

Up

A film review by Rev Dr Steve Taylor

Get down to *Up*. Take your children. Then ask your neighbour's grandchildren. Whatever you do, do not forget your church leadership team.

Up is yet another triumph from the Pixar stable, a creative collective currently riding the commercial and creative crest of the animation industry. This is their 10th movie and follows in the animated footsteps of critically acclaimed creations included *The Incredibles*, *Finding Nemo* and *Monsters Inc.*

Despite cutting edge computer technology, it is the plot, that good old-fashioned ability to tell a compelling story, that makes *Up* great.

Carl Fredricksen has lost his childhood dream, buried with Elie, his lifelong sweetheart. Until, aged 78, dwarfed by apartments, surrounded by shopping mall developers and destined for the rest home, he ties balloons to his house and finds himself up, aloft, heading for South America.

Eight year old Russell is an unintended stowaway. Adventure binds them together. A host of animals threaten to drive them apart. Together they find a friendship forged and an imagination rekindled.

The messages are worth pondering. For Russell: "It might sound boring, but I think boring stuff is the stuff I like the most." Fun times are neither Playstation nor theme parks, but sitting curbside, slurping ice cream and counting cars alongside his father.

Savour the handwritten message from Elie to Carl: "Thanks for the adventure. Now go have another one." It sounds like great theology and essential Christian spirituality. Too many of us live our lives anchored to our past and refusing to chase our dreams.

It reminded me of *The Message* paraphrase of Romans 8:15. "This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" Life is for living, an open, trusting, hope-filled adventure.

It is the little things that make Pixar great. The dialogue is witty. The attention to detail is extraordinary, including the saliva that drips of the ball the dogs chase and the stubble that slowly grows on Carl's face as the plot develops.

Get down to *Up*. For adults and children, it is both poignant and comic, reflective and clever.

Might I also suggest you purchase free tickets for all your church leadership team. In the cafe afterward, read Luke 10:1-12. Many churches are like Carl, aging, bereft of children, dwarfed by shopping mall developers.

Up invites you to dream again. Start by closing your precious book of memories. Lay it aside, gently, and thankfully. Now get up and go looking for another adventure.

You will need to look for a partner, and be prepared to accept one in the form of an eight year old. As you dream, you might well find yourself saying goodbye to faithful furniture and well-worn furnishings. You should expect to find yourself sitting on the curbside of your street, ready to greet God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?"

498 words

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