


PARENTS GUIDE TO

# movie messages

# *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

Seek and find worldviews
while having fun as a family

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# *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*

BY **PLUGGED IN STAFF**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
**SHANE CLESTER**

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 the Oscar-winning film *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*.

*Note:* You might have heard that there are references to transgenderism in this film's sequel, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*. You can read more about that controversy in Plugged In's review of the sequel. *This* movie, however, does not have any overt references to LGBT issues.

**FocusOnTheFamily.com/Spider**




## Directions:

1. Give every player a set of 10 worldview cards.
2. Watch *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* 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, and then everyone turns over their card to reveal their answer.
4. The correct cards are removed from play. The cards deemed incorrect are returned to each player, and the movie continues.
5. This board 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 eight cards is the winner.

*The **Agnosticism** card is not a part of this movie's game board. If someone plays the Agnosticism card and wants additional information, read John 3:36, which tells us that "whoever believes in [Jesus] has eternal life," but the "wrath of God remains" on those who don't believe. The Pragmatism card is not a part of this movie's game board either. If someone plays the Pragmatism card and wants additional information, read James 4:17.

Explain that when people do even good things only if it benefits them, they are being selfish.

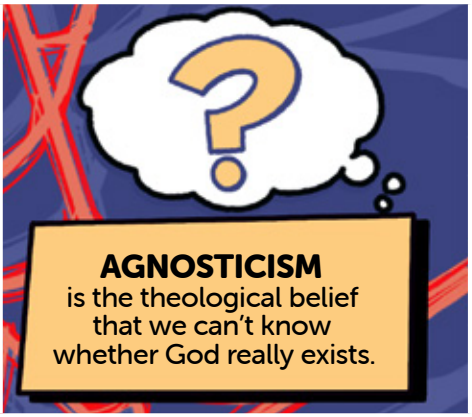
Note: For young children who aren't ready to play this game, a casual mention like, "That's narcissism. God doesn't want us to be selfish," is a good way to start worldview training.

Be sure to check out Plugged In's review of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* first to make sure it's right for your family.
**FocusOnTheFamily.com/Spider-Man**

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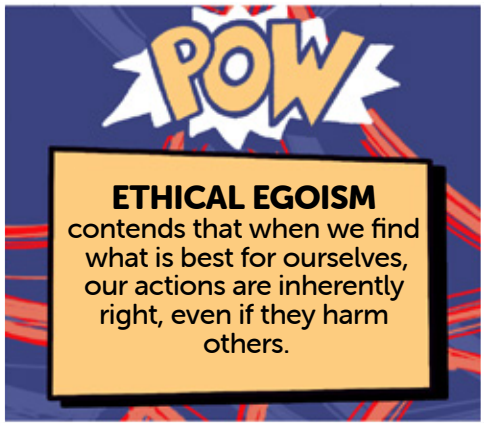
**AGNOSTICISM** is the theological belief that we can't know whether God really exists.



**ALTRUISM** prioritizes the happiness or safety of others above our own.



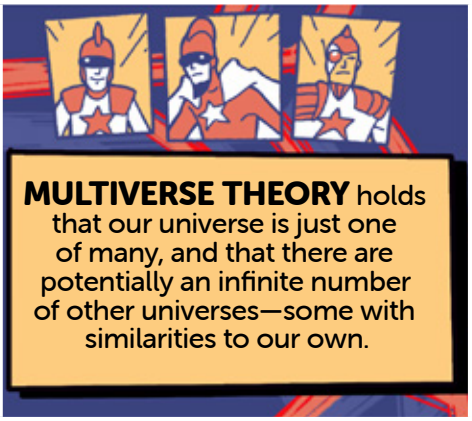
**DEFEATISM** is when we either expect or accept defeat, believing that to try to do anything to counteract an impending defeat is useless.




**ETHICAL EGOISM** contends that when we find what is best for ourselves, our actions are inherently right, even if they harm others.



**SCIENTISM** adheres to the idea that what we can know is limited to just our five senses.



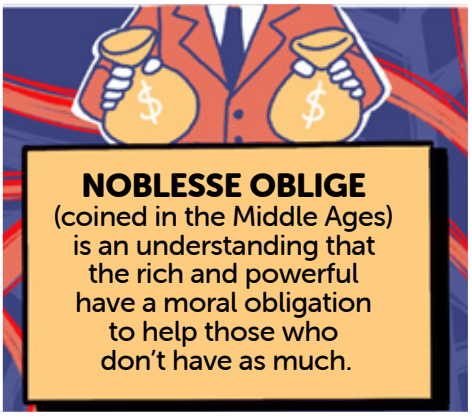
**MULTIVERSE THEORY** holds that our universe is just one of many, and that there are potentially an infinite number of other universes—some with similarities to our own.



