

### **“United” starring David Tennant, Jack O’Connell, Sam Claflin, 2011, PG-13, 90 minutes**

#### **Major themes:**

- Soccer / football
- Plane crash
- Grief
- Survivor’s guilt
- Team
- Perseverance
- Hope
- Rebuilding
- Companionship

#### **Major characters:**

- Harold Hardman (chairman of Manchester United)
- Matt Busby (manager)
- Alma George (Busby’s secretary)
- Jimmy Murphy (assistant manager)
- Bert Whalley (chief coach)
- Players:
  - Bobby Charlton
  - Eddie Colman
  - Duncan Edwards
  - Harry Gregg
  - Mark Jones
  - David Pegg
- Alan Hardaker (The Football League administrator)

## Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

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### Background info:

- Manchester United Football Club is an English professional football (soccer) club, based in Old Trafford, Greater Manchester, which plays in the Premier League. It was founded in 1878, and has won the most League titles of any English club. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> richest football club in the world in terms of revenue (after Real Madrid).
- The “*Busby Babes*” is the name given to a group of Manchester United players who progressed from the club’s youth team into the first team under Matt Busby’s management. They were recruited and trained by the chief scout and the assistant manager, Jimmy Murphy.
- The song they sing in Yugoslavia is the unofficial anthem of Yorkshire. Here are the opening lines in the Yorkshire dialect and in standard English:
  - Wheear 'ast tha bin sin' ah saw thee, ah saw thee?  
  
On Ilkla Mooar baht 'at . . .
  - Where have you been since I saw you, I saw you?  
  
On Ilkley Moor without a hat . . .
- The airplane on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1958, had 6 crew & 38 passengers, including Manchester United staff and players and 11 of the UK’s best-known sports journalists.
- An investigation by West German airport authorities originally blamed pilot James Thain, saying he did not de-ice the aircraft's wings, despite eyewitness statements to the contrary. It was later established that the crash was caused by slush on the runway, which slowed the plane too much to take off. Thain was cleared in 1968, ten years after the incident (largely due to the efforts of his wife, who discovered the scientific evidence proving his innocence).

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### Scriptures:

Psalm 31:9 – 10 (NIV) – *“Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.”*

2 Samuel 1:26 (The Message) – *“O my dear brother Jonathan, I’m crushed by your death. Your friendship was a miracle-wonder, love far exceeding anything I’ve known—or ever hope to know.”*

Romans 5:3 – 5 (The Message) – *“There’s more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we’re hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we’re never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can’t round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!”*

Nehemiah 4:6 (The Message) – *“We kept at it, repairing and rebuilding the wall. The whole wall was soon joined together and halfway to its intended height because the people had a heart for the work.”*

Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 10 (NLT) – *“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble.”*

Revelation 1:9 (NIV) – *“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus . . .”*

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### Discussion points:

1. In the first game following the disaster, the player lineup for Manchester United was left blank. Discuss Alma's poignant remark, "*It doesn't matter who the players are. It's about the club.*"
2. How do you think you would have responded to the tragedy if you were a player, a family member, a coach, the surviving pilot, a fan, . . .
3. What approaches to handling grief do you notice in this film?
4. The surviving pilot was cleared from blame for the plane crash 10 years after the tragedy. What are Christ-honoring ways to respond when we are falsely accused? when someone we love is falsely accused? when a stranger is falsely accused?
5. A police officer noted, "*The whole country loved these kids. We didn't realize it till now.*" How has God used a loss as a wake-up call in your life?
6. Jimmy exhorted Bobby to not be another guy who died out there, to live his life. What helps someone to not get stuck in grief when they go through suffering?