



PARENTS GUIDE TO
movie messages:
Despicable Me

Seek and find worldviews
while having fun as a family

FOCUS
ON THE FAMILY®



Despicable Me

BY **PLUGGED IN STAFF**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

SHAUN IVIE

The entertainment industry bombards us with obvious and subtle messages. But we often don't recognize them as worldviews or notice how they skew our thinking. To help you and your family identify varying worldviews in the culture, play this game of Movie Messages while watching *Despicable Me*.

Note: For young children who aren't ready to play this game, you can introduce them to worldview training with a casual mention like: "Free will means that our choices determine who we become."

**GAME
BOARD**
page 3

CARDS
pages 4-6

TIME STAMPS
pages 7-9

Directions:

1. Give every player a set of 10 worldview cards.
2. Watch *Despicable Me* until you reach an incident on the game board. Then pause the movie.
3. Each player chooses a card that matches the worldview identified in the movie and places it facedown. Then players turn over their cards to reveal their answers.*
4. The correct cards are removed from play. The cards deemed incorrect are returned to each player, and the movie continues.
5. This game doesn't cover every worldview in this movie. Players who have guessed wrong can catch up by calling out the correct worldview if it comes up again in the movie. (This can only be done with worldview cards that have been removed from play.)
6. The first player to get rid of his or her eight cards is the winner.

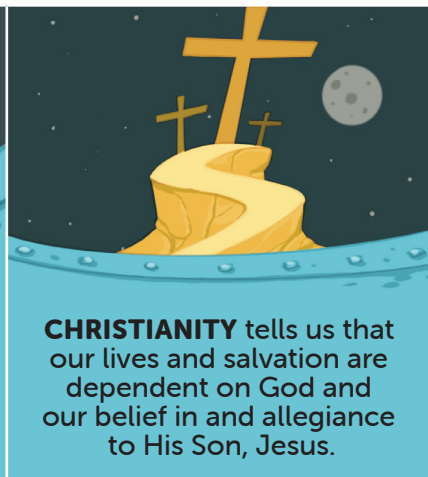
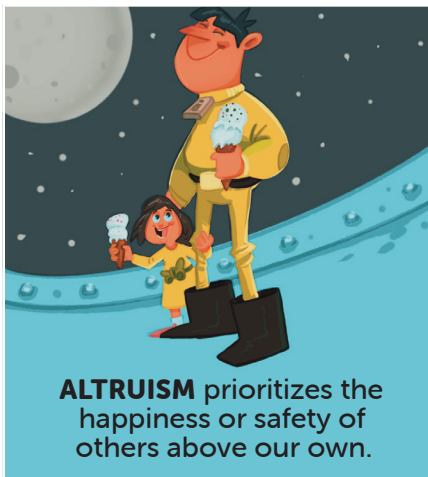
***Jingoism** and **Taoism** cards are not part of this movie's game board. If someone plays the Jingoism card and wants additional information, read Galatians 3:28, which rebuts the nature of jingoism by saying that in Jesus, we have unity, not division. If someone plays the Taoism card and wants additional information, read Isaiah 5:20. Christianity doesn't promote moral relativism.



Be sure to first check out *Plugged In's* review to see if *Despicable Me* is right for your family.

