

The Simpsons Movie (2007)

Rated PG-13. Our ratings: V- 3; L- 3; S/N – 2. Running time: 1 hour 27 min.

And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4

Too bad Homer probably neverThe Simpsons Movie reads St. Paul, especially the first part of the above verse. He definitely provokes poor Bart to anger—and up in Alaska, wife Marge as well. But who wouldn't be provoked by this self-centered slob with a knack for bringing grief and havoc to everyone connected with him? And whose frequent reaction to his son's errors is to choke Bart? Alongside Homer Simpson Archie Bunker seems as debonair as Cary Grant. But I am getting ahead of things. Suffice it to say that the long period for the transferal of the Simpsons to the big screen has been well worth the wait.

The fast-paced humor centering on the stupid antics of Homer Simpson and his hapless family will keep young and old roaring with laughter. Homer's attempt to dump the refuse from his pet pig into the lake instead of at the city recycling center leads to a national pollution crisis, the EPA sending the Air Force to lower a dome over Springfield in order to protect the

rest of the country. The scenes in which President Schwarzenegger (yes, they must have changed the US Constitution in Simpsonland) is manipulated by his adviser are funny, although I suspect more pointed at the current occupant of the Oval Office than the politician in Sacramento.

Driven out by the Springfield citizens because they are angry at being cut off from the rest of the country, Homer takes his family to Alaska, where even the long-suffering Marge decides to pack up the kids and leave him. How he finds redemption and reconciliation includes several poignant moments, the most notable sequence being Bart looking to neighbor Ned Flanders for the fatherly affection that Homer fails to provide. We even learn where Springfield is located when Ned Flanders says, "Look at that, you can see the four states that border Springfield: Ohio, Nevada, Maine, and Kentucky!" Yes, the geography is as whacky as the antics of the Simpsons!

This is a comedy not to be missed, though parents will want to see it first to make sure it is appropriate for their children—the hilarious sequence in which young Bart has to skateboard naked through the streets of the town earn this movie its PG-13 rating! After watching the Simpsons, one's own life, no matter how humdrum, doesn't seem so bad after all.

For Reflection/Discussion

1) Why do you think we care about such unattractive characters as Homer Simpson (or Archie Bunker)? Does it make us feel that despite our own foibles we are fairly well off?

2) How does even this cartoon demonstrate that we are interconnected, that what one does affects everyone else, for good or ill?

3) What do you think of Ned Flanders' version of Christianity? How does it apparently help him to be the kind of father that attracts Bart? When Bart loses the fishing pole, what does he expect from Ned? How is this unexpectedness typical of

Christian ethics?

4) How did you feel when Homer has an epiphany and finally comes through—and yet how is the new knowledge he gains (“Everything else is as important as me”) and his rescue of Springfield still appropriate for him?

5) Trivia: When the barge holding the band sinks, what is the music on the soundtrack? Yes, it is the same hymn that the band played as the Titanic sank, “Nearer My God to Thee.” What famous documentary film does the title of Lisa’s environmental lecture spoof—“ An Irritating Truth” ?