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



**SELF-ACTUALIZATION** is the belief that self-improvement and self-satisfaction are the highest goals of individuals.



**NOBLESSE OBLIGE** (coined in the Middle Ages) is an understanding that the rich and powerful have a moral obligation to help those who don't have as much.




**PRAGMATISM** says that the right decision depends on what you get out of it.

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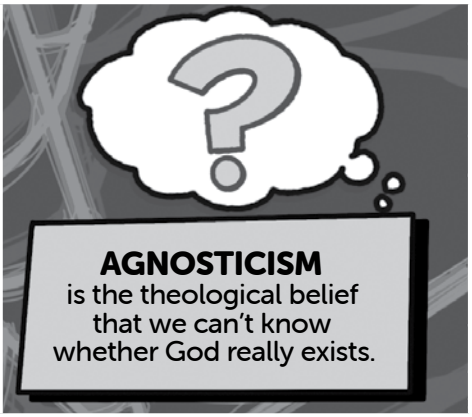
Cut out one set of either color or black-and-white cards for each player.

## MOVIE REVIEWS

For a review of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* and other titles, visit **PluggedIn.com**, Focus on the Family's media review and discernment website.

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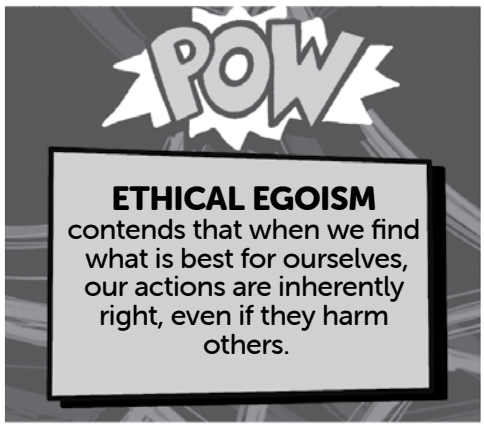
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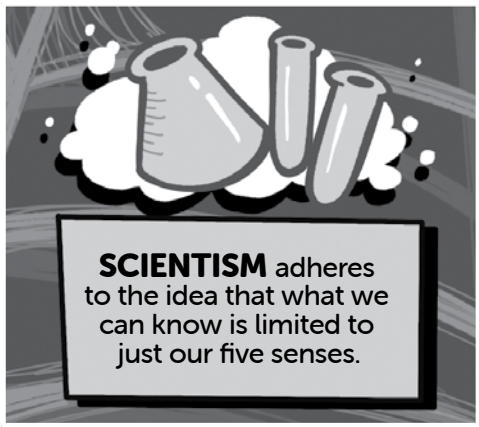
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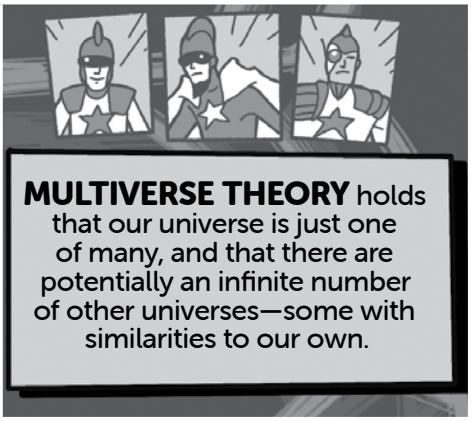
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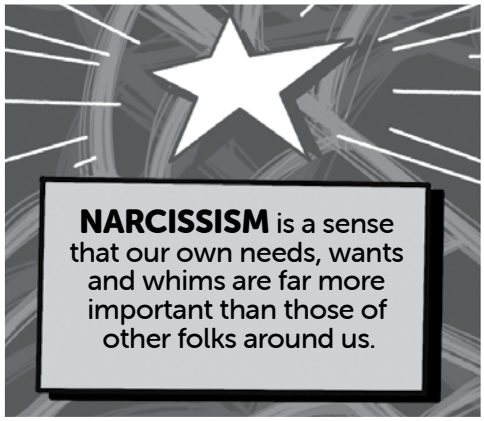