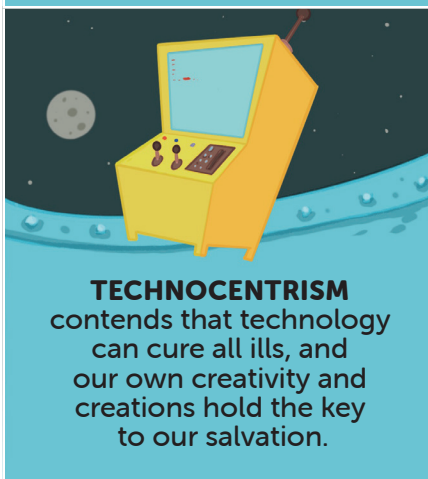
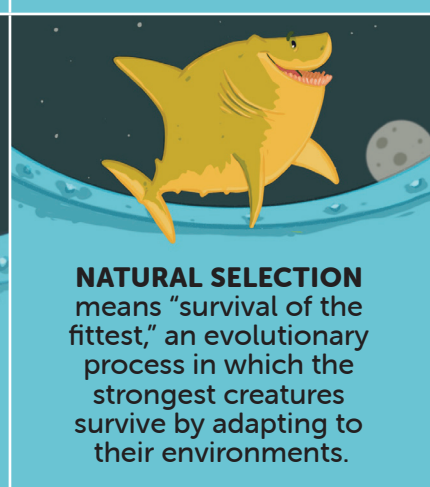
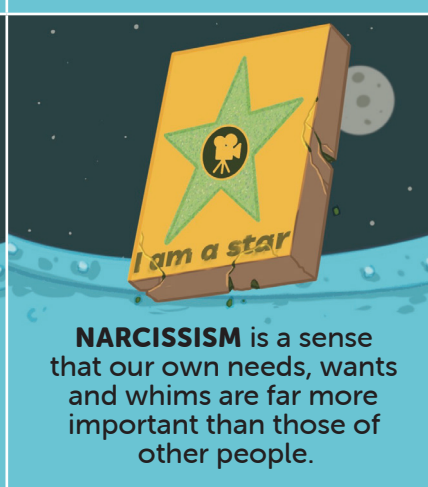
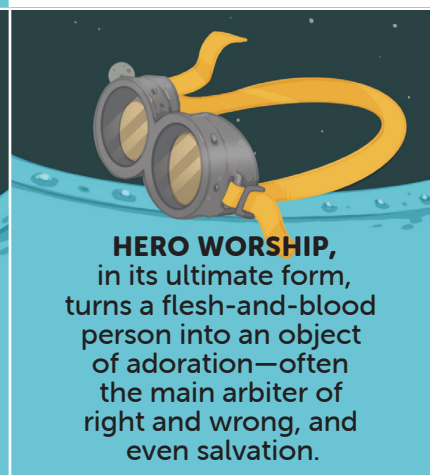
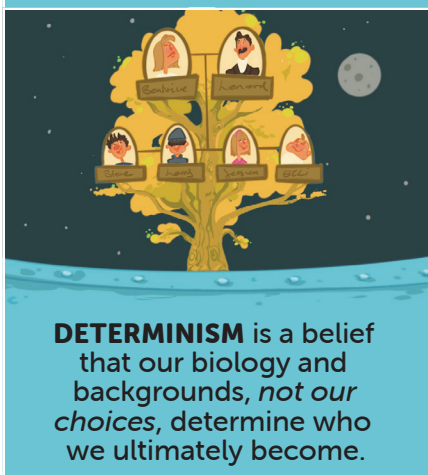
FocusOnTheFamily.com/DespicableMe





Directions:

Cut out one set of either color, black-and-white or plain cards (from pages 4-6) for each player.



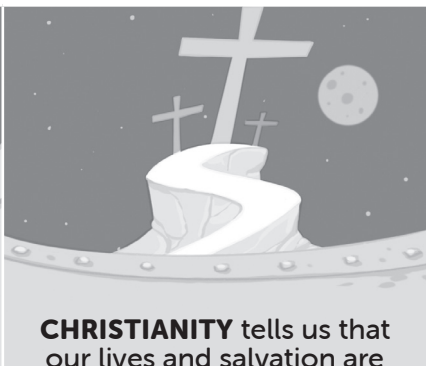
MOVIE REVIEWS

For a review of *Despicable Me* and other titles, visit **PluggedIn.com**, Focus on the Family's media review and discernment website.

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY'S
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ALTRUISM prioritizes the happiness or safety of others above our own.



CHRISTIANITY tells us that our lives and salvation are dependent on God and our belief in and allegiance to His Son, Jesus.

Directions:

Cut out one set of either color, black-and-white or plain cards (from pages 4-6) for each player.



DETERMINISM is a belief that our biology and backgrounds, *not our choices*, determine who we ultimately become.



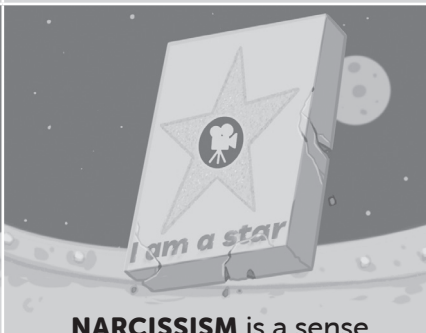
FREE WILL is a doctrine based on how our choices, not our *biology or backgrounds*, determine who we ultimately become.



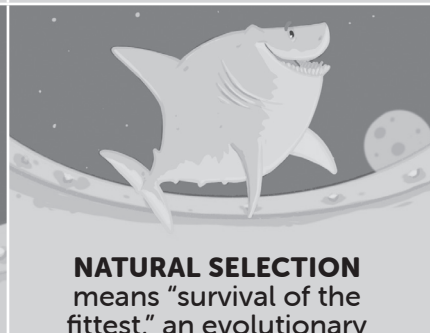
HERO WORSHIP, in its ultimate form, turns a flesh-and-blood person into an object of adoration—often the main arbiter of right and wrong, and even salvation.



