

“Because of Winn-Dixie” starring AnnaSophia Robb, Jeff Daniels, Eva Marie Saint, 2005, PG, 106 minutes

Major themes:

- Family
- Friendship
- Freedom
- Prayer
- Invitation
- Isolation
- Gossip
- Community
- Love

Major characters:

- India Opal Buloni
- Mr. Buloni, “The Preacher”
- Gloria Dump
- Otis
- Ms. Franny Block
- Amanda Wilkinson
- Dunlap & Stevie Dewberry
- Sweetie Pie Thomas

Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

Background info:

- The tagline for this film is, *"Discover what happens when you go looking for a miracle and a miracle comes looking for you."*
- This film is an adaptation of Kate DiCamillo's book of the same name (and winner of a Newberry Honor distinction).
- Winn-Dixie was played by two Picardy Shepherds, a rare breed. Dogs were brought from France when none were available in the U.S.
- The mouse in the film was played by a rat, because rats are easier to train.
- The story is set in Florida, but filming took place in Louisiana.
- The bunny that Otis hands to Opal is a Netherland Dwarf, one of the smallest rabbit breeds, reaching about 2 pounds in adulthood.
- Winn-Dixie is an American supermarket chain, with stores located in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, and Mississippi. The chain was founded in 1925. As of 2017, there were 495 Winn-Dixie supermarkets, and it was ranked the 45th largest retailer in the U.S. Winn-Dixie was founded by William Milton Davis and his four sons, after they moved from Idaho to Florida.

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Scriptures:

Matthew 5:43-48 (The Message) – *“You’re familiar with the old written law, ‘Love your friend,’ and its unwritten companion, ‘Hate your enemy.’ I’m challenging that. I’m telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer, for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best—the sun to warm and the rain to nourish—to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. In a word, what I’m saying is, Grow up. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”*

1 John 4:7 (NLT) – *“Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God.”*

Philippians 4:6 (NLT) – *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”*

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV) – *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*

Romans 14:10b (The Message) – *“Eventually, we’re all going to end up kneeling side by side in the place of judgment, facing God. Your critical and condescending ways aren’t going to improve your position there one bit.”*

Proverbs 16:28 (NLT) – *“A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends.”*

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Discussion points:

1. Do you think it was easy for Opal to extend an invitation to each of the people whom she asked to the party?
2. In what ways do we see the benefits of friendships in this film?
3. What can we learn about prayer from this film?
4. What characteristics of true friendship do you most appreciate?
5. What helped the various characters in this film to lay their burdens down?
6. To which character did you most relate, and why?
7. Gloria's advice to Opal is to love Otis as he is today, instead of judging him on his past. Why is this advice so difficult for many people to follow?
8. How does gossip affect the way we view the person being gossiped about? the person gossiping?
9. What does Gloria teach us about seeing others with our hearts?