

## “Free Guy”

*God at the Movies 2022: Pt.3*

### [Trailer 2:34]

They can't all be Oscar winners folks! Welcome back to SWFF and to God at the Movies 2022 – our annual series we here we take some of last years films and mine them for spiritual truth. Let me give you a little insight into the philosophy behind this series, because some of you are new and maybe some of you have just forgotten. But a big impetus behind this series is to inspire you to look for God in surprising places.

I believe that God is always speaking to us. And yes, of course, the Bible is the standard measure against which we evaluate every perceived message or truth. But just because God's standard is in the Bible does not mean that's the *only* place we find God. Even the Bible teaches in **Psalm 19:1-4**, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”*

That's the foundation of what's called “natural theology”. That there is a basis for the knowledge of God apart from the Revelation of scripture. The Apostle Paul says something similar in **Romans 1:20**, *“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that*

*people are without excuse.”* So, the concept is that you can get a general idea that there *is* a God and maybe a little something *about* that God through observing nature. This was the foundation for science even into the Enlightenment era – the reasoned world points us to God.

But this is not without problems. Especially in a fallen world. Because, as God says through the prophet Isaiah, (**Isaiah 55:8**) *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.”* So when it comes to trying to piece together an understanding of God outside of His own Revelation, we have a tendency to see four plus four and come up with eleven. What mostly happens, is we make a God in *our* own image. So we see in nature that the strong devour the weak and that's in our own human nature as well. So we assume God is the ultimate strong man that consumes the weak.

This is why the great 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian, Karl Barth – of whom I am a disciple – gave a resounding “Nein!” to natural theology. He says you cannot start with humanity and go to divine, it can only work the other way around. In fact, the only way to understand who God is – the *true* God – is through the Revelation of Jesus Christ and him crucified. That's what shows us that, in fact, God is *not* like us at all. He doesn't consume the weak because He is stronger, He *sacrifices* Himself for the weak, because He is stronger. That is *not* something you find in nature.

Sometimes I worry that Heir Barth would not appreciate our *God at the Movies* series. It starts from human culture and takes us to God and that always has an element of danger. But, while I appreciate the warning – and it was certainly a needed correction in the era when he proposed it – I think it potentially goes too far in the other direction. After all, if God truly created the world and everything in it – all things seen and unseen – then it would make sense that some of God’s fingerprints, however smudged, would remain on that creation. On us.

I believe – for instance – that humans beings are capable of creating life, because God first created life and we are made in God’s image. That a lawyer cares about justice – whether she realizes it or not – because she is created in the image of a just deity. The greatest rock guitarist you’ve ever heard can do that because God’s thumbprint is on them - and God created music. A poet can spin an epic tale because God is in the epic storytelling business.

For instance, take a look at the famous story about Paul on Mars Hill. This is a place in Athens where the people of the city loved to gather and debate philosophy. Which makes sense since Athens was the leading center for Greek philosophy in its day. By the way, the *third* leading center for Greek philosophy was Tarsus, which happened to be Paul’s hometown; so he could hold his own with these thinkers.

Now, Paul understood that these pagans philosophers did not have a proper handle on ultimate truth. His eyes were wide open, as it says in **Acts 17:16**, “*While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.*” So what does Paul – this great Christian leader – do with his distress? Does he yell at the people? Does he lobby the city council to make idols illegal? No, it says he reasons with them. In fact, he starts with where they are and actually *compliments* them for having a commitment to searching for truth.

Look at this, **Acts 17:22-23**, “*Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.”* In other words, “You’ve attempted to cover your religious bases, good for you. Now allow me to tell you about this “unknown god”. Let me turn that lower-case “g” into a capital “G”. Do you see what he’s doing? He’s taking non-Christian art – in this case sculpture – and using it to point to the gospel.

In fact, he goes even further. Look at **Acts 17:28**, this is amazing, “*For in him we live and move and have our being.*’ *As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’*” Now, Paul is quoting two different sources there. Not unusual, Paul often quotes sources from the Hebrew Bible to make his arguments. Except these quotes *aren’t* from the Bible. Oh no. The notes from my NIV Bible identify the source of the first quote as “From the Cretan philosopher Epimenides” and the second as “From the Cilicia Stoic philosopher Aratus.”