JINGOISM is extreme patriotism that aggressively promotes warlike measures.



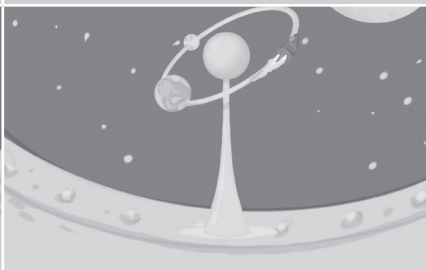
NARCISSISM is a sense that our own needs, wants and whims are far more important than those of other people.



NATURAL SELECTION means "survival of the fittest," an evolutionary process in which the strongest creatures survive by adapting to their environments.



TECHNOCENTRISM contends that technology can cure all ills, and our own creativity and creations hold the key to our salvation.



TAOISM teaches that we should live in balance with nature and the universe; opposite forces are needed to create and perpetuate that balance.

<p>ALTRUISM prioritizes the happiness or safety of others above our own.</p>	<p>CHRISTIANITY tells us that our lives and salvation are dependent on God and our belief in and allegiance to His Son, Jesus.</p>	<p>Directions: Cut out one set of either color or black-and-white cards for each player.</p>
<p>DETERMINISM is a belief that our biology and backgrounds, <i>not our choices</i>, determine who we ultimately become.</p>	<p>FREE WILL is a doctrine based on how our choices, <i>not our biology or backgrounds</i>, determine who we ultimately become.</p>	<p>HERO WORSHIP, in its ultimate form, turns a flesh-and-blood person into an object of adoration—often the main arbiter of right and wrong, and even salvation.</p>
<p>JINGOISM is extreme patriotism that aggressively promotes warlike measures.</p>	<p>NARCISSISM is a sense that our own needs, wants and whims are far more important than those of other people.</p>	<p>NATURAL SELECTION means “survival of the fittest,” an evolutionary process in which the strongest creatures survive by adapting to their environments.</p>
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II movie messages: *Despicable Me*

Movie stop 4:20

An impatient Gru, waiting in line at a local coffee shop, uses a freeze ray on everyone in front of him so he'll get his order quicker.

What it is: Technocentrism

According to technocentrism, technology is the solution for every problem. Other world-views play a part in this "ism," such as narcissism, and like so many, it claims to be able to cure all ills. Gru and his archnemesis, Vector, are dependent on technology and see it as the hope for their selfish futures. They use various gadgets throughout the movie to further their evil plans. But as they eventually discover,

even the most amazing gadgets can't remake (or in this case, shrink) the world as they'd like them to.

Read: 1 Corinthians 6:12

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Technology can help us do many wonderful things. We can learn how to build a bird-house, see what the weather's going to be like tomorrow or read a Russian novel with just a few taps on our phones. But as marvelous and helpful as technology is, it's just a tool. It isn't

the solution for everything. Gru and Vector show us how technology can be misused and often go awry. How has technology helped you? When has it gone awry when you were counting on it?

What to say to young children:

In a later scene, we see Vector posing in the mirror with his shrink ray gun—as if it makes him better-looking. Do you know people who brag about having the newest phone or the latest video games? Gadgets are fun to use, but God tells us that who we are is far more important to Him than the things we have. *These words are based on Proverbs 28:6.*

Movie stop 8:44

Gru's adoring Minions greet him when he enters his secret lair.

What it is: Hero Worship

The Minions' relationship with Gru goes beyond the typical relationship employees have with their employer. They worship Gru and think he's the greatest villain ever. Their incredibly warm welcome makes that clear. They treat him the way we might treat a beloved celebrity or championship quarterback. Their world revolves around their hero and his schemes. In fact, as we see throughout the film, they'll do almost anything for Gru, even when he's not a good guy.

Read: Matthew 24:24

"For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Throughout human history, popular leaders have pulled people away from God and are sometimes treated like gods. Even today, leaders in some countries are worshiped as if they're infallible. (Kim Jong Un, the ruler of North Korea, is an example of this.) In our society, celebrities often have this effect on their fans. Taylor Swift has never asked her fans to worship her, but some of them seem to believe that she can do no wrong. The

Minions worship Gru in the same way. Does he deserve that kind of praise?

