

The Lion King (1994)

Rated PG Running time: 93 min.

This marvelous Hamlet-related film has been a big hit in its 3-D re-release, and now is available in a superb take-home package that features both the Blu-Ray and the DVD version.

This is a father-son story that the whole family can watch, though parents should be wary that there are violent scenes that will be scary for pre-school children. Elton John's beautiful song celebrating the Circle of Life well supports the panoramic scene in which the shaman mandrill Rafiki climbs to the top of Pride Rock where little Simba and his parents King Mufasa (James Earl Jones) and Queen Sarabi (Madge Sinclair) are waiting for him. In a baptism-like scene he anoints the cub and presents him as the new prince to the multitude of animals assembled below. All bow and rejoice at this happy occasion.

All, that is, except for Scar, brother of Mufasa. Ambitious and jealous, he has stayed away. As wonderfully voiced by Jeremy Irons, Scar masks his jealousy in sarcastic remarks, often with double meanings. Turning his evil thoughts into deeds with the help of a pack of hyenas, he kills his rival and seizes the throne, but his plan to kill Simba as well, is thwarted, and the cub escapes to a far off land. Raised by some curious creatures, Simba grows to adulthood, but only an encounter with his childhood friend Nala and Rafiki, convinces him to return from exile and confront Scar.

The film will resonate with people of faith with its theme near the end of the importance of remembrance. In a spiritual encounter with his father, Simba is inspired to remember his legacy and his responsibility to live up to it. Also, parents

will appreciate the early scene showing the closeness of father and son and the call to honor that relationship.

The disks include a fine "making of the film," the usual voice over commentary by the filmmakers, and, depending on what set you purchase, deleted scenes

extended footage, song cuts, and some family On-line access to interactive features. This film lends itself to use by parents, grandparents, and church leaders who want more than just entertainment for the young child under their care.