who trust in your love,  
And whose love holds in its embrace your children in this world and the next;  
So unite us to yourself that in fellowship with you we may always be united to our loved ones whether here or there;  
Give us courage, constancy and hope;  
Through him who died and was buried and rose again for us,  
Jesus Christ our Lord

*William Temple*

