

“Jerry and Marge Go Large” starring Bryan Cranston, Annette Bening, Rainn Wilson, 2022, PG-13, 96 minutes

Major themes:

- Mathematics
- Gambling
- Investing
- Publicity
- Greed
- Loopholes
- Ethics
- Decency
- Community
- Restoration

Major characters:

- Jerry & Marge Selbee
- Bill
- Steve
- Howard & Shirley
- Doug & Heather Selbee, Lizzy
- Dawn Selbee
- Tyler
- Eric

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Background info:

- This film is based on a true story, referenced in a 2018 HuffPost article of the same name. It is set in Ewart, a small town in Michigan.
- The film's tagline is, "Inspired by true story. In all probability."
- A binomial distribution is a frequency distribution of the possible number of successful outcomes in a given number of trials in each of which there is the same probability of success.
- Cash Winfall was a game administered by the Massachusetts Lottery, no longer offered due to the events described in this film. Jerry Selbee said that it took him just three minutes to find a loophole in this game.
- A slight blooper in this film omits the fact that each Winfall ticket actually includes five sets of lottery picks. The machines could print one thousand tickets per hour, so 1600 tickets (8000 picks) could be printed during the course of this film (96 minutes)!
- Photos of the real Jerry and Marge and their family (upon whose story this film is based) are shown during the end credits.

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Scriptures:

Isaiah 26:4 (The Message) – “Depend on God and keep at it because in the Lord God you have a sure thing.”

Psalms 40:4-5 (The Message) – “Blessed are you who give yourselves over to GOD, turn your backs on the world’s ‘sure thing,’ ignore what the world worships; The world’s a huge stockpile of GOD-wonders and God-thoughts. Nothing and no one compares to you! I start talking about you, telling what I know, and quickly run out of words. Neither numbers nor words account for you.”

Ecclesiastes 5:10-12 (NLT) – “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.”

Proverbs 22:26-27 (The Message) – “Don’t gamble on the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, pawning your house against a lucky chance. The time will come when you have to pay up; you’ll be left with nothing but the shirt on your back.”

Proverbs 22:9 (NLT) – “Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor.”

Galatians 5:25-26 (NIV) – “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

John 13:34-35 (ESV) – “[Jesus:] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

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Discussion points:

1. Loopholes, defined as an ambiguities or inadequacies in a system which can be used to circumvent or otherwise avoid the implicit or explicit purpose of the system. They are searched for and used strategically in a variety of circumstances, including elections, politics, taxes, the criminal justice system, and security breaches. What is your opinion on loopholes? Is it ethically good, bad, or neutral, to take advantage of them?
2. What is your ethical takeaway from this film?
3. What did you notice about the correlation between Jerry and Marge's choices and restoration? Who or what was restored, and how?
4. Marge says, "He finally got to use his gift to connect to people." Who could you encourage this week by telling them what you notice about the gifts they've been given?
5. Do you see any issue with the differing motivations behind similar choices made by various characters in this film?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much of a risk taker are you? What circumstances are the most important to you in considering the level of risk you are willing to take?