

PARENTS GUIDE TO

movie messages: *Zootopia*

Seek and find worldviews
while having fun as a family

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®



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Zootopia

BY **PLUGGED IN STAFF**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ANDY ELKERTON

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 *Zootopia*.

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."





Directions:

1. Give every player a set of 10 worldview cards.
2. Watch *Zootopia* 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 nine cards is the winner.

*The **Fascism** card is not part of this movie's game board. If someone plays the Fascism card and wants additional information, read Psalm 82:2-4, which outlines how a true leader and judge should behave: "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Be sure to first check out Plugged In's review to see if *Zootopia* is right for your family.
FocusOnTheFamily.com/Zootopia

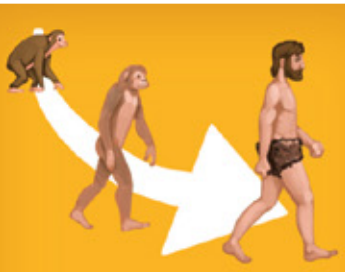
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DETERMINISM is a belief that our biology and backgrounds, *not our choices*, determine who we ultimately become.



EVOLUTION is based on the theory of natural selection—that, over time, all life forms evolved from simple to unique and complex creatures.

Directions:

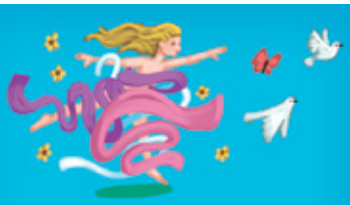
Cut out one set of either color, black-and-white or plain cards (from pages 4-6) for each player.



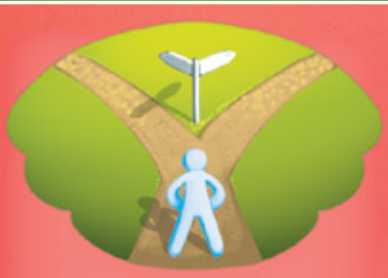
FASCISM is a political ideology that often centers on a dictator; individual rights are less important than the strength of the state.



FATALISM is the belief that there's no point in taking action because events are predetermined.



NATURISM is an ideology that emphasizes our relationship and union with nature—often expressed by the shedding of clothes. Naturists argue that nudity is an act of respect toward nature and our bodies.



FREE WILL is a doctrine that tells us that our choices, *not our biology or our backgrounds*, determine who we ultimately become.



LEGALISM involves an overly rigid desire to stick to the rules—no matter what the rules are.



NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY borrows heavily from Eastern spirituality, plucking elements from Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions without belonging to any of them.



MACHIAVELLIANISM, named after the writer Niccolò Machiavelli, is about using and deceiving people for your own gain.



MULTICULTURALISM, as a philosophy, pushes the idea that different cultures have inherent value and should be protected, not blended and freely shared. They should remain distinct but add to the collective whole.

MOVIE REVIEWS

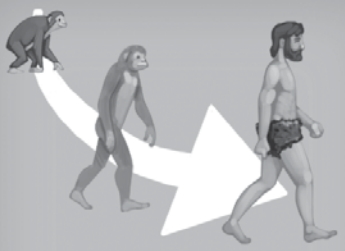
For a review of *Zootopia* and other titles, visit **PluggedIn.com**, Focus on the Family's media review and discernment website.

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movie messages: *Zootopia*

Movie Stop 2:00

Judy Hopps, a young bunny being raised well outside the city of Zootopia, stars in a play that points to the distant past, when instinct ruled the land and "predators had an uncontrollable biological urge to maim and maul!" After spurting ketchup from her chest to make it look like blood, she tells her audience about how animals evolved so that "now predator and prey live in harmony."

