



CLIFTON
COLLINS, JR.

CHEECH
MARIN

MOISES
ARIAS

RYAN
OCHOA

JAKE T.
AUSTIN

JANSEN
PANETTIERE

THE PERFECT GAME

BASED ON A TRUE STORY



Nine Boys,
One Dream

“A near perfect film...
you don’t have to be
a baseball fan to love it!”

– Larry King



STUDY GUIDE



THE PERFECT GAME

ABOUT THE FILM

From the director of *Angels in the Outfield* comes the incredible true story of the underdog foreign Little League team who inspired two nations. Clifton Collins Jr. (*Star Trek*) heads an all-star line-up of some of Hollywood's brightest young stars as Cesar, returns to his native Monterrey, Mexico after his major league career is cut short. Moises Arias (*Hannah Montana*), Jake T. Austin (*Wizards of Waverly Place*) and Ryan Ochoa (*iCarly*) costar as impoverished baseball-loving kids who recruit him to coach their rag-tag team. Together they beat the odds and overcome hardships and bigotry to compete in the 1957 Little League World Series. Screen favorites Cheech Marin (*Spy Kids*), Lou Gossett Jr. (*Iron Eagle*), Bruce McGill (*Animal House*), Emilie de Ravin (*Lost*) and David Koechner (*Anchorman*) are featured in this uplifting story in the winning tradition of Hoosiers that Boxoffice magazine cheered as "inspiring, richly entertaining, heartfelt... a perfect family movie."

ABOUT THE BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

The Bible study draws on the themes in the film and provides an opportunity for personal or group discussion of such topics as believing that God has a perfect purpose for our life; the importance of walking in faith on our journey; the role determination plays in achieving a goal; and how essential courage is in the face of adversity. Each topic will reflect on biblical applications and illustrate how our religious faith is integral to our hopes and dreams.

BIBLE STUDY INTRODUCTION

In the film *The Perfect Game*, a story unfolds in the 1950's when America's reputation as the land of opportunity extends beyond its borders. The economy is flourishing, Rock n' Roll fills the air waves, and the great American pastime, baseball, includes youth in Little League.

AIM HIGH

The Perfect Promise... Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Psalm 37:4 (NLB)

Ultimately, the dream for the boys of Monterrey, Mexico is to win the Little League Baseball World Series. Let's explore through the characters in "The Perfect Game" how God expanded their initial dream—to learn how to play baseball—and provided the resources they would need for the journey to their goal.

1. When the boys gather around Padre Estaban, he ignites their dream to play baseball. What event occurs that makes the rag-tag team believe that God wants them to follow their dream? Have you ever experienced God leading you toward His purpose through an experience, a coincidence or advice from another? Read a perfect promise in Psalm 32:8.



2. The Monterrey team has discovered its passion and purpose in baseball. Read Jeremiah 29:11 and consider what your mission or purpose in life is now, or what it might be. If you are still not sure, read James 1:5 for another perfect promise.
3. Young Angel Macias meets Cesar who has the ability to coach and teach the young boys baseball skills. Read Proverbs 19:20-21 and then discuss God's providence in their situation. Have you ever felt that God has provided what you've needed to pursue a desire of your heart? If so, share your story.
4. Additional Monterrey boys were asked to join the developing team based on their abilities. Read Psalm 139:13-16 and then make a list of your talents and abilities. How can you use these God-given gifts to achieve a dream—one that ultimately honors Him?

LESSON TO LEARN

In the dusty 1950's town of Monterrey, Mexico children grew up poor with little opportunity; choices for the future were limited. However, God's vision for every person isn't limited by circumstances.

In the film, we see how hope took root in their heart when Padre Estaban suggested that the boys play baseball. Enthusiastically—and with prayer—the group began to dream and form a mental picture of their future. What we see is how God provided them with the resources they needed, including their coach, Cesar, who honed their innate abilities. In time, God expanded their dream as they faithfully honored Him throughout their journey to the Little League World Series.



