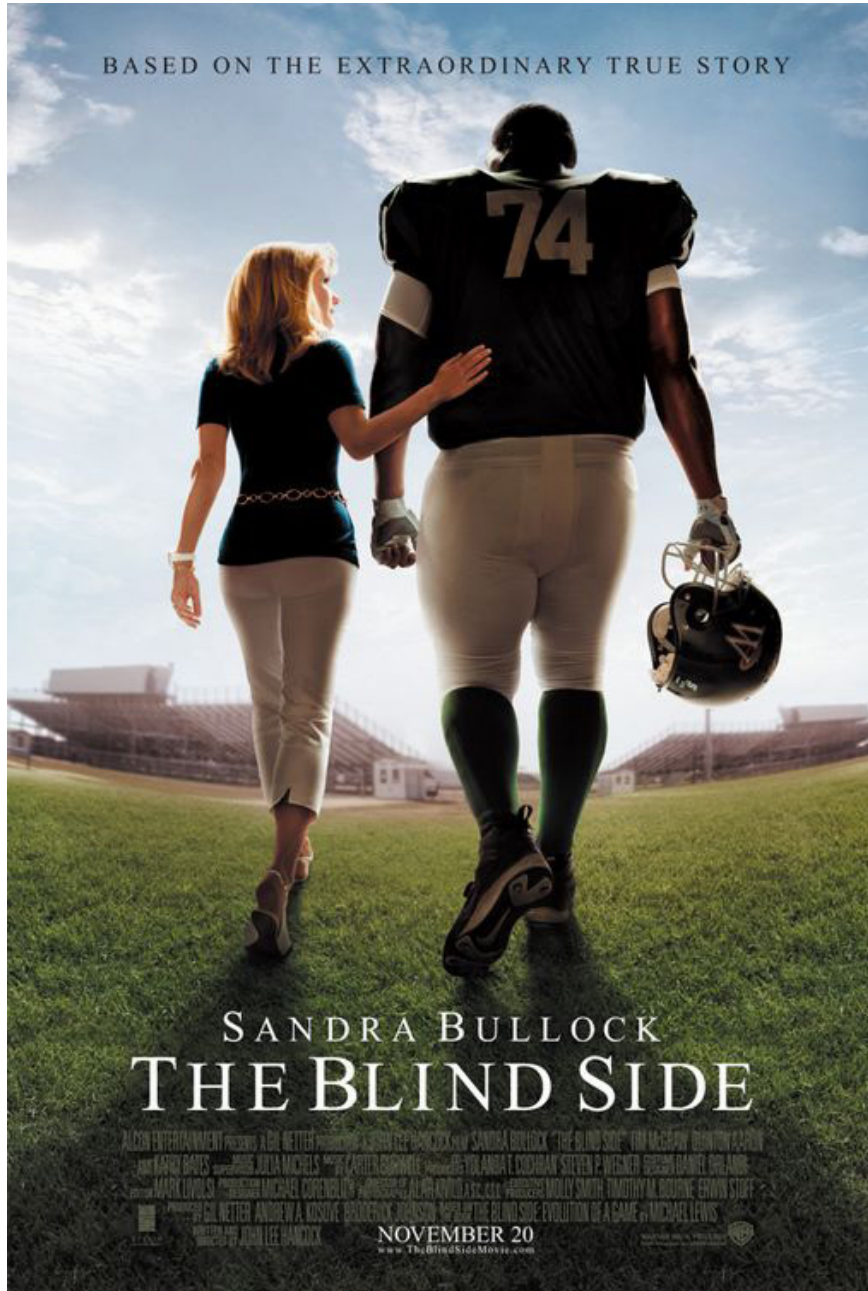


BASED ON THE EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY



SANDRA BULLOCK
THE BLIND SIDE

ALCON ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A GIL WETTER PRODUCTION A JOHN LEE HANCOCK FILM SANDRA BULLOCK "THE BLIND SIDE" TIM MCGRAW BRUNTON CAMPION
AND KARI MATCHETT STARRING JULIA MICHELS "THE KAPLAN BOYS" AND JESSIE YOUNG ANDA CRISHAM STEVEN P. WILSON GREGG DANIEL CARLSON
AND MARK LINDSEY PRODUCED BY MICHAEL CORENBLUT WRITTEN BY ALPHAVILLO & CO. EDITED BY MOLLY SMITH TIMOTHY M. ROUINE ENZO STOFF
DIRECTED BY GIL WETTER ANDREW A. KOSOVE BRONDERICK JOHNSON "THE BLIND SIDE: EVOLUTION OF A GAME" BY MICHAEL LEWIS
DISTRIBUTED BY ALCON ENTERTAINMENT
www.TheBlindSideMovie.com

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A Study Guide
by Craig Detweiler

THE BLIND SIDE

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INTRODUCTION

How many times have you thought, “When will I see a film that affirms faith and that shows how beliefs can be transformed into actions?” We often see and read stories about religious leaders who have disappointed us, via scandals and improprieties. Yet, what about all the heroic volunteers who make a positive difference on a daily basis? How many people serve joyfully at soup kitchens, hospitals and homeless shelters? What about those who care for their neighbors, who reach out across racial, cultural and economic divides?