What it is: Evolution

The play calls to mind a prehistoric epoch, when this animal world was more savage than it is now—much as we might be told about the age of the dinosaurs or when cavemen roamed the earth and killed mammoths. But that savage epoch is over in Zootopia because, as we're told, predators and prey *evolved* out of what they had been into what they are now. (Certainly the film gives us no other reason for the switch.) This form of evolution is a bit different from Darwin's classic evolutionary theory. Judy talks about it happening over thousands of years, not millions. But you'll see plenty of evidence of *Zootopia's* own evolutionary theory throughout the film—especially during the climactic scene in Zootopia's museum.

Read: Genesis 1:30

"To every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

The world of Zootopia started in a very different manner from the world of Genesis, which tells us that God created the world without predator and prey. The predator-and-prey system came about after Satan tricked Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and is a sign of a fallen world. That dynamic—called *entropy*—is seen everywhere in our own world. Things tend to get messier and more chaotic, rather than more ordered, if left on their own. (For instance, dinner never fixes itself—but if left alone, it can spoil.) Sure, things can and do get better: Our world is far more comfortable than the one we read about in the Old Testament, but that's because of God (and the desire He placed in our hearts to *make* things better). We can change for the better, but it's not our nature to get better. We need God for that. How do you see this in your life?

What to say to young children:

Sometimes when you're angry or frustrated, you might want to hit something or hurt somebody. And sometimes you might feel a little like those predators Judy Hopps talks about—as though you don't have any control over what you do. But over time, you've probably learned how to behave better. How did you learn to control your anger? Who helped you? *These words are based on 1 Corinthians 10:13.*

Movie Stop 7:21

After a long, hard struggle, Judy overcomes plenty of obstacles and officially graduates from the police academy—part of the "mammal inclusion initiative" we hear about during the ceremony. Judy is understandably proud after so many doubted her ability to become a police officer.

What it is: Free Will

Many people doubted that Judy would ever become a police officer. Why? Because she's a *rabbit*, that's why—and rabbits simply don't become police officers. They're not big enough or strong enough or tough enough. But using her smarts and creativity, Judy found a way to prove them all wrong by showing them that "anyone can be anything." This is a classic illustration of free will. We *choose* who we eventually become through our choices.

Read: Galatians 5:13

"You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Judy overcame her own "flesh" and physical limitations to become a police officer. You can see other examples all around you. Friends who don't have great home lives can become straight-A students. Kids who aren't as talented on the basketball court work hard and become starters. But free will is also one of the hallmarks of the Christian life. We're all inclined to sin. But through God's grace, we can overcome our sinful natures and become more like the women and men God wants us to be. In what situations have you used your free will?

What to say to young children:

Everyone told Judy that she'd never be a police officer. But she worked really hard to become one, and eventually her hard work paid off. Can you think of other people, either kids or adults, who've done things that no one thought they could do? Can you think of people in the Bible who did amazing things with God's help? *These words are based on Psalm 37:23.*

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movie messages: *Zootopia*

Movie Stop 37:20

Judy and Nick the fox meet Yax the yak, who owns the Mystic Spring Oasis. Yax holds his hands up in a meditative pose as they walk up to the counter.

What it is: New Age Spirituality

It's possible that Yax is a follower of Hinduism or Buddhism or other streams of Eastern faith. But it's more likely he'd call himself a spiritual seeker—embracing Eastern-style meditation and yoga without really understanding where they come from or why.

And with that, we should probably talk a little about yoga—which could've been a card in this game, too. Many people see yoga as simply a form of exercise, and lots of Christians engage in it—with some even putting a Christian spin on the discipline. But historically, yoga is spiritual, with its roots deep in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Naturally, it's popular with New Age followers, too.

Read: John 14:6

"Jesus said to [Thomas], 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' "

How to talk to tweens and teens:

People are attracted to New Age beliefs for a lot of reasons, but one of the biggest is that it doesn't ask a lot of its followers. For people who know they've got a spiritual yearning deep inside but don't want to be bothered by a lot of religious doctrine, New Age feels satisfying. In *Zootopia*, Yax's Mystic Spring Oasis looks pretty harmless and comical—but plenty of people have been lured away from God by New Age teachings. And sometimes, when they try to incorporate New Age teachings with their old beliefs, they might not even know they've been lured. Take a look at your world. Where might a New Age practice have slipped in?