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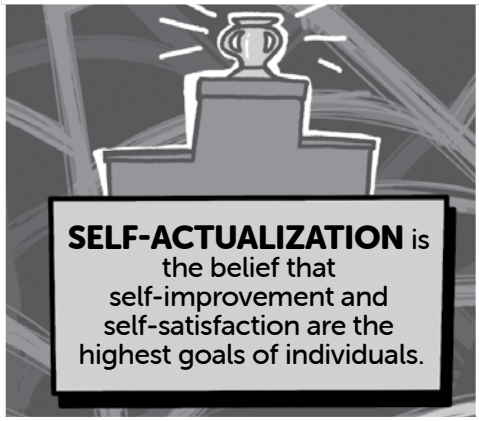
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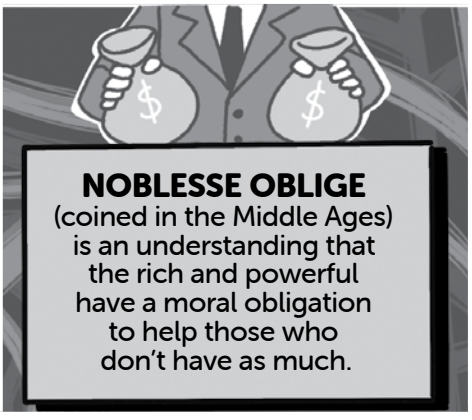
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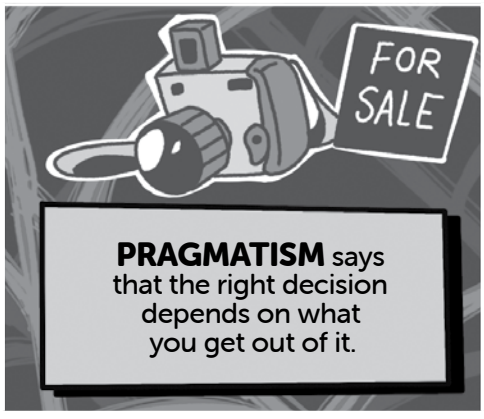
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# movie messages—Spider-Man: *Into the Spider-Verse*

## Movie stop 7:50

Miles is barely paying attention as he listens to a frizzy-haired scientist talk about how the universe is "one of many parallel universes." Little does he know how that supposed "fact" will impact the trajectory of his future.

### What it is: Multiverse theory

This might be the easiest question on the whole board—and if you miss it at the 7:50 mark (like Miles might have), you'll have plenty of opportunities to play this card again. The very title *Into the Spider-Verse* tips the film's hand regarding this worldview. And make no mistake: It is a worldview. Many scientists have used it to explain away the idea of a created universe. Many (though not all) theologians contend that the multiverse theory is incompatible with Christian doctrine.

**Read:** Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

### How to talk to tweens and teens

One of the reasons why the multiverse is such a popular theory in scientific circles is that it doesn't acknowledge the existence or possibility of God as creator. But it's also very popular in fiction, especially in superhero and science fiction stories. Do you think that God could've created multiple universes? Would He?

### What to say to young children

How do you know that God made you unique and that He didn't make many versions of you in multiple universes? *These words are based on Psalm 139:13-14.*

## Movie stop 8:50

One of Miles' teachers catches Miles "cheating" on a test—not to get the right answers, but to answer every single question wrong. She asks him to write a personal essay for her, "not about physics, but about you—and the kind of person you want to be."

### What it is: Self-actualization

This isn't the only time Miles is asked what kind of person he wants to be. Miles asks himself that question a lot throughout the movie. In another class, he reads the title of Charles Dickens' book *Great Expectations*, a phrase that pops up again and again in the movie. Miles even uses it as the basis for his most ambitious bit of graffiti art: He paints the words *Great Expectations* on a wall, and then he stands against the wall while his Uncle Aaron traces his body. Miles is wrestling with his own expectations and those of others. And when he gains superpowers, those expectations increase dramatically.

There's a famous philosophical theory called Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It goes like this: We all have needs, and once our basic needs are met, we can move on to the next level in the hierarchy. We all need food and water and air, for instance. Once those needs are secured, we can move on to our need for safety—physical safety, financial security and the like. At the top of the hierarchy is self-actualization—the need we have to be the very best we can be. According to Abraham Maslow, we all want to fulfill expectations—those we have of ourselves and, often, those that other people place on us. That's what Miles is wrestling with.

While self-actualization doesn't run counter to Christianity, it can be selfish and lead us away from God's expectation—that we consider the needs of others.

**Read:** Ephesians 2:10

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

### How to talk to tweens and teens

Do people talk to you about your potential? What do you think your potential is? What good works did God create you to do? Where do your skills and gifts lie? At times, Miles seems to push against pursuing his potential. He wants to be a normal kid. What are some ways that you might be struggling in your pursuit of knowing how to reach your potential?

