



THE INCREDIBLES



Rated: PG • **Running Time:** 1 hour, 55 minutes

Starring the voices of: Craig T. Nelson as Mr. Incredible; Holly Hunter as Elastigirl; Jason Lee as Syndrome; Samuel L. Jackson as Frozone; Brad Bird as Edna Mode

Director: Brad Bird

Themes: Family unity, teamwork, embracing one's true

Story Summary

Mr. Incredible is at the top of his game. Uniquely gifted. Publicly adored. Professionally fulfilled. The spandex-clad superhero prides himself in being a lone-ranger defender of justice (much to the chagrin of Buddy, an obsessed young groupie eager to become his sidekick). Everything's super. Then the unthinkable happens. Just as Mr. Incredible is tying the knot with his rubber-limbed love, Elastigirl, we learn that noble mishaps have led to so many lawsuits against the city that Metroville's superheroes are being forced into early retirement. A government relocation program will set them up with normal jobs and normal lives under the condition that they stop being super.

We next encounter Bob and Helen Parr 15 years later in suburban mid-life, suppressing their powers and trying to remain as average and ordinary as their new name implies. Helen is stretched to the limit raising three children, including a lightning-fast little boy (Dash), a brooding teenage daughter prone to invisibility and erecting force fields (Violet) and a new baby capable of who knows what. Meanwhile, Bob rescues old ladies from the bureaucratic red tape of his employer, a chintzy insurance company. Instead of saving the world with his ultra-strength, he now hears his wife say, "Go save the world one policy at a time, Honey!" These days Mr. Incredible's greatest nemeses are a receding hairline, bulging gut and intense boredom. On the sly, he and his pal Lucius (formerly the icy hero Frozone) listen to a police scanner while reliving their glory days. But things are about to change.

A loss of self-control costs Bob his job.

Then a holographic message from a mysterious woman invites him to don his old super suit to corral a renegade robot on a remote island. Bob secretly accepts the mission and lies to Helen about attending an out-of-town conference. He proceeds to vanquish the metal marauder and return to suburbia invigorated. However, a second trip to the island lands him in



identity, striving for excellence vs. accepting mediocrity, midlife crisis, marital trust and fidelity, revenge, redemption, teen angst, everyday heroism

Cautions: For teens they're minor. Mainly action violence, scenes of children in peril, two exclamations of "my god" and a reference to a drinking game.

a trap laid by an old pest with a score to settle: *Buddy*. Now calling himself Syndrome, it seems this madman inventor, weapons trafficker and wannabe crusader has been flushing out and eliminating the world's true superheroes one by one.

Back home, Helen smells something fishy. Clues prompt her to contact a brassy little woman by the name of Edna Mode, a German fashion diva who unveils new supersuits for the entire family. That visit helps Helen connect the dots. Feeling concerned and betrayed, she leaps into action and follows a homing beacon to the island to retrieve her husband (with stowaways Violet and Dash aboard). Missiles fly. Machine-guns blaze. Syndrome and his sneering henchmen show no mercy. Still, Helen's maternal instinct is strong. Even the bickering sibs learn to cooperate. Indeed, if they're going to succeed, everyone must band together and use their unique abilities to escape the island and foil Syndrome's nefarious plot, which leads them back to Metroville.

Joined by their old friend Frozone, the Parrs battle and eventually subdue Syndrome's mechanical monster as it rampages through the city streets. But Syndrome is not a gracious loser. He heads straight for their suburban home and threatens to make off with baby Jack-Jack, only to learn the hard way that the little guy has his own unpredictable superpowers. Once again in Metroville's good graces, the Parrs can relax and, within reason, enjoy being themselves. Which is super.

The savvy folks at Pixar have built a reputation for creating warm, humorous, kinetic and truly intelligent animated films that tell stories of substance. Writer/director Brad Bird loves the studio's amazing computer graphics but told *Time*, "I often think people stress the technology too much. The heart of the matter is still characters." And a well-crafted story. And moral themes. Which is why *The Incredibles* deserves an in-depth look.

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Before You Watch

Carve out a half hour to read 1 Corinthians 12 together and list in detail the unique gifts that make each member of your household valuable to the family. Attitudes. Talents. Personality traits. Specific contributions. Write down as many as you can. At some future date—with everyone gathered around—you can share the list aloud as a gift of love and encouragement.