What to say to young children:

Who are your heroes? What makes them your heroes? What do you like about them? Is there anything you don't like about them? There's nothing wrong with looking up to people. But always remember that heroes are just like you and me, and they can make mistakes, too. God is the only one who is perfect and never makes mistakes. *These words are based on Romans 3:23.*

Movie stop 11:20

Gru gives the Minions a pep talk as he shares his plans for stealing the moon. He tells his yellow friends that if he pulls this off, "I will be the greatest villain of all time!"

What it is: Narcissism

Gru doesn't want to do bad things just because he likes it. No, he wants *fame* and *recognition* for doing those bad things. He wants to be the worst bad guy ever—and he wants everyone to admire just how bad he is. This is a kind of narcissism, a trait in which people think the world revolves around them. Gru's narcissistic plan to steal the moon—an object

that revolves around the Earth—is all too appropriate, since Gru seems to think everything should revolve around him.

Read: Proverbs 18:12

"Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Gru's not alone in his desire for fame. In a recent poll in Great Britain, teens were asked about their top career choice. More than half said they wanted to "become a celebrity." How is being famous a career? Gru, thinking only of himself and his desire for fame and recognition, ends up on a very destructive path.

Jesus, on the other hand, showed us how to channel our desires and energy. Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

What to say to young children:

Do you want to be an influencer or become famous? If so, why? What would you do to become famous? There's nothing wrong with fame, as long as we love God more and don't think we're more important than everyone else (narcissism). How was Jesus' teachings the opposite of narcissism? *These words are based on Deuteronomy 6:5.*

II movie messages: *Despicable Me*

Movie stop 15:56

A young Gru watches a moon landing on TV. "Someday, I'm going to go to the moon!" he says.

"I'm afraid you're too late, Son," Gru's mother says. "NASA isn't sending the moonkeys anymore."

What it is: Determinism

This is one of the most poignant moments of *Despicable Me*. Gru started out as an idealistic kid. But throughout the movie, his mom belittles and insults him. This leaves him mean and broken and, most of all, wanting to prove to his mom that he's as bad as she raised him to be. The movie suggests that Gru's mom is to blame for the way Gru is—and that is a telltale sign of determinism. Determinists believe that the traits we're born with and the way we're

raised determine who we ultimately become, not our choices in life.

Read: 1 Corinthians 2:14

"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Determinism tells us we're slaves to the raw ingredients we're made of. Our biology and upbringing determine the course of our lives instead of our choices. It's true these things can have a huge impact on who we are and who we become. Friends and teachers and even the shows we watch can have a major impact on us, too. But determinism doesn't factor in the free will God has given us. A lot

of things can influence our lives, but none of those influences really determine who we're going to be. We determine that through the choices we make.

What to say to young children:

We're all born with certain traits. We can't do much about the color of our eyes or how tall we're going to be when we grow up. Gru couldn't do much about his mom or the way she parented him. But he still had a choice about the sort of person he wanted to become. You have a choice, too. What kind of person do you want to be? Do you want to be a villain like Gru or someone who loves and follows God?

These words are based on Proverbs 16:9.

Movie stop 22:15

Margo, Edith and Agnes pray by their bedsides at the orphanage where they live. Margo leads them, asking God to "watch over us, and bless that we'll have a good night's sleep." The other two girls chime in with their own prayers.

What it is: Christianity

Like believers throughout history, Margo, Edith and Agnes pray to God. (Edith's prayer that bugs won't crawl in their ears might not be the most devout prayer, but I'm sure everyone would appreciate bug-free ears.) Prayer is how Christians talk to God. Christianity is the belief in one, true God made up of three divine Persons, the Father, Son and Holy

Spirit. When humankind sinned, God the Father sent His only begotten Son to die on our behalf and remove our sins so we can live with God forever. Jesus did this through His death and resurrection.

Read: Philippians 4:6

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

In a way, Margo, Edith and Agnes are like the ancient Hebrews—folks like Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—when they were taken to Babylon as prisoners. The Hebrews, like the girls in *Despicable Me*,

were in an unpleasant, heartbreaking place. The Hebrews prayed that God would bring them back to the Promised Land, and the girls prayed for a new family. In each situation, deliverance came through unlikely people. Thanks to King Cyrus, a new ruler who conquered Babylon, the Hebrews eventually returned to their homeland. And the girls find a new home with Gru, even though he initially adopts them to aid his evil schemes.

What to say to young children:

Do you pray before bed? What do you pray for? How has God answered your prayers? Has He ever answered them in a way you weren't expecting? *These words are based on Mark 11:24.*

Continued on the next page.



