



A Walk to Remember

Rated: PG • **Running Time:** 1 hour, 42 minutes
Starring: Mandy Moore as Jamie Sullivan; Shane West as Landon Carter; Peter Coyote as Reverend Sullivan; Daryl Hannah as Cynthia Carter
Director: Adam Shankman

Themes: Redemption, peer pressure, trust, friendship, unconditional love, Christian faith, forgiveness, lifestyle evangelism, peace amid terminal illness, handling persecution, the impact of divorce on teens.

Cautions: The movie's main problem is teen profanity (about two dozen instances, half of them s-words). There's also some randy joking, implied underage drinking and a secret handshake that mimics dragging on a joint. While disappointing, this serves to contrast Landon's and Jamie's worlds. He's a *real* bad-boy in need of *real* redemption. And her light shines all the brighter against this shadowy backdrop of teen life. Even so, parents may want to look for the "family-edited version." (The heaviest concentration of inappropriate behavior is in the opening scene.)

Story Summary

A Walk to Remember is based on a popular work of teen fiction by Nicholas Sparks. Although it's not a Christian film, it's a powerful tale of one teenage believer's ability to influence the lives of those in her small, coastal North Carolina town, including an unruly young rebel.

Jamie Sullivan isn't "cool." She's quiet, studious and wears unfashionably modest clothes that would embarrass most girls. But not Jamie. She isn't a slave to style and doesn't care what other people think. Her self-confidence comes from how God sees her and who she is on the inside. She's witty, self-assured, wise and caring, though few of her peers get close enough to notice. All they see is the bland, goody-two-shoes daughter of the local preacher.

At the other end of the spectrum lies Landon Carter, a brooding member of the in crowd who is sassy, angry, self-absorbed and occasionally cruel. His aimless clique enjoys teasing Jamie. Their worlds collide when Landon is punished after a thoughtless prank lands a boy in the hospital. His sentence includes tutoring disadvantaged students on weekends and acting in the school play—activities he'd never do voluntarily. Coincidentally, Jamie is already involved in both.

Landon observes her decency in action, but responds with sarcasm and ridicule. Jamie continues to be kind to him in spite of his rudeness, helping him learn his lines for the show. But she's no doormat. She puts him in his place with sharp insight and sly wit. Consequently, something about her quiet strength and self-respect attracts him. He wants to be around her, but knows it could cost him popularity points if his pals learn how he really feels. Months later, while acting opposite Jamie in the spring musical, Landon is so overcome with emotion that he forgets his lines and adds an unscripted kiss.

Landon sincerely reaches out to Jamie. She doesn't



trust him at first. In the spirit of Jeremiah 13:23, she wonders if this leopard can change his spots. So Landon sets out to prove himself. He gives her a new sweater, then defends her honor when his jealous ex-girlfriend plays a malicious joke. Undeterred by her father's "no dating" rule, he respectfully asks her dad for permission to take her out. Landon's bad-boy reputation isn't an easy thing for the pious, protective Reverend Sullivan to overlook, but he believes in forgiveness and trusts his daughter's instincts. Soon Landon is helping Jamie complete items on a "to-do list" she has developed for her life.

As the relationship deepens and sweetens, Landon changes, adapting to what's important to Jamie. Then one evening Jamie confesses that she has Leukemia and isn't responding to treatments. Landon races to the home of his estranged father, a physician, in hopes that he might have a solution. But no one can help. It's just a matter of time. Landon's only choice is to marry her and spend whatever time they have left making her as happy as possible. It's merely a summer, though he recalls it was perfect with "more love than lots of people know in a lifetime. And then she went, with her unfailing faith."

Four years later, Landon visits Jamie's father to drop off a memento and tell him he's headed to medical school. His path has changed because of Jamie's living witness and love. Landon reminisces, "Jamie saved my life. She taught me everything about life, hope and the long journey ahead." We're not sure that he ever adopted her faith, but it's clear he has been changed forever by a life well lived.

Before You Watch

Sometime prior to your Movie Night, casually initiate a discussion about typical Hollywood portrayals of Christianity. How are "religious" people depicted? Be specific.

