



Family **GUIDE**
TO

The
PILGRIM'S
PROGRESS

Equipping and supporting your family to have faith for a lifetime.

FOREWORD

As parents, we have all been there. We find ourselves being asked questions about faith, mortality, sin, and any other deep topic by our children. Sometimes we are at a loss for what to say or how to answer their questions. More often than not, we are asking the same questions as well.

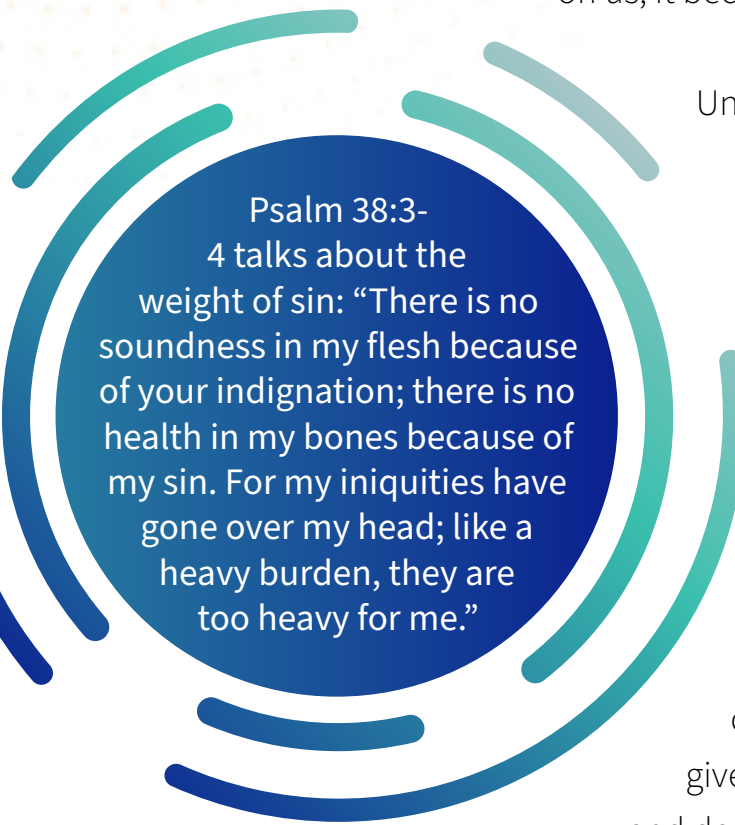
Guiding our families into a fully-known faith is a daunting and humbling task. There are snippets of truth coming from social media anecdotes, bumper sticker narratives, songs, and movies. Christians have been seeking ways to share their understanding of faith with strangers and loved ones for centuries. Recently, movies like *God's Not Dead* or *I Can Only Imagine* have tried to serve in this regard. Hundreds of years ago, Christians used *Pilgrim's Progress* as a teaching aid alongside Scripture.

The *Pilgrim's Progress* is a Christian allegory that was written in 1678 by John Bunyan. A classic of English literature, it has been translated into more than 200 languages and has never been out of print; and now it has been turned into a computer-animated film. Since this is an animated film, the apparent audience will be children. However, as an allegorical story written nearly 350 years ago, young viewers will need guidance for understanding the theological concepts that *Pilgrim's Progress* teaches.

This movie and parents' guide can serve as a catalyst for discussion in families. Things like the burden of sin, the schemes of the enemy to keep you from truth, salvation through Jesus, and what it means to be a witness can be discussed by families. Take some time to ask some of these questions together after watching the movie.

THE GOOD NEWS & THE BAD

When the main character, Christian (the Pilgrim), finally resolves to leave town for the Celestial City, he becomes weighed down by a heavy burden. Suddenly, he is aware that he is carrying a weighty load. The weight Christian is carrying is his sin and selfishness. Interestingly, he didn't feel the weight he carried until he started to learn about the truth. When we are confronted with our own sin and its effects on us, it becomes a heavy burden.



Psalm 38:3-4 talks about the weight of sin: “There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.”

Understanding that we are burdened by sin and that we are, in fact, carrying a heavy weight is a good thing. Without acknowledging our problems, how could we know we need to be set free?

The Bible teaches that Christ came to set us free. Romans 3:23 says that everyone is guilty of sin. Everyone has a weight they carry. But there is good news: Romans 6:23 says that the result of sin is death, but through Jesus, we are given life. By Jesus' death and resurrection sin and death are defeated. When we trust in him, the burden of sin is rolled away.

We must first accept the bad news—we are sinners. Christian is made aware of the wrongs he has committed and good things he hasn't been doing. He is confronted with the truth. The reality of this own sin is a burden he did not even know he was carrying. Ultimately, it is a good thing to see the burden we carry. When we see that we are carrying the weight of sin, then we are entirely dependent on God's forgiveness and grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Here are several discussion questions to help jump-start meaningful dialogue with your family:

- Are you aware of your own sin and your need for a savior?
- What sins are weighing you down?
- Are you willing to seek the truth, even if it reveals something uncomfortable?
- The good news is that, like Christian, we don't have to carry the burden of sin.