This true story is one that illustrates how God can give us the desires of our heart if we will develop a relationship with Him. In childlike faith, we can set our sights on a dream for our life and know that our Father in heaven will lead us to our life's purpose; one that fills our heart with passion and joy. Along the way, we will be amazed at God's perfect timing. Opportunities from His unseen hand will lead us—and sometimes push us—toward our goal while using others to coach, advise and develop our gifts.

As you dream of what God wants you to be, draw close to Him and hold onto biblical promises, remembering that His purpose and plan for your life will be perfect.

WALK IN FAITH

The Perfect Promise... Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths. Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLB)

In this segment of the study, we will look at the role faith played in the Monterrey boys achieving their dream.

1. Padre Estaban grieves for the disadvantaged boys who play—often mischievously—near the mission. How does God answer his prayer, “The children have nothing. How can I give them hope?” Read James 5:16b and Psalm 66:18-19 and then consider what this says to you about your relationship with God and bringing prayer requests to Him.



2. Prayer is of great importance to the Monterrey team, even to the point of almost forfeiting a game. List the various times in the film where the boys and their priest demonstrate their faith in God through prayer. Now, read Isaiah 65:24 and Psalm 20:4-5 and recall the many occasions when their prayers were answered.
3. In childlike faith, the baseball team and the padre ask for specific things in their prayers: “Help them come out victorious and make lots of hits.” What do the scriptures Matthew 7:7-11 and Philippians 4:6-7 say to you about making requests when you pray? Read I John 5:14 for a perfect promise.
4. Set aside time to write the details of your dream or goal and then commit your request to the Lord in prayer. Now, read Mark 11:22-24 and believe that God will lead you to your goal step by step.

LESSON TO LEARN

Prayer is a key ingredient in the journey to a miracle. For the Monterrey boys, it was the dream to play in the Little League World Series. From the padre’s first plea for hope to the last entreaty before the final game, God’s leading, intervention and blessing is sought after by this rag-tag group.

As we see, God doesn’t answer prayer based on our station in life, but on the condition of our heart. The children trust with an innocence and purity that allows them to believe wholeheartedly in the ability of God to grant them

anything they ask of their heavenly Father. As Angel enthusiastically tells the group, “Anything is possible with the help of God!”

Certainly, the long road to success wasn’t without its bumps as they encountered a lack of resources, prejudice and an expired Visa. But God provided them with everything they needed—funds, uniforms, bats, generosity of others—including the right person to intervene on their behalf to extend their stay in the United States.

In every situation, the team prays specifically for what they need. We would do well to follow that example rather than praying in generalities. It may be that asking for a specific need threatens what little faith we have; the fear that God may not answer holds us back. But the late Catherine Marshall in her book, *Adventures in Prayer*, advises us to come to God with our dreams—our heart’s desires; to put those details in writing, set them aside and then wait patiently as the Creator works on our behalf.

In the end, we will see—just as *The Perfect Game* audience has seen—that God is personal, loving and wants to answer our prayers. The Bible tells us in Lamentations 3:25 that “The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for him and seek him.” A perfect promise.



FAN DETERMINATION

The Perfect Promise: Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:3 (NIV)

In the film, we see the difficulties encountered by the boys of Monterrey. In this segment, let's discover what it took on their part to achieve their objective.

1. When Angel asked Cesar to teach his friends how to play baseball, what obstacle was immediately presented to the boys? Describe their reaction and what it indicates about their desire to play baseball.
2. During the boys baseball training they were often asked to “go the extra mile” by their coach when it didn't make sense to them. Read Joshua 6:1-20 and discuss the importance of perseverance and obedience when we are following God's leading in our lives.
3. Not only did the Monterrey team train at a disadvantage, they also had few amenities including transportation to a game, forcing them to walk. How would Isaiah 40:29 and 31 encourage you if you had been in their situation?
4. A journey toward a goal takes commitment; a willingness to persevere. Have you ever felt discouraged while making every effort to reach an objective? In what ways would Psalm 37:23-24 give you confidence?