Bible Bookmarks Gen. 4:1-12; Ex. 17:8-16; Num. 12; Deut. 28:1; Prov. 5:15-20, 22:1; 1 Cor. 9:24 and 12; Eph. 6:10-18; James 4:1-12; 3 John 9-11

Talking Points

1 Early on, Mr. Incredible boasts that he prefers to work alone. How does he come to regret that attitude? What does he learn about his family's ability to do more together than any one of them could do alone? Read Exodus 17:8-16 and imagine what would have happened had Moses gone solo and refused help from others.

2 In separate scenes Bob, Dash and Syndrome all note that calling everyone "special" or "super" simply diminishes those who truly *are* and encourages mediocrity. What do you think about that? Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 28:1 and 1 Corinthians 9:24 clearly prescribe a path toward excellence.

3 Writer/director Brad Bird said, "Violet is a typical teenager, someone who's not comfortable in her own skin and is in that rocky place between being a kid and an adult. So invisibility seemed like the right superpower for her." Ask, "Do you agree or disagree? Why? What other superpowers might befit modern teens?"

4 To improve his own image, Syndrome gets rid of the competition by doing away with Metroville's true heroes. Do you know people at school or work who would rather tear down others than strive for personal excellence? Biblical examples include Genesis 4:1-12, Numbers 12 and 3 John 9-11 (find the solution in James 4:1-12). Who are the pseudo-heroes in our culture, and who are the real ones they'd like to eliminate?

5 Syndrome bitterly remarks that he only earned Mr. Incredible's respect after he became a threat to him. Sadly, many bullies (at school, on the job or in global politics) feel the same way. Talk about that a little. How can we treat everyone with the kind of respect Jesus demonstrated to the people He met?



6 Helen (aka Elastigirl) impresses upon her children, "Your identity is your most valuable possession. Protect it." What does she mean by that? Why is a person's identity so important? Relate this to Proverbs 22:1.



7 The movie has a lot to say about midlife crisis, particularly from a male point of view. Help your teen understand what Edna means by "Men at Robert's age are unstable, prone to weakness." Explain how the full armor of God is a spiritual suit designed to protect us at all stages of life (Eph. 6:10-18).

8 Though Bob never seriously considers being unfaithful to Helen, what aspects of his "innocent flirtation" with Mirage crossed a line? Why? Where would you have drawn the line? Examine Solomon's wisdom about fidelity in marriage in Proverbs 5:15-20.

9 Mirage tells Syndrome, "Valuing life is not a weakness, and disregarding it is not strength." Talk about that. How does this truth apply to the current cultural battle over the sanctity of human life?

10 Helen realizes she expected too much of Violet on the plane, and reassures her that her gifts will develop in time. If you have put undue pressure on your teens to think or behave like adults, take this opportunity to apologize, point to their strengths and express confidence in them.

Follow-Up Activity

Creator Brad Bird laid the foundation for his film by deciding what he considered heroic and how to personify that. Take some time to create your own superheroes from scratch, independently. Have them reflect your ideals. Be creative. What are their secret identities, and what do they do when they're not fighting crime? Give them specific powers and indicate how they might use those gifts for the greater

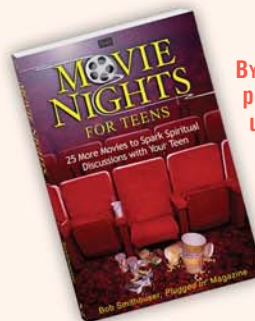
good. Explain where their abilities came from. Draw or describe them in costume (include capes at your own risk). Do they have arch-enemies? Sidekicks? Gadgets? Cool vehicles? Let your imaginations run wild for a few days. Then go out for dinner and, while you're waiting for your food, unveil and describe your heroes to each other.

Just for Fun

Near the end of the film we see two old men talking about being "old school." They are cartoon renderings of Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, members of Walt Disney's team of master animators from the studio's early years. The men, both in their nineties at the time, provided the voices themselves. —by Bob Smithouser



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—*Movie Nights for Teens*

You can request this resource by contacting Focus on the Family at 800-232-6459 (in Canada, 800-661-9800).