

**“Bella” starring Eduardo Verástegui, Tammy Blanchard & Manny Perez,  
2006, PG-13, 91 minutes**

**Major themes:**

- Repentance
- Hope
- Beauty of life
- Choices
- Family
- Dignity
- Faith
- Love

**Major characters:**

- José
- Nina
- Manny
- Mother
- Father
- Eduardo

## Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

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### Background info:

- “*Bella*” is an Italian / Latin word meaning, “*beautiful*.”
- This movie was filmed in just 24 days!
- Verástegui co-founded Metanoia films (“*to entertain, engage and inspire*”) after experiencing transformation in his own life. “*Metanoia*” is a Greek word that means “*repentance, a change of mind, change in the inner man.*” Verástegui credits the grace of his conversion to his mother’s prayers. “*My mother told my father one day, ‘Our son is very rebellious — he’s lost, he doesn’t listen to us any more, my words don’t touch his heart any more. But if my words don’t touch his heart, my prayers will touch his heart one day.’ And she became a warrior, a prayer warrior, and never gave up the hope that one day I would come back, just like the prodigal son.*” That day came when his English tutor started asking him questions like, “*What’s the purpose of life? Why are you doing what you’re doing?*” These questions led him to turn to a priest friend, who heard his heart and gave him some books which impacted him in a very deep way. Then Verástegui made a commitment to the Lord Jesus. Suddenly he had a new purpose in life — to know and love God, and to grow in holiness. He went back to his priest friend and told him he was giving up his career, thinking he would instead head for the mission field. He said, “*I want to go out into the jungle, to the Amazon, to discern what God wants from me. Because I need to clean all this dirt that I had in my soul for all those years . . . What should I do? What do you think?*” The priest just laughed. He said, “*No, no, no, you’re not going anywhere. We have plenty of missionaries over there in that jungle. But you know what, we have very few here in Hollywood. And this is a bigger jungle. Our Lord put you right there for a reason. You stay there.*”
- Verástegui, a Catholic Christian, was invited to have a private audience with the Pope. He asked him, “*We have a company called Metanoia Films . . . please pray for this mission.*” The pope gave him a blessing. Caught up in the emotion of the moment, Verástegui closed his eyes and started praying — still standing before the Pope. “*He gave me a second blessing,*” Verástegui said, admitting, “*Then the bodyguards came and took me away.*”

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*There were like eighty people behind me.” Just over a week later he and his cofounders met the investors who financed the film.*

- While researching the movie, Verástegui visited an abortion clinic and ended up befriending a Mexican couple who had an appointment that day. They changed their minds about the abortion, and named the baby Eduardo. Verástegui noted, *“If this film tomorrow disappears and it burns and nobody sees it again, the fact that one baby is alive by the grace of God, I will rejoice in the Lord . . . It is my hope that Bella gives those who watch it the spark to do the great things that God has planned for each and every one of us.”*
- The director said that although butterflies are a motif in the film, the closing scene included something unscripted: *“It just happened magically — there was a guy with the butterfly!”*
- Real Madrid is a professional football [soccer] club based in Madrid, Spain, and has the highest revenue of any club worldwide.
- Paella is a Spanish white rice dish that can include meat, seafood, and vegetables.

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### Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT) – *“For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.”*

Luke 15:3 – 7 (NLT) – *“Jesus told them this story: ‘If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!’”*

2 Peter 1:3 (The Message) – *“Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received!”*

James 1:5 (NIV) – *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”*

Mark 12:28b – 31 (The Message) – *“‘Which is most important of all the commandments?’ Jesus said, ‘The first in importance is, ‘Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.’ And here is the second: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself. There is no other commandment that ranks with these.’”*

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### Discussion points:

1. One tagline for this movie says, *"One moment can change your life forever."* After José's radically life-altering moment, what other choices did José make that took him on a journey towards healing?
2. Another tagline asks us, *"What do you live for?"* Discuss.
3. José recalls his grandmother saying, *"If you want to hear God laugh, tell Him your plans."* Discuss.
4. We all face difficult choices at times. In spite of God's lavish gifts of love, life, wisdom, courage, resources, and countless others, why do we humans so often struggle with making hard decisions?
5. How is hope sometimes more clearly displayed in the context of despair?
6. Discuss how, although we should oppose that which is wrong, God calls us even higher, to love those in need with the love of Christ, potentially at a cost to ourselves.
7. How does this film challenge us to recognize that life is a beautiful and precious gift even in far from ideal circumstances, and that the choice to embrace life, even when it involves great sacrifice, is also beautiful?