Now this is incredible. The “him” and the “his” that these Greek poets are referring to is *not* YHWH the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. Not the God of the Israelites. Not the Trinitarian Creator from Genesis. These are the guys that wrote the Greek mythology that we read about in school. In fact, the second quote comes from a work called *Hymn to Zeus*. They were talking about *Zeus*. But Paul didn’t care, he was going to take it and talk about *Jesus*. Which is exactly what he did if you read on, he explains the gospel to them right through the Easter Sunday Resurrection.

And that’s how you redeem natural theology. It might not start with the Revelation of Jesus as found in the gospels. But it *ends* there. It may start with a pretty sunset, a laughing baby, a beautiful violin solo, a tear jerking scene from a movie...but if it eventually takes

you to Jesus Christ, and his life, death and resurrection...it’s probably a legitimate means for theology.

So that’s why I feel comfortable using movies – pagan movies even! – to take people on a journey to Jesus. In fact I almost *exclusively* use pagan movies. Sometimes a few of you will recommend a Christian movie to me – like the recent Western adapted from the book of Hosea – and I’m probably never going to do that. That’s too easy! Low hanging fruit. *Of course*, you can pull a Christian message from a Christian film. I want to show you how you can do it all over nature. Whether the creators intended for it or not. Because there is an overarching Creator that wants to speak to all His children, in the church or outside of it.

So that’s the philosophical or theological underpinnings of *God at the Movies*. But let me add a practical note. They don’t actually have to be *good* movies. There are plenty of good, artistically elevated movies that God speaks to me through. The first two films in this series have been Oscar winners. But at the end of the day, I have to hear God in it – *His Spirit* speaking to *my* spirit...so I can hopefully stand up here and speak to *your* spirit. And as I said, they’re not all Oscar winners, folks!

This morning's film was at least *nominated* for an Oscar; Best Achievement in Visual Effects. Although up against two Marvel movies, James Bond and – the most visually spectacular movie I saw last year – *Dune*, it was a long, long shot. But again, that's ok. The reality is, as much as I enjoyed *Dune*, I just didn't see my way to a sermon in it. Although the sequel looks promising...!

But *Free Guy* – which I also enjoyed very much – I was writing the outline for what would become this sermon literally while the end credits were scrolling in the Westgate Regal Theatre. Now there's a couple of ways to do God at the Movies. Sometimes – probably a lot of the time – I use a movie that allows me to talk about some other issue that I've been wrestling with. So *Belfast* let us talk about violence done in the name of religion and *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* got us into a warning about the abuses of the prosperity gospel. Both very useful.

But sometimes, I just see the movie as a big old metaphor for the gospel and it makes me want to talk about it. It's an allegory. An allegory is a story that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning. “*This is really that.*” Neo in *The Matrix* is a type of Christ-figure. Shakespeare's Iago in *Othello* is a stand in for Satan, the accuser of the brethren.

Now, you always have to be careful with allegories. They are a two-edged sword. Used in moderation, they can bring a-ha moments of insight. But overdo it and they can lead you astray. Neo is a *type* of Christ, but he's *not* Christ. You can go too far. Allegory was the go-to means of scriptural interpretation with most of the early Church Fathers. Origin was so adept at allegory that it is said that every piece of wood became the cross. Hey, sometimes a piece of wood is just a piece of wood.

In fact it was the abuses of allegory that led the Reformers to reject it in favor of going strictly to the author's intent. And I do think that *is* the higher interpretive rule, but like with Barth and natural theology, it's possible to go too far in one direction in response to a lack of balance toward the opposite direction. So we're going to do some allegorizing today and – whether the director intended it or not – there's a lot of dots to connect.

So I'm going to play you more clips than I usually do. This is more like me showing you what I saw and seeing if you can see it too. Honestly, this would probably work better if we could just sit around in a discussion group about it and say, “What did you see? What did you see?” I think art is more fun in dialogue than lecture. But here we are. And there is a place for lecture. So let's talk about *Free Guy*.

Now, not all of the critics were as generous as I was with the movie. And again, I'm not arguing this was a great movie, but it was fun and it was sweet – like the bubblegum ice cream the main characters loved so much. *The New York Times* review said, “*Free Guy* has charm, but there's not much memorable in the same old quest, same old boss fight, then game over.”

And I think that's probably valid, there's a lot of derivative here from *The Matrix* actually, to *Groundhog Day*, *Westworld*, and more recently *Ready Player One* and – to a surprising large extent the more I think about it – *The LEGO Movie*. But it's ok, sometimes you want the classic formulas. Sometimes you want to experiment with a gorgonzola and pear pizza, but sometimes you just want a good old pepperoni! Nobody is tuning into the Hallmark Channel for gritty realism.