What to say to young children:

Yax is trying to find the meaning of life, but his beliefs are leading him further away from it. When Yax is meditating, he's probably trying to get in touch with the universe, not praying to God—who Christians know is our only source of real meaning. How do you pray? Who do you pray to? And what do you pray for? *These words are based on Matthew 6:33.*

Movie Stop 38:15

When Yax begins to lead Judy and Nick to Mr. Otterton's yoga instructor, Judy discovers—to her horror—that Yax doesn't have any clothes on. The Mystic Spring Oasis is a nudist club.

What it is: Naturism

"You know what I say is weird?" Yax tells his guests. "Clothes on animals." And given that in our world, animals rarely wear human clothes, it would seem weird to us, too. Animals in our world are comfortable in their own skin. Some people believe we should live more like animals and be closer to nature.

Read: Genesis 3:21

"The LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Zootopia's naturists are wrong, but they hint at something important: There was a time when everything was just as God designed it. That design didn't include animals eating meat—or people wearing clothes. Adam and Eve walked around without clothes and felt no shame. But that changed when they both ate the forbidden fruit. They were suddenly ashamed and quickly covered themselves. Ever since, the Bible has talked about the importance of dressing modestly. It's important to remember that today, too. While *Zootopia* played up the animals' immodesty for laughs, many teens are pressured to dress and behave in immodest, harmful or even dangerous ways. And that's no laughing matter. Where do you see the naturist ideology most in your world?

What to say to young children:

Outside of the world of Zootopia, animals don't typically wear clothes. Hair and fur and feathers and scales are their clothes. What animal wears the prettiest "clothes," in your opinion? Do you think God enjoyed making such different looks for His creations? *These words are based on Psalm 145:5.*

Continued on the next page.



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movie messages: *Zootopia*

Movie Stop 41:25

Nick and Judy walk into Zootopia's department of motor vehicles, and Judy discovers it's staffed by sloths—notoriously slow creatures. "Are you saying that because he's a sloth, he can't be fast?" Nick kids Judy. "I thought in Zootopia anyone could be anything."

What it is: Determinism

This is the flip side to Judy's free will. In *Zootopia*, we see plenty of animals that are shaped more by their biology and instincts than by the choices they make. Sloths are naturally slow. Lemmings (who collect a series of pawpsicles earlier in the movie) naturally follow each other. If Judy believes that free will can overcome any obstacle, Nick spends a lot of the movie insisting that there are limits—lots of limits—on what animals in Zootopia can be.

Read: Jeremiah 1:5

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

Both Judy and Nick are right in a way. Judy proved that hard work and creativity can go a long way in helping someone become what he or she wants to be. We hear that a lot in our world, too: "Work hard, and you can do anything." That's true—to a point. But if someone's shorter and slower than your average person, that person probably won't become a pro basketball player, no matter how hard he or she works. Tone-deaf people will struggle to become opera singers. While the Bible does talk a lot about free will and choice, it also talks about how we were *chosen*. We're all given certain gifts that God wants us to use for His glory and the benefit of His creation. What do you think you were chosen for? What gifts has God given you? And how does that line up with your own choices?

What to say to young children:

Judy is learning that even though animals can try to become anything they want, they also have unique strengths and weaknesses that make it easier to do some things but harder to do other things. They are how God made them. What gifts did God give you when He made you? Are there things you don't do well? *These words are based on 1 Peter 4:10.*

Movie Stop 45:30

Judy tosses her carrot pen recorder over the fence at an impound lot, and Nick scurries over to get it. But it turns out that Judy wanted an excuse to get into the lot herself. She didn't have a warrant, but she didn't need one if there was probable cause. "And I'm pretty sure I saw a shifty lowlife climbing the fence," she says with a smile.