LESSON TO LEARN

A goal takes determination; a lesson the Monterrey Industrials learned from the moment they began to clear the sandlot for a ball field. Their wish to play baseball would take their interactive participation, even though God was directing their path.

This is a lesson we can take to heart when we long for our dreams to come true. As much as God is willing to help us by opening doors, sometimes the open door leads us to hard work and something that may not be of our choosing. For example, Joshua wanted to storm the walls of Jericho for an immediate victory, but God had a different plan—one that seemed bizarre. Can you imagine how the army felt day after day as they walked silently around the city, the only sound their footsteps and perhaps laughter from within the gates? Still, Joshua and his men were obedient to God's direction and their perseverance paid off when the walls of Jericho fell.

Often the road to our dream is long as we prepare for the purpose and plan God has for our life. It's not uncommon to grow weary, to question whether it's worth the effort and to even wonder if what we're doing is really taking us where God wants us to be. Discouragement—and excuses—can fill our weary soul, but our Father in heaven promises us that He will refresh us and give us the strength we need.

So when doubts assail you and there's a temptation to give up, remember this perfect promise found in Nehemiah 8:10: “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”



WIN WITH COURAGE

The Perfect Promise... Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9 (NLB)

There were many hurdles to overcome as the Monterrey Industrials journeyed toward their ultimate dream. In this final section of our study, we'll see how they handled adversity with God's help.

1. Racial prejudice toward the team, including its coach, is apparent during the Little League competition. What does the Bible say about a person's outer appearance in I Samuel 16:7? About racial or ethnic differences in Acts 10:28, 34-35?



2. Despite racial discrimination, the Monterrey Industrials continue to seek the Lord's guidance and protection, courageously praying before each game—an action that brought further insults. Reflect on Isaiah 43:2, Psalm 60:12 and 2 Samuel 22:31 and then describe the feelings the boys might experience if they read these verses.
3. When the Mexican team sees the black teen discriminated against in the restaurant, how does the group's reaction demonstrate their Christian walk? Read Matthew 22:37-39 for the answer. Next read Matthew 5:14-16 and then discuss the impact their courageous action had on others who were present. Would you have had that same fearlessness?
4. The team's overall stature is small when compared to the taller, more experienced Little League teams. Read 1 Samuel 17:17-51 and compare their situation with this story about David and Goliath. Now consider this question: What "Goliath" have you faced—or are presently facing—and how does this story apply to you?

LESSON TO LEARN

Prejudice. It's something that rips the core of our self-esteem if we are the recipient. Certainly, the young boys from Monterrey felt pain from bigoted remarks directed at their team. But even so, their faith and belief that God was in control gave them courage and diminished the hurt intended for them.

The Bible speaks specifically about judging an individual or an entire race by their appearance. Prejudice has no place in a child of God's heart. We are commanded to love everyone as much as we love ourselves, to appreciate the uniqueness of each person that God has created. It doesn't matter how educated, talented, or rich we may be, if we treat others without love we are of no value whatsoever. (I Corinthians 13:1-3). Also, the Bible tells us that real love "...is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out." (I Corinthians 13:6 NLB).

Not only did the young boys of Monterrey experience discrimination, they also faced bigger and far more experienced young players. The biblical account of the shepherd boy, David, who faced the giant Goliath, comes to mind as we see the Monterrey Industrials conquer team after team. If we compare their situation with the Bible story, we see how size, resources and bravado aren't necessarily what matters. What is more important is our faith and dependence on God. In much the same way that David honored God with his proclamations, the boys of Monterrey continued to pray publicly, asking for heaven's blessing on their game. Even in less public circumstances they "walked the talk" displaying kindness and respect for others.

What occurred in this true story is certainly reminiscent of David and Goliath as God blessed the efforts of this team, equipping them with courage and emotional strength to face their strongest opponent in the final game. It should inspire us to trust God as we seek our purpose, our dreams and our passion. Along the way, we will meet a "Goliath" or two, but never stop believing in the goodness of our God, remembering this perfect promise: "I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need." Even if it means pitching a perfect game.

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For more information go to www.ThePerfectGameMovie.com