And *Free Guy* is a fantasy above all. The classic Mariah Carey song that runs throughout is proof of that. Imagine you're heading to your job at the bank like you always do, preparing for it's daily flood of violent robberies, and suddenly you discover your whole existence is nothing but a character in a video game. And not even a hero in the game, but just an NPC – Non Player Character. You are background material. The curtains. The painting above the bed in a hotel room. That's a lot to process.

That's just the situation that Guy finds himself in. Guy is everyman. The working men and women that make the world go round. Of course, you could argue that Guy is not exactly, *every*-man, because very few of us actually look like, or are as charming as, Ryan Reynolds! But Guy is the stand in for us. Guy is comfortable with his monotonous life in the game called Free City – same blue shirt and kakis everyday, same cup of coffee with two creams, same breakfast cereal with his goldfish as a companion. Only one thing missing...the girl.

But of course, this is Hollywood, so we don't miss the girl for long. Enter Millie, an in-game skin controlled by a very real girl in the real world. In fact, in the real world, Millie and her friend and former programming colleague, Keys, actually *created* the Free City that Guy and all of his friends inhabit. Well, not exactly the city, they didn't create this game world to be so violent and exploitative, but their original design was stolen and used to build the mega-commercial hit that is Free City.

And so Millie is infiltrating the game as a player, trying to find the proof she needs to reclaim her creation. She's one of the “sunglasses people”. If you see someone in the gaming world wearing sunglasses, that's our clue that they are players from the real world. They have the power to control their own destiny, unlike Guy with his closet full of the same outfit, his best friend Buddy the bank security guard who's job is just to lie still during each subsequent robbery, and really all of the non-sunglasses wearing members of his community.

Of course the irony is that in the “real world” many of the “heroes” are revealed to be just a much a cog in their own machine as Guy is in his. I’ve played my fair share of interactive video games and the feeling of escape, is a key part of the appeal. I may not have had much success in counseling a couple in their broken marriage during the day, but by golly, I can liberate a whole island from tyranny at night!

As the pandemic sent many of us to home offices, how much our our own work-lives are now spent behind screens even in the “real word”? We’re still dealing with the fallout of this “wake up” call. It forced many people to take a closer look at their life and decided maybe there’s more to it than working at the bank everyday. Well, Millie is Guy’s wake-up call.

One day her path interacts with Guy’s routine and everything changes. Subtly at first, instead of his medium coffee, two sugars, he orders a cappuccino and nearly causes a breakdown in the social order. But he’s just not satisfied with doing the same things anymore. Putting up with the same oppression. So inspired by the vision of the girl, he interrupts a bank robbery and gets a pair of sunglasses for himself. And as soon as he puts them on, the world changes. Now he sees things as they really are. As he himself puts it, “I feel brand new.”

There’s a story at the end of Luke’s gospel where the resurrected Jesus appears to a couple of disciples on the road to Emmaus and it says they didn’t recognize him. It’s almost like he had a different skin on – to use the video game lingo. But then at one point it says that “their eyes were opened” and they recognized it was Jesus. They said to each other, “didn’t our heart burn within us?”

John Wesley talks about how his heart was “strangely warmed” when he finally understood who Jesus was. That’s what’s happened to Guy, he gets a glimpse of the creator and things can’t ever go back to the way they were. Now he has new eyes. He replaces his blue dress shirt...with a more *casual* blue shirt. Baby steps.

But he feels compelled to make a difference. His new found sunglasses allow him to play the game, but because he’s been captivated by the beauty of the creator, he can’t bring himself to play it the same way everyone else does. He starts doing acts of kindness. He stands up to bad guys. And every time he fails he just comes back stronger and stronger. And the world takes notice – both within the game and without. To the outside world he’s simply know as the mysterious “blue shirt guy”

And he wants to share his vision with his best friend, Buddy. Because once your eyes are open, it's natural to not want to keep it to yourself. So in this clip, after being gone for a bit, he returns to the bank to help his security guard friend. **[Sunglasses 1:20]**. Not everybody is ready to see a new way of living. It's scary to change. But Guy is committed to be there for his friend whenever he's ready.

