

Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

"Barfi!" starring Indian actors, 2012, NR, 151 minutes

Major themes:

- Deaf Mute
- Autism
- Communication
- Social & cultural expectations
- Childlikeness
- Joy
- Jealousy

Major characters:

- Barfi (Murphy)
- Jhilmil Chatterjee
- Shruti Ghosh / Sengupta
- Police Sub-inspector

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Background info:

- Barfi is a sweet confectionary from the Indian subcontinent. The main ingredients are condensed milk and sugar.
- The writer and director - Anurag Basu uses non-linear storytelling to traverse between 1972, 1978, and 2012 Darjeeling, Calcutta, and little known places of Bengal.
- "*Barfi*" was India's official submission to the Best Foreign Language Film for the 85th Academy Awards in 2013.
- The mute and deaf title character played by actor Ranbir Kapoor is the voice for the sanitary tobacco warning before the movie begins. This is the only part where Ranbir says anything in the movie.
- One reviewer suggested that Barfi – could be an acronym for: Breathtaking (cinematography), Astounding (acting), Ruthless (breaking of stereotypes about the disabled), Fantastic (music), and Invigorating (feeling in your heart as you leave the theater)

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Scriptures:

Leviticus 19:14 (NLT) – *“Do not insult the deaf or cause the blind to stumble. You must fear your God; I am the LORD.”*

Romans 12:2 (The Message) – *“Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.”*

1 Peter 4:8 (The Message) – *“Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything.”*

Isaiah 35:10 (NLT) – *“Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.”*

Nehemiah 8:10 (NLT) – *“Don’t be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!”*

Mark 10:14 – 16 (The Message) – *“Don’t push these children away. Don’t ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God’s kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you’ll never get in.” Then, gathering the children up in his arms, he laid his hands of blessing on them.”*

Song of Songs 8:6 (NASB) – *“Put me like a seal over your heart, Like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; Its flashes are flashes of fire, The very flame of the LORD.”*

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Discussion points:

1. *"Silence is the language of love."* Despite Barfi's speech & hearing impairment, he manages to communicate very well, using facial expressions, body language, silence, etc. What is the essence of good communication?
2. What are some of the societal or family expectations that young people face in our culture?
3. Autism is defined as *"a disorder of neural development characterized by impaired social interaction and verbal and non-verbal communication, and by restricted, repetitive or stereotyped behavior."* How did Jhilmil's autism affect her life? the lives of others?
4. What are some of the simple things in life that we sometimes forget to celebrate?
5. This film reminds us that all of us, whether disabled or not, deal with the same kinds of issues to deal with – love, hate, jealousy, forgiveness, etc. What does this film teach us about how we view those with disabilities?
6. What does it mean to be childlike (without being childish)?
7. What does it mean in practical terms to have the joy of the Lord as our strength?