Have you seen your sin and asked Jesus to forgive you?

Prayer:

Father, we ask that You open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts to know the weight of sin. Show us how we are not living according to Your truth. Let this realization of our own sin cause us to find ourselves seeking Your forgiveness and grace. Amen

REMOVING **THE BURDEN**

Christian cannot remove his burden by himself; this parallels the truth that we cannot free ourselves from our own sin. But that doesn't prevent us from trying. In an attempt to be released from his burden, Christian is led to the Village of Morality, which is a dark and scary place. Recall that part of Christian's weight is an awareness of all the good deeds he wasn't doing. Why would morality be a bad thing? It isn't—unless you think your good deeds will save you. No matter how hard Christian tries, he cannot get any closer to Mr. Legality to satisfy his demands, since there is always one more rule blocking Christian's way.

Romans
3:23 (ESV):

*“For all have sinned
and fall short of the
glory of God...”*

Legalism—the notion that you can be saved by doing the right things—will only impose a more significant burden on you, eventually crushing you. That is the purpose of the Village of Morality, to teach us that our attempt to save ourselves by good deeds (or “trying harder”) is impossible. Thankfully, Evangelist arrives to help guide Christian in the right direction.

We cannot remove the burden of sin ourselves. No good deed or good work we do can justify us—we are already guilty. Acts 4:12 teaches us that salvation can only come from Jesus, and no one else can save.

Only Christ can free us. When Christian reaches the “place of deliverance” (symbolized by sunlight shining through the trees in the form of a cross), then his straps melt away, and he is free from his burden. Just like Christian, we cannot free ourselves; we are set free by an act of grace from the King.

Romans
6:23 (ESV):

*“For the wages of sin
is death, but the free
gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus, our
Lord.”*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Here are several discussion questions to help jump-start meaningful dialogue with your family:

- Are you trying to remove your burden by doing good deeds?
- How is legalism keeping you from God's free grace?
- In what areas of your life do you still need to accept that only Jesus saves?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we have been trying to earn Your grace. Please help us today to let go of perfectionism, legalism, and morality for morality's sake. Help us to know who You made us to be: Your image-bearers. We accept Your love for us today.

WITNESS & STRUGGLE

Salvation is only the beginning of the Christian journey. We see in Pilgrim's Progress that once Christian is set free from his burden, he still faces challenges.

An enemy wants to tempt him and attack him; trying to keep him from being a witness of the Truth. On the way to the Celestial City, Christian continues to struggle and make mistakes, but the grace of God guides him on the journey.

Acts
4:12-14 (ESV):

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

We all have Swamps of Despondency in our lives, filled with fears and doubt. Like Christian, we may need Help to lend a hand. Christian's determination should also inspire us to continue our journey toward God's best for our lives.

Remember, "help in some form or another is never far away."

At times in your faith-journey, you will feel the temptations of the world tug at you, and you may very well be attacked by the enemy. Always remember that because of the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, you are no longer subject to the weight of sin. You are free to say "no" to sin, and to bear witness of God's truth.

John
10:10 (ESV):

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Here are several discussion questions to help jump-start meaningful dialogue with your family:

- How are you tempted by the things of this world?
- How are you seeking truth amidst temptation?
- What does it mean to be a witness to the truth?

Prayer:

Father, we ask You to lead us out of temptation. Let us live according to Your Spirit so that we may know You and make Your truth manifest to others.

IN CONCLUSION:

The animated version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a great way to introduce this literary classic and its life-changing message of redemption to a brand-new generation. The story and themes are timeless. Everyone can relate to the ups and downs of life faced by the story's main character. We can all rejoice along with him as he is freed from his burden. We pray that you, like Christian will be set free from sin by the grace of God through Jesus.

MORE ABOUT SUMMIT

Summit Ministries' mission is to equip and support rising generations to embrace God's truth and champion a biblical worldview.

Our programming consists of two-week conferences for 16-25-year-olds in multiple locations across the U.S. We also offer semester-long programs for collegiate-level students. Our publishing division offers resources for Christian schools, homeschool, and churches. Alumni in our programs are networked around the world with the aim of driving impact in their communities.

We bring the best leaders in America to speak, teach, and write at Summit. It's more than just a classroom experience. It's a network, a life-long experience, a trajectory-changing event. To say that Summit changes lives can sound cliché but it's true. Summit's fingerprints are found on the lives of politicians, business innovators, nonprofit executives, church leaders, and nearly every area of culture.

Culture draws a line in the sand. It says, "Stay on that side where it's safe and boring and predictable." On the other side is a life of purpose, meaning, and impact. Summit invites Christians to boldly step across the line.

We teach students to stand for truth and justice in the most unexpected way.

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