The Blind Side redefines football films. While there is plenty of action on the field, the story revolves around family, faith, and commitment. It is about doing the right thing, walking the talk, making a difference in one person’s life. The Blind Side is a rousing, true-life story of an outstanding football prospect, Michael Oher, and a remarkable family, the Tuohys, who rallies around “Big Mike.” It features a stellar cast led by Sandra Bullock, Tim McGraw, Kathy Bates, and newcomer Quinton Aaron as “Big Mike.” Director John Lee Hancock has turned an intriguing book into that rarest phenomenon -- a genuinely inspiring film.

The Blind Side is that faith-affirming film that audiences consistently long for. It shows how one family can make a difference in a boy’s life. It also demonstrates how sacrifice results in unexpected blessings, as those we reach out to inevitably bless us with their presence, their appreciation, and their often hidden gifts. The Blind Side unlocks the possibilities we all have to change our corner of the world.

Who is the most valuable player on any football team? A healthy quarterback will usually result in a winning season. But what happens if Tom Brady, Donovan McNabb or Brett Favre get Blind Sided by an opposing linebacker or defensive end? In his best-selling book, *The Blind Side: Evolution of the Game*, Michael Lewis investigates how teams protect their most valuable asset, the quarterback. He celebrates the hidden heroes of the game: offensive left tackles. They have such size and presence that teams will do almost anything to find a human shield for their quarterbacks. Michael Oher has a God-given gift for protecting others, especially his family. The only thing he needs: a family who will protect him.

“We either take that seriously or paint over it.”



PLAY THE SCENE

The Blind Side takes place at Wingate Christian Academy in Memphis, Tennessee. Wingate pursues both academic excellence and athletic dominance. Coach Cotton is introduced to a phenomenal football prospect, Big Mike Oher.

But before he is admitted to the school, the teachers and staff wonder, “Will he be successful here?” Can he pass academically as well as athletically?”

Coach Cotton challenges those who would deny Big Mike admission. He points to the watchwords on their school crest: “Neighborly” and “Christian”

His challenge: “We either take that seriously or paint over it.”

REFLECT

The Blind Side is about putting faith into action. It challenges audiences to demonstrate their beliefs in tangible ways.

It reminds us of the biblical verse, “This is true religion, pure and undefiled in the sight of God, to look after widows and orphans in their time of need” (James 1:27). There are more than 500,000 in foster

care across America. The Blind Side follows the travails of a massive boy without a stable home, Michael Oher.

After the challenge by Coach Cotton, Wingate Christian Academy admits Big Mike, “Because it is the right thing to do.”

As he starts his first day at school, Mike passes under an arch that announces, “With men, this is impossible, With God all things are possible.” It comes from Matthew 19:26. Standing alone, it is easy to see the verse as inspiration for overcoming odds, for underdog victories. But the context becomes even more compelling. Jesus challenges a rich young ruler to sell his possessions and give to the poor. The disciples are overwhelmed by the challenge. Who can make such sacrifices and attain salvation. Jesus suggests that such costly discipleship may seem impossible, “With God, all things are possible.” The Blind Side will demonstrate that simple sacrifices, like opening our homes and caring for an orphan can result in unexpected rewards and blessings.

DISCUSS:

1. What does true religion look like in your town? Have you ever cared for widows or orphans in your church, school, or community?
2. What sacrifices could you make that might enable the impossible to become practical? What could you give away or invest in others?



THE BLIND SIDE

“She’s about to get her way.”



PLAY THE SCENE

The Tuohy family is quite content. Sean Tuohy (Tim McGraw) was a legendary basketball star at Ole Miss who now owns most of the fast food restaurants in Memphis. His wife, Leigh Anne (Sandra Bullock) is an interior designer in constant demand. Their teenage daughter Collins plays volleyball and serves on the cheerleading squad. Their young son, S.J. (Sean Junior) has energy and ideas to spare.

Returning from a volleyball game, Leigh Anne spots Big Mike walking the streets on a chilly evening. She is troubled by the sight and insists that Sean turn their car around.