What it is: Legalism

Throughout *Zootopia*, we see that Judy is not just a champion for truth and justice; she also loves rules. She knows the city's rules really well, and she's initially excited to hand out as many parking tickets as she can. But this scene shows Judy's legalism at its sneakiest: Tossing the pen over the fence gives her an excuse to go into the impound lot.

Read: Matthew 23:23-24

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"

How to talk to tweens and teens:

In a way, Judy might have made a pretty good Pharisee. She knows Zootopia's rules really well, and she'll stick to all of them enthusiastically. And Zootopia's laws are much like the laws in our society. If we didn't follow traffic laws, every intersection would be filled with smashed cars. Without laws against stealing or trespassing, people would take what doesn't belong to them or go wherever they wanted. But Jesus reminded the Pharisees that some of their laws were like parking tickets—and the Pharisees should be more concerned with "weightier matters." Of course, it's always worth remembering that while obeying laws can save us a trip to court, laws can't save our souls. For that, all of us need God's grace. In what ways are you a rule keeper? How does God's grace fit into your adherence to rules?

What to say to young children:

Your parents probably have rules they expect you to obey. What might happen if they didn't have some of those rules? Do you remember a time when you broke a rule and felt really, really bad about it? How did your mom or dad respond? *These words are based on 1 John 1:9.*

Continued on the next page.

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movie messages: *Zootopia*

Movie Stop 59:55

Nick talks about a heartbreaking experience he had as a kid, when he wanted to join the Junior Ranger Scouts. Instead of accepting him, his friends muzzled him. Their betrayal profoundly impacted Nick. "If the world's only going to see a fox as shifty and untrustworthy, there's no point trying to be anything else," he tells Judy.

What it is: Fatalism

Fatalism is a little like determinism but more intense, and this revelation tells us why Nick was so hard on Judy throughout most of the movie. "Things are the way they are, so what's the point of even trying," a fatalist might say. Nick's fatalism comes with a sad spin, though: He *could've* been trustworthy—if he had been given the chance. Nick believes—or hopes—that Judy will have her own unpleasant revelation that she's not meant to be a police officer after all.

Read: Mark 10:27

"With man [being saved] is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

How to talk with tweens and teens:

It can be tempting to be fatalistic—to look at the world with all its problems and say that it's just the way it is. We can look at our own lives and feel the same way. "My chemistry teacher hates me, so why even do the homework?" someone might say. Or "I won't make the cast anyway, so there's no point in trying out." Fatalists often end up fulfilling their own gloomy prophecies. Not doing your chemistry homework is, of course, a recipe for failure. But as *Zootopia*'s story goes on, we see that there *is* a point in trying—and that things *can* change. Perhaps the change is small at first, but change is possible—with God. What change would you like to see in your life? How might trying help you?

What to say to young children:

Have you ever felt, as Nick did, that no one likes you, so what's the point in even trying? Do you ever feel like not working hard because it won't pay off? The Bible encourages us to do our very best in everything, just as if we're doing it for God (Colossians 3:23). We might not succeed in everything we do, but doing our best, even when it's difficult, makes us stronger. *These words are based on Romans 5:3-5.*

Movie Stop 1:14:11

When pop star Gazelle is interviewed, she expresses sadness about the prejudice that predators are dealing with. She tells the interviewer that Zootopia is a "crazy, beautiful, diverse city where we celebrate our differences."

What it is: Multiculturalism

This isn't the first time multiculturalism is on display in the movie. Instead of forcing all of its animals into one universal culture, Zootopia literally has a place for everyone. There are 12 different districts, from the frigid Tundratown (where the polar bears tend to frequent) to Little Rodentia (where all the buildings and vehicles are just right for mice and voles). That said, the movie ignores a huge irony: While leopards might feel right at home in the Rainforest District, and polar bears may love Tundratown, they aren't allowed to celebrate one difference. They can't behave like predators. Apparently there's a limit to Zootopia's multiculturalism.