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II movie messages: *Despicable Me*

Movie stop 31:17

When Margo, Edith and Agnes come “home” with Gru, they get a sense of his unusual decorating taste. On one of the walls is a mounted lion’s head with a dog in its mouth. In the dog’s mouth is a cat. And in the cat’s mouth is a mouse.

What it is: Natural Selection

The phrase “survival of the fittest” has always been associated with Charles Darwin, though he never actually used these words to describe his theory of natural selection. The animals mounted on Gru’s wall reflect this worldview, which Gru and his fellow bad guys fully embrace: The strong thrive, and the weak suffer. The lion with the dog in its mouth suggests that Gru may think of himself as the strongest of all the villains, at least initially.

Read: Psalm 28:7

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.”

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Natural selection may be the worldview that drives everything Gru believes. When he freezes people in the coffee shop, he does so because he feels he has the “right” to—and because he has the powerful freeze ray. When the girls ask why they’re not delivering cookies to all the customers who bought them, Gru says, “Life is full of disappointments . . . for *some* people.” But there’s plenty of doubt about whether he’s actually the “greatest villain of all time.” Gru and Vector engage in their own fight to see who’s most fit to survive. But the Bible tells us that God himself is our

strength. In His Word, we see unlikely heroes carry the day, even when they’re not the strongest or most powerful. We can accomplish amazing things when we rely on God’s strength. Our strength ultimately fails, but His strength is unlimited. What kind of strength are you pursuing?

What to say to young children:

Gru has a lot of power, to be sure. But as the story goes on, we see that the girls he adopts from the orphanage have their own sort of power. What is that power? How does Gru change from living out the idea of natural selection after he adopts the girls? *These words are based on Proverbs 11:17.*

Movie stop 58:05

After the bank turns down Gru’s request for a loan, it appears that his scheme to steal the moon has failed. But Agnes, his youngest daughter, hands Gru their piggy bank, sparking a wave of generosity and creativity.

What it is: Altruism

Technically, his daughters’ donation goes toward an evil scheme. But they gave the money freely, sacrificing their own savings to help Gru. This is altruism—sacrificing our own interests for the good of someone else. As their act of altruism illustrates, one good deed

can spark generosity in others. And suddenly, something that seemed impossible becomes achievable.

Read: Ephesians 5:2

“Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

How to talk to tweens and teens:

That little piggy-bank gift made a big difference in Gru’s heart. He was already changing into more of a father to Margo, Edith and Agnes, but now he had new priorities. He

wanted to be a dad, not an evil villain. Altruism can have that impact on people. Strength can bend and break things, but generosity and sacrifice can change hearts. How have you seen altruism at work in your own life?

What to say to young children:

Why do you think Agnes and the girls handed over their piggy bank to Gru? Why did the Minions follow their example? Have you ever given something you had to someone who needed it? Has anyone ever done that for you? What have your parents given you? *These words are based on 1 John 3:18.*

Movie stop 1:16:47

When Gru finds that Vector has kidnapped his daughters, he races to Vector’s evil lair. But Vector refuses to even talk about the girls’ fate until he has the moon in his possession. Gru pauses as he struggles with Vector’s demand. Then he gives Vector the moon to save his girls.

What it is: Free Will

Earlier, we learned about determinism, which tells us that how we’re made and raised determines who we become. Throughout the movie, it seems like Gru is destined to be a villain because his mother raised him to be a bad guy. Even as Gru’s attitude toward the girls softens, he still follows a villainous path. But now he has to make a choice: To be “the greatest villain of all time” or save his daughters. In the end, he follows Agnes’ example of

altruism and sacrifices something he’s always wanted for the love and safety of his little girls. In exercising free will, Gru demonstrates that his choices determine the kind of person he will become, not his upbringing.

Read: Ephesians 4:28

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”

How to talk to tweens and teens:

In Ephesians 4:28, thieves are given a choice: to keep stealing or turn their lives around. That’s the choice Gru faces in this scene. We all have to make this choice each day as well. Like Gru, we can choose to do what we want or sacrifice our interests for the good of others. God has given us the freedom to follow Him

or our own selfish desires. What choices like these have you had to make? Choosing to do the right thing can be hard because it feels like we’re giving up a lot. But when we make the right choice, we often realize later on that the wrong choice came with too many problems—like Gru’s moon scheme.

What to say to young children:

We all make a lot of choices every day. Some of our biggest choices as kids involve obeying our parents. Do you remember a time when you chose not to obey? What happened? How did you feel? We have reasons for making rules we want you to follow. Do you remember a time when you chose to obey your us? What happened? How did you feel afterward? *These words are based on Ephesians 6:1-3.*

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