

**“The Miracle Worker” starring Anne Bancroft, Patty Duke, Victor Jory,  
1962, NR, 106 minutes**

**Major themes:**

- Blindness
- Deafness
- Pity vs. compassion
- Struggle
- Expectations
- Perseverance
- Tough love
- Discipline
- Communication
- Hope

**Major characters:**

- Anne Sullivan
- Helen Keller
- Captain Arthur & Kate Keller
- James Keller
- Aunt Ev

## Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

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### Background info:

- Anne Sullivan was born on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1866, in Agawam, Massachusetts.
- Helen Keller was born on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1880, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. June 27<sup>th</sup> is commemorated as “Helen Keller Day” at a U.S. federal level, as authorized by a presidential proclamation on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth.
- The Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts, is the oldest school for the blind in the United States, founded in 1829.
- For their roles in this film, Anne Bancroft won the 1962 Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role and Patty Duke won the 1962 Academy Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role. Patty Duke was 15 at the time of filming.
- Patty Duke later played Anne Sullivan in a TV movie of the same name (with Melissa Gilbert as Helen Keller).
- Fingerspelling is the representation of the letters of a writing system using only the hands to form a manual alphabet. The earliest known manual alphabet was described by the Venerable Bede in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.
- Helen Keller went on to become an author, political activist, lecturer, and was the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.

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### Scriptures:

Luke 15:4 – 7 (The Message) – *“Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn’t you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Celebrate with me! I’ve found my lost sheep!’ Count on it—there’s more joy in heaven over one sinner’s rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.”*

Hebrews 12:11 (ESV) – *“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

Proverbs 14:29 (NLT) – *“People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness.”*

2 Corinthians 1:3 – 5 (The Message) – *“All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us. We have plenty of hard times that come from following the Messiah, but no more so than the good times of his healing comfort—we get a full measure of that, too.”*

Philippians 1:29 (The Message) – *“There’s far more to this life than trusting in Christ. There’s also suffering for him. And the suffering is as much a gift as the trusting.”*

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### Discussion points:

1. *"I'll tell you what I pity: that the sun won't rise and set for her all her life, and every day you're telling her it will! What good will your pity do . . ."*  
Describe the kind of love that Helen's family had shown her prior to Anne's arrival. Describe the kind of love that Anne showed her.
2. What gifts were given and received in this film? Which of these gifts do you value the most?
3. What made it possible for Anne to reach through Helen's walls of darkness and silence? How did Anne's own losses help her to help Helen?
4. How can our expectations of someone else's behavior affect both the way we treat them and the way they respond?
5. At the close of the dining room scene, Anne (and Helen's family) had choices on how to interpret the results. How did celebrating the folded napkin alter both the events that followed and the people involved?
6. At Helen's moment of awakening, what are some of the things you noticed that she suddenly realized?
7. Discuss Anne's equating of original sin with giving up. How do you think that attitude impacted Helen, who said, *"When we do the best that we can, we never know what miracle is wrought in our life, or in the life of another."*