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You may even want to make a game of it, going back and forth summoning characters and scenes you've encountered. The more examples you recall, the more likely you'll notice a negative trend. After watching *A Walk to Remember*, refer back to this conversation and decide how this film measures up.

Bible Bookmarks Prov. 29:18; Jer. 13:23, 29:11; Hab. 1:5; Matt. 18:21-22; Mark 9:35, 11:25; 1 Cor. 13 and 6:18; 2 Cor. 6:13-15; Eph. 4:31-32; 1 Thes. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:15

Talking Points

1 Peer pressure and the desire to be accepted caused Clay Gephart to do something foolish. Why is that temptation so strong? Talk about how Christ's unconditional love can satisfy that need. Then ask, "How can we know when a 'harmless prank' crosses the line?"

2 On the bus Jamie tells Landon, "Please don't pretend you know me, OK?" What does it take to truly know someone and be a friend? What qualities have attracted you to your closest friends?

3 Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Compare Jamie's specific list of ambitions to the aimlessness of Landon and his crew. How can a lack of vision—spiritual or otherwise—put us on a road to nowhere?

4 Landon starts to change when he stops being selfish and focuses on others' needs. Why do you think that happens? In what ways are you fulfilling Mark 9:35 by serving others?

5 Reverend Sullivan is angry with his daughter for giving Landon a quick goodnight kiss. How do you feel about certain displays of affection before marriage? In an attempt to honor 1 Corinthians 6:18, what boundaries have you or your family set for dating? What kinds of situations can be dangerous to purity?

6 Jamie tells her father she thinks God wants her "to be happy." Surely God doesn't want us to be miserable, but how could Jamie's assumption lead a Christian into trouble? Talk about the need to subordinate happiness to holiness (1 Thes. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:15).

7 Many teens engage in "missionary dating" in hopes of converting an unsaved person who has caught their eye. Why is that a bad idea? What does 2 Corinthians 6:13-15 say about dating someone who is not a believer? Considering Jamie's circumstances, should she and Landon have gotten involved? Married? Why or why not?

8 In Jamie's hospital room, Landon reads from 1 Corinthians 13. Read that passage aloud and identify ways each showed that kind of love to the other.



9 Jamie makes these two statements: "I do not need a reason to be angry with God" and "Maybe God has a bigger plan for me than I had for myself." What do you think occurred in her heart between those comments? Can you relate to her frustration? Her peace? Read Habakkuk 1:5 and Jeremiah 29:11 for a reminder that God has big plans for His children.

10 How do you think Landon's strained relationship with his father impacted his rebelliousness? Discuss Landon's ability to forgive his Dad, and how several of the boy's old friends sought his forgiveness (a virtue explored in Mark 11:25, Matt. 18:21-22 and Eph. 4:31-32). Do you need to forgive someone who has hurt you? Do you need to ask someone for forgiveness?

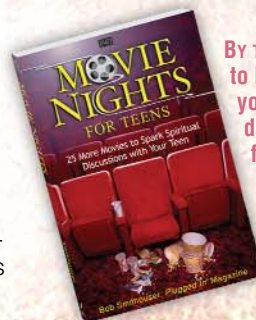
Follow-Up Activity

- Make your own "life to-do lists." Include serious goals, fun aspirations and even some outrageous dreams. Plan a follow-up outing, just the two of you, and share your desires with each other. Moms and dads should think of ways they can help make some of those teen dreams a reality.
- If your family likes to build things, try making a telescope together like Landon did. Books are available at your local library. Or conduct an online search for "make your own telescope," which will turn up several Web sites offering projects of varying difficulties.

Just for Fun

- The first time we see Jamie she's walking towards Landon and his friends in front of the school, carrying a box and wearing a backpack. But as the camera swings behind Jamie to show her walking away, the backpack has mysteriously disappeared. It's just one of several continuity errors in the movie.
- The film's soundtrack features Switchfoot, a musical act that had yet to achieve broad success, but was a favorite of star Mandy Moore (a pop singer herself) who lobbied for the band's involvement. —by Lissa Halls Johnson

A **plugged** Resource
online



BY THE BOOK: "Pray for wisdom. Invite God to be part of the process. The Lord knows your teen's heart even better than you do. Ask Him to guide your discussion for maximum benefit."

—*Movie Nights for Teens*

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