

Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 2 (2017)

Reviewed by Markus Watson

Rated PG. Running time: 136 min.

Our content rating: Violence 7; Language 5; Sex/Nudity 3.

Our star rating (1-5): 4

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:11

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

John 14:18

Ego, Peter, & Yondu.

(c) Marvel Movies

The first *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie (2014) is about a group of individuals who are “losers,” that is, who have “lost stuff.” Peter Quill, aka Starlord (Chris Pratt), has lost both of his parents—his mother to a brain tumor and his father left them when Peter was a baby. Peter and four other “losers” come together to form a ragtag family of heroes who call themselves the “Guardians of the Galaxy.”

In *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, Peter is reunited with his long-lost father, a Celestial being who calls himself Ego (Kurt Russell). At first, Peter is suspicious. What if this guy isn't his father? What if he is his father, but he's got

something else up his sleeve? With Gamora's (Zoe Saldana) encouragement, Peter—accompanied by Gamora and Drax (Dave Bautista)—goes with Ego to learn about his heritage and get to know his dad.

At first, everything seems perfect. Since he is half-Celestial, Peter discovers powers he never knew he had. He and Ego end up playing catch (with a ball of blue energy) just like Peter had always dreamed of doing with his dad.

But soon the truth comes out. Ego has had hundreds of children from all over the galaxy, hoping that one of them would carry the Celestial gene, which would increase his own power. But each of those children were mortal, so Ego killed them and disposed of them. Peter realizes he is nothing more than a tool for Ego's ambition, and that after Ego has used Peter for his own ends Peter will be dead.

Peter isn't the only one with "daddy issues" in this movie. Gamora's sister, Nebula (Karen Gillan), hates both Gamora and their father, Thanos (who had abducted both of them as children). When they were young, Thanos would pit Gamora and Nebula against each other. Gamora would always prevail; then Thanos would replace a part of Nebula's body with machinery.

The father-relationship is really at the heart of this movie. In both Peter's case and in Nebula's, their fathers failed to be true fathers. But near the end of the movie, Peter realizes he actually did have a dad—Yondu (Michael Rooker), the leader of the space-thieves who abducted Peter when he was a boy. Yondu wasn't a great dad, but a much better dad than Ego. In fact, it turns out that by abducting Peter, Yondu was protecting him.

The reality of life is that no father is perfect. Some are downright bad—abusive, neglectful, selfish. But most fathers do their best to love their children well. Part of growing up involves accepting both the strengths and the weaknesses of

our fathers.

The good news is that we have a perfect Heavenly Father. It's important to recognize, of course, that this does not mean God is primarily masculine (the scriptures use many feminine images for God, as well). But the image of a father is one of the ways God presents himself to us.

This Father never neglects us. He never abandons us. He never abuses us. He is always present, always listening, always available, always compassionate. He is a Father who loves us as we are, yet empowers us to grow beyond what we are into who we were created to be. This is a Father who delights in his children even when they don't feel delightful. God is the kind of Father who would give anything to be with his children—even his own life.

Peter Quill never discovers this Father. But he does see some of the Heavenly Father's qualities in the very imperfect fatherhood of Yondu. Perhaps we, too, can find traces of the perfect love of God in our imperfect fathers.

This review with a set of questions will be in the June 2017 issue of VP.