### What to say to young children

What gifts has God given to you? What are you especially good at? God wants you to grow not just bigger, stronger and smarter but also to use your skills to help others. *These words are based on 1 Peter 2:9-10.*

## Movie stop 20:40

Miles stumbles into the middle of a fight where Spider-Man—his own dimension's Peter—is battling the Green Goblin. "I cannot allow you to open up a portal to another dimension!" Spidey says. "Brooklyn is not zoned for that!"

### What it is: Altruism

Spider-Man is concerned about more than a mere zoning violation. He knows that the portal could destroy New York City, and he'll do everything in his power to stop it—even if it means risking his life. Altruism is, of course, pretty much a prerequisite for any hero—super or otherwise. You have to be willing to put aside your own needs and selfish desires to help other people. You don't need to be Christian to be altruistic, but it is what God calls us to do. Christ is the ultimate example of what it means to be altruistic, of course, and as Christians we're asked to follow Jesus' example.

**Read:** 1 John 3:16-17

"By this we know love, that [Jesus] laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"

### How to talk to tweens and teens

At the end of the movie, we see a quote from Stan Lee, who helped create the character Spider-Man: "That person who helps others simply because it should or must be done, and because it is the right thing to do, is indeed without a doubt, a real superhero." Do you think that's true? When have you seen someone in real life being an authentic hero? Have you ever sacrificed to do the right thing?

### What to say to young children

You can find plenty of other examples of goodness and heroism throughout the rest of the movie. Can you name some of them? Why do you think it's important to do the right thing, even when it's uncomfortable or even dangerous? *These words are based on 1 John 3:16.*

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# ⏸ movie messages—Spider-Man: *Into the Spider-Verse*

## Movie stop 27:35

Spider-Man confronts Kingpin, the man who spent a fortune to get the interdimensional portal up and running. But while the evil businessman is often consumed with wealth, he aims for a different sort of treasure here. "It's not always about the money, Spider-Man," he says.

### What it is: Ethical egoism

Spidey knows—and we later learn—that Kingpin is trying to bring back his wife and son. They died in his own universe, but he believes that he can find other versions of them in other universes. We can sympathize with Kingpin's desire to reunite with his loved ones, of course. But it doesn't seem to bother him that his understandable longing could kill millions of people—and let's not forget the impact it might have on the other universes he's invading. Even though these alternative versions of his wife and son might be genetically identical to his own, he's essentially kidnapping them. Kingpin's quest is a prime example of ethical egoism.

**Read:** Proverbs 14:12

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

### How to talk to tweens and teens

There were lots of Kingpin-like characters in the Bible who engaged in ethical egoism, and they often came to nasty ends. There are lots of examples of people like that today, too. In fact, we can all mistake what's good for us as what's good for everyone. Have you ever seen people do something wrong because they thought it was right for themselves? Have you ever done something like that? On the flip side, can you think of a time when you turned your back on ethical egoism?

### What to say to young children

We sometimes forget to do what's right and instead do what we want—just because we want to do it. Why was Kingpin wrong to try to bring back his wife and son this way? *These words are based on Proverbs 14:12.*

## Movie stop 40:23

Miles eventually runs into a Peter from another dimension—and they're literally pulled into a madcap chase through the city. Eventually they fall into an intersection where people are crossing the street. "Hey, maybe you guys can go around?" Miles asks the pedestrians. They pay him no mind. "All right, thanks, New York," Miles sighs.

### What it is: Narcissism

Narcissism is closely related to ethical egoism and a host of other isms we could mention—and they're all related to selfishness. The difference is in degree. Kingpin thought it was right for him to bring back his wife and son, and so he felt that because it was what he wanted, millions of lives could be sacrificed. What's right or wrong isn't even considered. The New Yorkers we see on the crosswalk are so wrapped up in themselves and their own petty needs that they can't be bothered to change what they're doing.

**Read:** Philippians 2:4

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."

### How to talk to tweens and teens

The opposite of what we see here is plain old consideration—stepping out of your way (either literally or figuratively) to show a little kindness to people. It's not too much to ask people to watch where they're stepping, just as it's not too much to say please and thank you, or pick up something that someone dropped, or open the door for someone. Do you think that being polite and considerate is important? Do you think people are as polite as they should be?

### What to say to young children

What would you do if you saw Miles and Peter lying in the middle of the street? Would you try to help them? Can you think of a time when you helped someone else, even in a small way? *These words are based on 1 John 3:17.*

## Movie stop 42:15

When the "other" Peter and Miles have a chance to talk, Miles wants Peter's help to save the world. "With great power comes great—" Miles begins. But Peter cuts him off. "Don't you dare finish that sentence," he says. "I'm sick of it."