Of course, sometimes rejecting a new vision is not just because it's scary, but because it's a threat. While Guy is drawing a lot of fans in the online gaming community, not everybody is cheering for him. In a world that monetizes violence and oppression, being kind and generous is bad for business. And that brings us to the villain of our story, Antwan. If Millie represents Jesus, Antwan is the devil. Proud, arrogant, lies as a native language. And he will ruthlessly eliminate anyone who gets in the way of his goal...which is simply whatever generates the most money, power and recognition for Antwan.

It's fitting that they made the devil the head of a multi-media corporation. The film's director said he modeled Antwan on some studio executives he had worked with over the years. The goal is not creativity, or art, but profit above all.

Antwan rejects any attempt at originality and insists on relaunching sequels, each more soul numbing than the last. But they are profitable. Except with Guy in the picture, suddenly they're not so much anymore. People have stopped playing the game and just enjoy watching Guy do good things. And Antwan can't have that.

Plus, Guy is helping Millie get closer to discovering the evidence she needs to prove Antwan stole the original program that she and Keys developed. At the center of the game, some of their old code is kept under lock and key. But it's a reminder that in our big story, our world is not the one the original creator designed either. Antwan perfectly demonstrates that the devil doesn't create anything, he can only warp and twist was God has made.

At one point Keys pours out his frustrations to Millie; "Our game was complex and beautiful and interesting and Free City, it may be popular, but it's so idiotic, it makes me want to cry." Near the end of the movie, Antwan unleashes his attempt at creating his own version of Guy, the character Dude. He's big and inarticulate and only knows one way to interact, raw strength. Side-by-side, Guy and Dude prove the point, the enemy can't create anything, he can only twist the designs of the original creator.

Same with our world and God's creation. For instance, the enemy didn't create sex – sometimes even the church acts like he did – but no, God created human sexuality as a beautiful expression of committed love. But under the management of this fallen world, it's turned into a commodity which doesn't seek to give, but to *take* as much as it can get, leaving people broken and hurting in it's wake.

God's design for human work was to take care of the earth and receive needed resources in return. Under the fallen system, work becomes about exploiting both the earth and the worker. In the original creation the family was meant to be a mutually supporting unit. In the current game, parents dominate and children rebel. Even in the church – *the* institution created specifically for the worship of the creator – money and power get instituted into the game – as we saw all too well in last week's film – and God's name winds up being slandered by the very church He created to spread good news. The enemy always twists the original design of the creator.

And so in the fallen gaming world, even Blue Shirt Guy begins to feel overwhelmed. Even a Christian who has truly laid eyes on the beauty of the creator can't help but get discouraged by the world as it exists. Guy starts asking questions about the meaning of life. He's in an existential crisis about his identity. And he wisely, turns to his friend for support. Let's see what Buddy has to say, **[Real :58]**

That's *so* good. We live in a complex and confusing world. It's very hard to determine sometimes the difference between the real Anthony and the commercialized Anthony carefully advertised through my job, my reputation and my social media platform. We live in complex times with complex questions. And I like the complex questions, but at the end of the day, it has to come down to two things. What did Jesus say were the most important things? Love God with all your heart – love the creator. And love your neighbor as yourself. Keep your life outward focused. Love God and love others.

It's a reminder that the game doesn't revolve around us. I once heard a counselor tell about a client who was depressed and they kept talking about all their issues, on and on. And finally the counselor said, "You know, I think I've found the problem. If I thought about you all day long, I'd be depressed too." We have to keep it outward focused.

Well, Guy does just that. He turns his focus to once again making a difference in the lives around him, and he even finds the clue that Millie needs to prove her ownership of the game world. But of course, that means Antwan would lose everything, and he can't do that. So rather than let Guy be the hero, he just reboots the game. And sure enough, Guy goes back to his normal, mundane life. No more Blue Shirt Guy.



Millie reenters the game and desperately tries to get Guy to remember her but to know avail. In fact he's a little scared of her. He's fully retreated into his old life. So with the enemy closing in, the needed evidence almost lost, in an act of desperation, Millie try's something...new. Let's watch. **[Kiss :43]**. "I remember" – yeah he does! What a kiss. It is the love of the creator that gets the neurons firing. Brings him back to real life. You might say he's born again.

You see, the brilliance of the game as designed by Millie and Keys was that the NPCs – the background characters – would *evolve* beyond their original programming. Yes, they were created beings, but a form of free-will was programmed into their nature. They were meant to become free agents. It was Antwan that wanted to make them slaves.

