

## Sunday School Lesson - Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

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### Preface

I've read that many ardent fans of the Harry Potter series did not like the book version of the Order of the Phoenix. Many were turned off by all the negative things that happen to Harry and probably upset at the turmoil and the apparent decent into darkness. Frankly I found it to be refreshing! Here in this book we begin to see large-scale development in the characters and begin to leave all the vestiges of "cute" behind. My perspective on OOTP is that we begin to see something akin to Orthodox theosis in Harry. Something that is even more evident in the later books (and hopefully movies).

Harry begins to deal with basic, deep questions about what his true character is. In short he has doubts! What could be more relevant to your young people than dealing with doubt and the amount of character it takes to fight evil in the world? While there have been objections to the overtones of the macabre in this series, I think the darkness is part of the test for the characters. We all have to deal with how we react to evil and its many forms. As Orthodox we have an icon dealing with Saint John Climacus' Ladder of Divine Ascent and here in movie form we see a great way to illustrate that very struggle toward theosis and God.

One thing I've learned about using movies like this is not to be afraid to stop if you hit an area of keen interest to the kids. If there is a concept or topic that they react positively to then my advice is to address it. The best advice I probably ever got on youth activities is that they have to be three things: relaxed, relevant and real. The kids have to have the room to be themselves, it has to be put into a format or level that reaches them and it has to be done in a way that delivers things they can use. That's hard to do and I would estimate that I probably succeed at it less than half of the time.

### How to Follow the Lesson

I basically watched the movie scene by scene using a computer. The numbers you see are the elapsed time from the beginning of the movie. When I showed the movie I used a PC since it gave me better control over the movie allowing me to skim over the parts to get to the minute markers I wanted.

I found what I considered to be key points and portions of the movie that illustrated them. Then I used the biblical references to reinforce them as we watched the movie.

### Key Points in Order of the Phoenix

- Steps to salvation
- Struggle: The spiritual battle (Daniel 12:10, Psalm 5:11, Psalm 11:5)
- Action: Doing something!
- Love: The greatest of all spiritual gifts
- Return of Voldemort parallels the return of Satan to the world and the eventual final battle between good and evil (judgment day).
- Our own struggle between being good or bad.

### Key Movie Points

#### **\*\* Chapter 5, 20:40 - 25:21**

**- Harry has to face trial as the result of being persecuted for telling the truth about the return of Voldemort (Job 19:19)**

00:26:00 original order of the Phoenix. Sirius shows Harry a picture of the original Order of the Phoenix and talks about how many of them died for the cause. How is this like looking at icons of the Holy Saints of the Church?

**\*\* 00:33:00 - 00:33:44 Harry faces doubt and scrutiny from students** who are reading the bad accounts written about him in the daily news. How is this like our own Christian struggle? (hint: not much is written positively about Christians in most quarters). Ron stands with his friend as we should stand together as Christians. (Proverbs 17:3, Proverbs 17:17)

00:44:00 Luna expresses to Harry why Voldemort might want him to feel isolated and alone. Satan will try to isolate us to make us less of a threat to his ambitions

00:53:00 - 00:56:15 Harry agrees to take on teaching defense against the dark arts since Umbridge and Fudge are afraid of the students learning to defend themselves against the "dark arts".

The idea of magic in this series has to do with the relationship we have with God and the development of our belief. When the students go into the room of requirement (01:02:00) Harry the difference between those who can work magic and those who cannot is the depth of their belief.

01:01:30 - Dumbledore's army is practicing while those who follow Umbridge are signing up for with her to persecute those who believe that evil exists (and Voldemort has returned). The DA is practicing their "magic" and we see that the key is in their confidence

\*\*\* **01:13:43** - Black and Harry trace Sirius' family tree and have a wonderful discussion about having dark feelings versus doing dark things. What makes us good or bad. Harry is confused about feeling angry and thinks that he might be becoming bad. **"you're not a bad person.... the world isn't split into good people and death eaters... what's important is the path we choose to act on.. that is who we really are..."**

01:19:00 Hagrid tells Harry "...there's a storm coming Harry and we'd all best be ready when it does" (Mark 13:36, Luke 12:11)

01:57:00 Harry tries to use the Crucio curse. Does it work? Why not?  
Friendship

\*\*\*\* **02:01:00 "Its not how you are alike... its how you are different"**  
Love: Harry expresses pity for Voldemort (Matthew 5:44)

02:06:00 Luna expresses sincere feeling to Harry about the loss of his God Father. (Romans 12:15 15 weep with those that weep)

02:07:30 "We have something Voldemort doesn't have... something worth fighting for..." (1 Corinthians 16:13)

The showdown. In the end Harry learns that either he or Voldemort must win.