Read: Galatians 3:28-29

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians from the Roman Empire, he was in one of the most multicultural nations in history. The letter only hints at the different cultures that might have made up the Galatian church. But multiculturalism in Galatia had its limits, too. The people to whom Paul was writing might have come from different lands and even spoken different native languages. Some might have been rich, and some might have been poor, and slaves would obviously have owned nothing at all. But because they worshiped Jesus, they had something in common. And like Zootopia's predators, that meant they didn't just instinctively follow the crowd. For one thing, these believers didn't pretend the Roman emperor was a god, like others did, and it got plenty of them into trouble. We should remember that in our own lives as Christians. Our fellow Christians may not all dress the way we do or like the same TV shows. But we're united in our love of God—and our desire to follow Him, even when it's tough.

What to say to young children:

Zootopia is made up of lots of different kinds of animals. But people in our world are all pretty different, too. How are you different from your friends? From other members of your family? Are those differences good? *These words are based on 1 Samuel 16:7.*

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movie messages: *Zootopia*

Movie Stop 1:31:33

Assistant Mayor Bellwether reveals her plan to turn Zootopia's prey against its predators, thus wielding power over the entire city. When Judy tells her that it'll never work, Bellwether says, "Fear always works. And I'll dart every predator in Zootopia to keep it that way."

What it is: Machiavellianism

Niccolò Machiavelli was a politician, adviser and author in 16th-century Italy. He took a pretty cynical view of what leadership should be about. In his book *The Prince*, Machiavelli said that it is "far better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both." He also observed that "he who overcomes the enemy with fraud is praised as much as the one who overcomes it with force." Assistant Mayor Bellwether seems to have read *The Prince* carefully, deceiving everyone in her quest for power and using the fear of others as a motivator.

Read: Isaiah 41:10

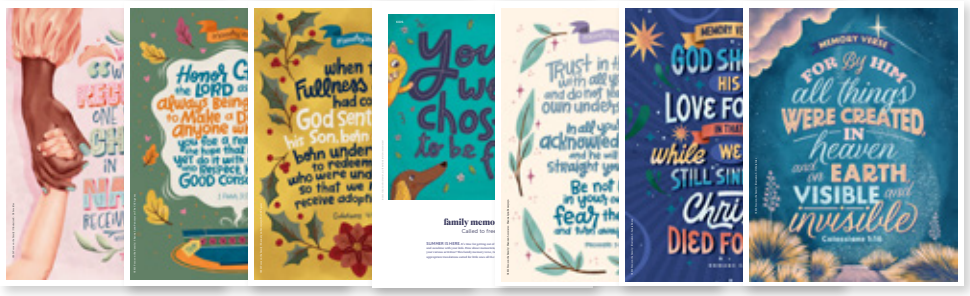
"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

How to talk to tweens and teens:

In another book, Machiavelli wrote that "men are driven by two principle impulses, either by love or by fear." Leaders throughout history—including during our own time—have used fear to their advantage. They might try to stoke fear in another country to wage war, or say that we should fear a group of people *within* our own nation to get votes. Bigotry, racism and a whole host of other injustices stem from fear. We sometimes see the same fear dynamic in our schools and neighborhoods. But as Machiavelli also pointed out, we're driven by love, too. That's the dynamic Jesus always looked at. In John 13:34, He told His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." And He said in Matthew 5:43-45, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." We often fear things—and people—for superficial reasons. But God wants us to go deeper. Who are you trying to love but are finding it hard to do?

What to say to young children:

Assistant Mayor Bellwether seems so nice to most of the animals in Zootopia. But in the end, she reveals her true self—and breaks a lot of commandments. Unfortunately, not everyone we meet in life is exactly who they seem to be. Have you ever met someone who seemed really nice at first but turned out to be pretty awful? *These words are based on Proverbs 10:9.*



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