But Guy couldn't see who he really was until the creator entered into his world. That got his attention, that woke him up, but it was the kiss...it had to be an act of love to make Guy *fully* who he was capable of being. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said "When you feel miserable inside, look at the cross and you will know what is happening. Suffering, pain, sorrow, humiliation, feelings of loneliness, are **nothing but the kiss of Jesus**, a sign that you have come so close that he can kiss you."

Do you see why Christianity can't just be a religion? A set of propositions or commands? Only in a *relationship* do you get a life transforming kiss; do you get love. This is an appropriate way to talk about Jesus. My faculty adviser for my dissertation, Dr. Cindy Rigby, is a brilliant theologian and she has written as brilliant, and accessible, theology. Some of you might remember when she preached here. But she writes, "In the person of Jesus Christ, Christians believe, God not only meets us but also makes us God's own. We are claimed as beloved ones embraced by a lover, as children held by parents, as friends defended and believed in by one another. We are claimed as objects of a love greater than our understanding, a love that desires we participate, as conscious subjects, in the joy of its benefits." (Rigby, *Holding Faith*, 107)

It's all about the transforming love of the creator. It will set you free. And it now really sets Guy free. As it turns out, he has been looking at Millie's hidden game code every morning through his window and didn't realize it. There was a shadow, just a reflection in the blinds of his window, of the original world that Millie and Keys designed, that got left in Free City. A luscious green island just off the shore from the beach.

It reminds me of how C.S. Lewis described heaven, as a shadow, a whisper, of a distant land. All of our lovely memories remind us of it, but the memories are not the reality. “For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.” (*The Weight of Glory*). But Guy is committed to getting to that island. Of helping Mille win back her creation.

And of course that makes Antwan mad. Listen, the closer you get to spoiling the enemy’s plans the more *difficult* life will get, not easier. And so Antwan is throwing everything he has at the hero. It’s like the game is set on the highest settings of chaos. But Guy has resources of his own. He may not be a programmer, but he has friends.

Now, before I play you this clip, I have to share a dilemma I had about the movie. I’ve already said that allegories are imperfect by nature, but this one bothered me. So Guy represents us – humanity. Millie and Keyes are the creators, and as the one who reduces herself to enter into our world, Millie is obviously Jesus. Which means that Keyes represents God the Father. But I’m a Trinitarian – God is one essence but *three* persons. So where’s the third person of the Trinity? Where is the Holy Spirit? And then I found him.

He’s in this clip. Guy has gathered the other Non Player Characters and asks them to join him in resisting the enemy’s plan. All these minor background characters, the traffic cops, the baristas, the lady with the lost cats, the guy who’s only job is to keep his hands up because he’s always getting mugged. They are not heroes, but maybe if they banded together...Let’s take a look **[Change 1:02]**

“What’s inside me is inside you too.” What *is* inside of a Christian who has been transformed by a love encourager with the Creator? Why, the Holy Spirit of course! The Holy Spirit has been referred to as the “shy” member of the Trinity. He prefers to do his work behind the scenes and point the glory to the Father and the Son. And one of the key places he works is in the lives of believers.

How did Saint Peter go from denying knowing who Jesus was out of fear on the night he was arrested, to a few weeks later standing up in the daylight in the middle of the Temple square and boldly proclaiming the Gospel? In between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost, Peter had received the Holy Spirit. Two chapters later Peter gave another big speech and it says, (**Acts 4:8**) *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...”*

The Holy Spirit turns ordinary people into heroes. Simple folk into saints. And so in Free City, the simple people rise up. And when Antwan sends the police after Guy...there *are no* police. They're all taking a coffee break, thank you very much. So Guy and Millie are on their way to the island – Keyes has created a bridge from the outside (we don't even have time for *that* metaphor!) and it looks like they may make it. But then Antwan decides that if he can't run the game his way, he'd just as soon destroy the whole thing. So he literally takes an axe and begins to whack the physical servers. No servers, no game. One by one the characters in the game blink out of existence – including Buddy who gives his life to help his friend cross that bridge.

Finally only Guy remains, but he's not real. He's only a code of 1's and 0's. Back in the real world, all Antwan has to do is swing the axe one more time and it's game over. The creation will be lost. And then...into the server room...steps Millie. Let's take a look at her confrontation with her nemesis. **[Deal 1:06]**. It's the great exchange. She's willing to give up everything to save her precious creation. And Antwan agrees because he thinks it's the stupidest deal ever. But that's only because he doesn't understand the true currency. All he sees is money. Which has no meaning in the *true* world.