Big Mike insists he is going to the gym. But Leigh Anne presses further wondering why he is going to a gymnasium that is closed. When Big Mike equivocates, Leigh Anne confronts him, “Don’t you lie to me.”

Sean watches from a distance. He’s seen Leigh Anne in action many times before, “She’s about to get her way.”

REFLECT

When it comes to carry for those in need, sometimes we have to be insistent. The needs are often so simple and tangible: food, shelter, clothing. Jesus redefined the test of a true disciple. In Matthew 25:35-36, he lays out tangible measures: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you took care of Me; I was in prison and you visited Me.”

Leigh Anne takes Jesus’ words seriously. She pushes past fear or prejudice to make room for a cold and hungry stranger. The Tuohys welcome Mike into their home.

DISCUSS:

1. Who do you know who is hungry or thirsty tonight? How can you respond?
2. Who needs shelter or clothing? How could you or your faith community provide a comfortable place to stay—either for those in your immediate community or even across the planet?





WHO TAKES CARE OF YOU?



PLAY THE SCENE

As Leigh Anne and Sean open up their home, Big Mike stretches their understanding of family. A Thanksgiving spent watching movies is altered by Mike's appearance at the dining table. He communicates volumes through his massive presence. The Tuohys are soon gathering in the dining room, saying grace, grateful to be together.

Leigh Anne resolves to take Big Mike shopping. This is a different pre-Christmas shopping rush. Big Mike alters Leigh Anne priorities and shopping list.

Big Mike doesn't divulge much about his painful past. Leigh Anne probes for more information. She asks a simple question, "Who takes care of you?" Mike's hesitation speaks volumes. He hasn't been cared for in any consistent way. The one truth he chooses to reveal: his preferred name is "Michael." Not Big Mike. So Leigh Anne concludes, "To me, you're Michael."

REFLECT

I John 3:1 teaches us, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

God constantly renames people. Abram became Abraham, father of the Hebrew people. Saul, a perse-

cutor of Christians becomes Paul, the little one who founds numerous churches. God takes those who have been orphaned or abandoned and adopts them. He renames them as a way of communicating their worth. Adoption is God's way of saying, "I'll take care of you."

In the Bible, God consistently adopts others. He adopts the Israelites, naming them, "his people." In the sacrificial actions of Jesus on the cross, God extended his family. How do we become sons and daughters of God? Galatians 4:4-7 says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

Leigh Anne welcomes Michael into the Tuohy family. He's given the same rights and privileges as her biological children, Collins and S.J.

QUESTIONS:

1. What nicknames have other people given to you? Have you been called things that you didn't like?
2. What new names has God given to you? Do you feel "blessed" and "beloved," like a child of God? What is it like to be an heir?

THE BLIND SIDE

“They’re family. Protect your family.”



PLAY THE SCENE

With Michael’s physical needs finally met, Coach Cotton still faces the challenge of raising his performance on the football field. Traditional motivational methods of yelling, screaming, and shaming Michael do not work. How to turn a gentle giant into a lion?

Leigh Anne interrupts the practice with some on-field coaching. She makes the concept of protecting the quarterback quite simple. She redefines the quarterback, halfback, and fullback as Michael’s family. Would he protect the Tuohys from those who sought to tackle them? Absolutely. So Leigh Anne challenges Michael to defend his teammates with the same gusto. He has got their back, especially their Blind Side.

REFLECT

Jesus hurt for the beleaguered people of Jerusalem. In Luke 13:34, he expresses how he longed to gather them like chicks beneath his protective wings. We may not think about Christ as a mother hen, but his instinct is to cover those he cares for.

Michael Oher has the same instincts. He is fiercely protective of family. Having faced physical and emotional threats, he is used to guarding those who cannot defend themselves. Leigh Anne understands that as soon as Michael considers his teammates as family, he will keep away all kinds of threats.

We see the same security extended by God in Psalm 91. Read the entire Psalm. Note the vivid imagery and language. God is described as a refuge and fortress. Like Jesus, God’s love includes spreading out protective feathers and wings. God repels deadly threats of pestilence and plague. Guardian angels insure that no harm or disaster will land on our tents (or rush into our backfield!). Dangerous animals like lions and cobras will be trampled underfoot. The application to football teams and mascots is quite apt.

The familial bond between Michael and the

Tuohys is paralleled by God’s love for his people. Psalm 91:14-16 indicates, “Because he loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you had opportunities to stand up for the truth even at personal cost? Are you willing to appear “disloyal” by blowing the whistle on questionable activities?
2. How can you step into another person’s shoes? Who needs our prayers, solidarity and support today?

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