### What it is: Noblesse oblige

The famous words from so many Spider-Man comic books and movies is: "With great power comes great responsibility." And Peter's Uncle Ben was hardly the first guy to think of it. The saying is French, and it was particularly in vogue during the Middle Ages, when some noblemen used their wealth and prestige to help those less fortunate.

**Read:** Luke 12:48

"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."

### How to talk to tweens and teens

In the world of superheroes, we know what it means to have great power, and we know the great responsibility that comes with it. Spider-Man (in whatever version we're talking about) uses his strength and skills to help others. But that philosophy applies to us, too. If you're popular or smart or respected at school, the philosophy of noblesse oblige suggests that you should help those who aren't as popular or smart or respected. If you're reading this in the United States, you're likely better off than most of the world's population. You might have far more possessions than people who live just a few blocks away. You might have your own sort of power, too. How might you use that power or responsibly to help others?

### What to say to young children

Kids don't have Spider-Man's power, of course—but you still have a responsibility to treat people kindly and to do what you can to help them. How does your family help other people? *These words are based on Galatians 6:9.*

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# ⏸ movie messages—Spider-Man: *Into the Spider-Verse*

## Movie stop 43:40

After Miles quotes the "great power" line, the other-dimensional Peter tells him flat out that he's on his own. Peter says he needs to get back to his own dimension, and he doesn't have the time or inclination to help Miles figure out how to be a superhero. Miles shouts back, "You're just going to leave me here to figure this out for myself? You good with that, Spider-Man?" Without turning around, Peter replies, "Yeah."

### What it is: Defeatism

You could say that Peter was being narcissistic—concerned only with himself. You could argue that he was showing some ethical egoism, like Kingpin. But we learn something about Peter in that other dimension: In a way, he's lost hope. Peter feels sorry for himself. He's gotten out of superhero shape. He mostly sits around his apartment these days and eats pizza; he's not doing good anymore. So why should he try to do good in another dimension? It's as if he's shrugging his shoulders and shutting the door on his "great responsibility." He's given up. That doesn't last long, of course. But it takes some work to turn him around.

**Read:** Isaiah 40:31

"They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

### How to talk to tweens and teens

Sometimes when we suffer setbacks, we can slip into a state where we feel sorry for ourselves. We can feel a little hopeless and convince ourselves that it's pointless to try. Everything is going to come crashing down no matter what we do. But we need to shrug off these feelings and, like Peter, be the people—the heroes—that God designed us to be. God wants us to reach for our great expectations and use the power He's given us for the benefit of others.

### What to say to young children

Why do you think Peter doesn't want to help Miles at first? Is he sad? When you feel sad, what do you do? Being sad or angry is a normal human experience, but God doesn't want you to get stuck there. And He's always there to help you through tough times. *These words are based on Matthew 11:28-30.*

## Movie stop 50:43

Peter talks with the female scientist we heard from way back at the beginning of the movie. She tells Peter that because he's from another dimension, he is disintegrating—and the process will likely be painful. "I, for one, can't wait to watch," she adds.

### What it is: Scientism

Strictly speaking, scientism means that our knowledge of the world is based only on our five senses—what we can see, hear, smell, touch or taste. What the scientist says sounds pretty evil—and sure enough, just seconds later, she reveals herself to be a female version of Doc Ock, a longtime villain of Spider-Man's (in all sorts of dimensions). It seems that Doc Ock wants to observe Peter's disintegration not because she inherently likes to watch suffering but because, as a scientist, she wants to observe this phenomenon. She wants to see and hear what happens to Peter so she can file the experience in her brain and use it to shape her understanding of the multiverse. Knowledge is often a very good thing—but acquiring that knowledge without any regard to morality is not. Doc Ock isn't the only scientist who has sought to increase knowledge through the suffering of others. That sort of scientific curiosity has caused a lot of unnecessary pain over the course of history.

**Read:** Colossians 1:16-17

"For by [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

### How to talk to tweens and teens

Science can be an incredibly helpful tool for understanding the world God created—but there's always a danger when we worship science *instead* of God. Doc Ock illustrates that danger. Can you think of other times when scientists have lost sight of the Creator in studying His creation?

### What to say to young children

Scientism is about learning about the world through what we see, hear, smell, touch and taste. How can you use those senses to learn more about God? What do you see that makes you think of Him? What do you hear? What do you touch? What do you taste? *These words are based on Proverbs 20:12.*

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