Summary: Order of the Phoenix is very different than the previous books/movies. It marks the start of descent into a dark period, both for society and for Harry personally. Think about how thing end for Harry. By the end of this story he is no longer a quidditch player, loses the girl he has a crush on and discovers that either he or Voldemort must kill the other. It is the start of a very dark time, and it parallels many biblical ideas. One example, is Harry's birth date. He is born at the end of the 7th month. While it could be coincidence Revelations 8:1 also talks about the opening of the seventh seal which is a significant part of the final battle between good and evil in the final days.

The most important point of the story concerns the spiritual condition of the characters and how this is born out in their character. Case in point; what happens when Harry tries an unforgivable curse on

## QUESTIONS

### Conversation starters:

- Does "magic" give Harry Potter the ability to make his problems disappear? Does it improve his life? **Answer:** No, the story is really about the people, relationships and the love that bonds people, and which is stronger than any evil.
- In the end we will be defined by what and who we love. Voldemort loves only himself and power, while Harry, Dumbledore and others around them love one another and what is right.
- In OOTP Harry changes from the boy to whom bad things happen to the boy who does things.
- Sirius Black tells Harry Potter that he's not a bad person, just a good person that bad things have happened to. Do you agree? Have good things happened to Harry? What has he done himself that might make him a good person or a bad person?
- Sirius then says, "We've all got light and dark inside us. What matters is what part we choose to act on." What choices does Harry make? What about the scene near the end when Harry tries to do something really bad but is told he did not succeed because he didn't really "mean" to do it? Do you think he "meant" to?
- It has been said that the greatest trick the Devil ever played was convincing the world he did not exist. How do Voldemort's actions in this film parallel that?
- Harry and Dumbledore are accused of lying and fearmongering when they say that Voldemort has returned. When have you been accused of lying because you said something you knew to be true? How did you handle it? How have you decided who to believe when other people have told you that someone is lying?
- J K Rowling may be hinting very strongly at the final judgment day using little clues. Both Harry and Neville were born in the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the year, while in the book of Revelation the end of the world begins with the unrolling of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal and the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet. Do you think Rowling is pointing to this? How is Orthodox teaching of the end times different than others (we do not believe in the "rapture"). How would you feel being in Harry's place and knowing you must face an adversary such as Voldemort? (We in fact face an even worse enemy).

### Biblical References

Deuteronomy 7:9 “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 4:31 31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.

Job 19:19 All my close friends abhor me, And those whom I love have turned against me.

Daniel 12:10 Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

Psalms 5:11 But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You.

Psalms 11:5 The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.

Psalms 70:4 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; And let those who love Your salvation say continually, “Let God be magnified!”

Psalms 97:10 You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.

Psalms 109:4 In return for my love they are my accusers, But I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, And hatred for my love.

Proverbs 3:26 For the LORD will be your confidence, And will keep your foot from being caught.

Proverbs 8:36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death.” (hence the term "death eater"

Proverbs 17:3 The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts.

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Proverbs 17:17 A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

Ecclesiastes 3

Everything Has Its Time

1 To everything there is a season,  
A time for every purpose under heaven:  
2 A time to be born,  
And a time to die;  
A time to plant,  
And a time to pluck what is planted;  
3 A time to kill,  
And a time to heal;  
A time to break down,  
And a time to build up;  
4 A time to weep,  
And a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn,  
And a time to dance;  
5 A time to cast away stones,  
And a time to gather stones;  
A time to embrace,  
And a time to refrain from embracing;  
6 A time to gain,  
And a time to lose;  
A time to keep,  
And a time to throw away;  
7 A time to tear,  
And a time to sew;  
A time to keep silence,  
And a time to speak;  
8 A time to love,  
And a time to hate;  
A time of war,  
And a time of peace.

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:“ Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

Hosea 4:18 Their drink is rebellion, They commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor.

Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

Luke 12:11 “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.

Matthew 24:12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Mark 13:36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

1 Corinthians 13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

1 Corinthians 16:13 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

Corinthians 2:6-9

BRETHREN, among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him."

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old

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things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Ephesians 3:11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Ephesians 4:17 [ The New Man ] This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind,

Ephesians 4:24 "... and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

Hebrews 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

Hebrews 10:35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

Revelation 8:1 [ The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer ] When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Revelation 10:7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

Revelation 11:15

[ The Seventh Trumpet ] The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Revelation 16:17

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!"