

“The Guardian” starring Kevin Costner, Ashton Kutcher, Melissa Sagemiller, 2006, PG-13, 139 minutes

Major themes:

- Coast Guard
- Rescue
- Swimming
- Teamwork
- Training
- Fear
- Heroes
- Sacrifice

Major characters:

- Senior Chief Aviation Survival Technician Ben Randall
- Helen Randall
- Airman / Petty Officer 3rd Class Jake Fischer
- Emily Thomas
- Chief Aviation Survival Technician Jack Skinner
- Captain William Hadley
- Captain Frank Larson
- Maggie McGlone

Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

Background info:

- The film's tagline is "*How Do You Decide Who Lives Or Who Dies?*"
- Established in 1790, the Coast Guard was the only U.S. armed force on the sea until Congress launched the Navy Department 8 years later. The Coast Guard has served to protect the U.S. in every one of the nation's conflicts.
- Rescue swimmers are a small group within the U.S. Coast Guard, only about 300 of them service-wide. The whole person evaluation used in recruitment considers the applicant's attitude, professionalism, honesty, respect, language proficiency, height / weight, physical abilities, and work ethic. Candidates who are afraid of being in, on, or near the water are not eligible to apply.
- The Coast Guard's rescue swimmer training school has one of the highest student attrition rates of any special operations school in the military. Roughly 75 students go through the school each year, and fewer than half complete the training.
- The USCG Academy is one of the five military service academies. Located in New London, CT. The USCG Academy's mission is to produce leaders of character for service to the nation.
- The Coast Guard motto is "*Semper Paratus*" (always ready).
- The producers and actors worked closely with the Coast Guard to simulate what recruits have to go through in order to become a rescue swimmer. In the movie they cast actual Master Chiefs to play roles to give it more authenticity.
- Chief Flythe, played by Joseph "Butch" Flythe, who can be seen in various scenes throughout the film, was one of the first five operating rescue swimmers in the Coast Guard, graduating from A school in 1984 and beginning his work at the Elizabeth City base in 1985.
- Bonnie Bramlett, who plays Maggie McGlone, is better known for her singing and songwriting (she co-wrote "*Superstar*" [The Carpenters] and "*Let It Rain*" [Eric Clapton]).

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Scriptures:

Psalms 13:5-6 (The Message) – *“I’ve thrown myself headlong into your arms—I’m celebrating your rescue. I’m singing at the top of my lungs, I’m so full of answered prayers.”*

Psalms 34:17-18 (The Message) – *“Is anyone crying for help? God is listening, ready to rescue you. If your heart is broken, you’ll find God right there; if you’re kicked in the gut, he’ll help you catch your breath.”*

Psalms 69:14-15 (ESV) – *“Deliver me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters. Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.”*

Psalms 70:5 (NLT) – *“But as for me, I am poor and needy; please hurry to my aid, O God. You are my helper and my savior; O LORD, do not delay.”*

Proverbs 24:10-11 (The Message) – *“If you fall to pieces in a crisis, there wasn’t much to you in the first place. Rescue the perishing; don’t hesitate to step in and help.”*

Matthew 16:25-26 (The Message) – *“Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self. What kind of deal is it to get everything you want but lose yourself? What could you ever trade your soul for?”*

Mark 10:29-31 (ESV) – *“Jesus said, ‘Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.’”*

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Discussion points:

1. Ben counsels Jake to save the ones he can and let the rest go. Who do you tend to think about the most, those you were able to help, or those whom you had to let go?
2. What do you think of Ben's philosophy of choosing who lives? (He said he takes the first one he comes to or the weakest one in the group and then swims as fast and as hard as he can for as long as he can. And the sea takes the rest.)
3. What makes someone willing to *"live a life of meager pay with the distinct possibility of dying slow, cold and alone somewhere in the vast sea"* along with *"a chance to save lives"*?
4. Ben confronts Jake about his past because he realizes Jake will not be able to reach his full potential in the future without coming to terms with his past pain. What are some practical ways to lovingly confront someone about their past in order to promote healing?
5. What fear would you most like to overcome?
6. What instance of teamwork most impacted you in this film?
7. Which character did you most relate to, and why?