And this is one of the things I really love about this movie, the layers within layers. There's the video game that the NPC's inhabit, but even in there, the people with the glasses see a world others don't. But of course, *we* know that Free City is not even the computer game it was designed to be. There's another world hidden inside the visible one. But then when you log out, you realize Millie and Keyes and Antwan occupy a much larger world. Our world. The real world.

So here we are in the real world. But is this all there is? All that we can see and taste and touch? The materialist view says, "yes." But those with eyes of faith believe there is another world yet. That even this world is a "game", if you will, that has it's fulfillment in the world to come. The world the Creator truly designed for us to occupy. The Bible refers to this world as "heaven"

And in heaven, they didn't use the same currency. You know how in a video game, you have to exchange your currency in this world for something that works in the game world. If you need fifty gold coins to buy a sword, the piece of paper with Abe Lincoln's face in your pocket won't do you any good unless you exchange it for game currency.

This is what Jesus was after when he said in the Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 6:19-21**, “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”

But all Antwan can see are the treasures of this world. Which of course, he loses anyway. As it turns out, once their eyes are opened, people would rather watch Millie and Keys world than play in Antwans. So his empire collapses. Meanwhile, Guy is in the new world. Now not just Free City, but *Free World*. And we get a beautiful picture of what that will be like – again, it’s allegory, so not perfect – but the closing scene is a picture of “a slice of heaven”. Let’s watch, **[Heaven 1:00]**

The world as it was designed to be. A world of friends and freedom. No violence, no exploitation, no disease, no death. Now, that’s all fine and good, but there’s one critical piece missing. Yes, heaven is like that, but the presence of the good and the absence of the bad is *not* what makes heaven, heaven. Not alone. See, every religion teaches some kind of nirvana, Valhalla, escape from the toils of existence. The Christian view is different.

And the movie gets it exactly right. There’s a twist just before this final scene, and honestly, this is the thing that turned the light bulbs on for me. This is when I knew I had to use this movie in our sermon series. Millie logs into her creation once more and she walks and talks with Guy in the cool of the garden. Everything is lovely. But of course, she’s real and he’s still digital, so she realize he can’t be the final love she needs. Guy’s paradise is still her fantasy world. And Guy realizes this to, so he helps her “break up” with him. Let’s take a look at what happens. **[Love Story 2:12]**

We thought it was Guy and Millie’s love story. But no, all along it was *the creators* love story...we are just characters in it. I don’t know if you noticed what Keys was wearing in that last scene, but it was a *blue shirt*. Everything about Guy is made in his image. Guy is simply a manifestation of the love of the creator.

We must understand that the essence of God is not power or knowledge – those things can be twisted and used for evil – but the foundation of God – and thus the foundation of all things, is *love*. Another theologian I have been reading – and I’m so thankful we’re getting more women in theology because they tend to have a better eye for this aspect of the nature of God.

But Katherine Sonderegger writes: “God is Love. The whole is caught up in its goal and final good. Love is the keystone of the Divine Perfections, we should say, the Attribute that holds together, sums up and makes lovely the entire Divine Nature, all its Properties and its Glory. It is the Perfection of Eternity in its loveliest form. God’s Love is in this the greatest of all that lasts; it is the excellent Way.” (Syst. Theo. Vol.1, 469)

And of course she’s basing that on the words of the Beloved Disciple in **1 John 4:16**, *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love.** Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”*

So no, the perfect existence – heaven, paradise, the afterlife – will not revolve around us. It’s not been *our* story. Someone programmed you. God didn’t *need* you to have love. God had all the love He needed from all eternity within His own being; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But God’s love is so grand He desired to share it with “the other”. God created you for love. To love and to be loved in return. And in the end, we are just a love letter to the creator. We have been invited to be a part of the greatest love story ever told.

So yes, the *Times* review is probably right, “same old quest, same old boss fight”. But have you ever wondered why so many epics tales – and it’s been this way as long as humans have been telling stories to each other – but the great ones all start with a perfect world corrupted by a selfish villain, but a hero steps in and at great sacrifice saves the day. In the end the guy gets the girl and everyone lives happily ever after. What are so many of the stories like that?

Maybe it’s a common story, because it is *the* story. And it is hardwired into our programming. I hope you can see it. I hope the creator opens our eyes to the reality of love. Love is all through God’s Revelation, both in the person of Jesus Christ and in the Bible that tells his story. It’s all around us...even in the movies...if we’ll learn to see.

Let’s pray...