



Robert Velarde, author of *The Wisdom of Pixar: An Animated Look at Virtue*  
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### Why did you decide to write *The Wisdom of Pixar*?

**Robert Velarde:** I came to write *The Wisdom of Pixar* because of my enjoyment of Pixar films and the virtues they contain. I have four children ranging in age from three to fifteen and realized that they have essentially grown up with Pixar. In fact, each year one of my children was born a new Pixar film was released—*Toy Story*, *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters, Inc.*, and *Cars*. I've seen every Pixar film many times and always find them captivating and insightful in ways that go deeper than your typical family film. While people still read, and I believe they always will, we have entered an era that has in many respects left behind the age of exposition or typography, to use Neil Postman's terms. Instead, we've entered an age of digital entertainment that is often dominated by film and television. In this sense, film is the new "literature" of our generation and, consequently, something many people can relate to.

### What is your main point in *The Wisdom of Pixar*?

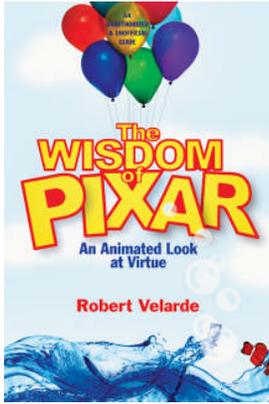
**Robert:** Virtue matters a great deal, especially in the Christian life. But in order to grow in moral character we need to be deliberate about understanding and developing virtue in our lives. Virtue is not just an abstract or academic area of study for professional philosophers and theologians, but is a very real part of our daily lives. More specifically, theological virtues are key to our spiritual formation, and as such, *The Wisdom of Pixar* approaches the topic of virtue from a distinctly Christian perspective.

### How does virtue come across in a Pixar movie like *Finding Nemo*?

**Robert:** *Finding Nemo* is a wonderful film with many rich themes, including that of family. Since it addresses the parent-child relationship, along the way it typifies the many challenges and concerns that parents face in trying to balance their love and care for a child with the realization that children need room to grow. Marlin is an overprotective clown fish, while his son Nemo has reached an age where he wants to do more without having his father constantly interfering and overreacting. As a parent of four children, I want what's best for them but need to realize that at some point they will grow up. Instead of smothering them, I need to give them room to grow and equip them with the life skills they need to enjoy life and also deal with the challenges they will face. To this end, *Finding Nemo* does a great job of communicating the virtue and wisdom needed in families.

# Q&A

## AUTHOR INTERVIEW



**Robert Velarde** is a writer and editor for Sonlight Curriculum. His books include *Examining Alternative Medicine* (InterVarsity Press, 2001), *Conversations with C. S. Lewis* (InterVarsity Press, 2008), *The Heart of Narnia* (NavPress, 2008) and *Inside the Screwtape Letters* (Baker, forthcoming). A former editor for Focus on the Family, he received his M.A. in religion from Southern Evangelical Seminary.

### What virtues or wisdom is at the heart of a movie like *Up*?

**Robert:** *Up* is primarily a love story and, in my assessment, one of Pixar's most touching films. It's about a man, Carl, who has lived much of his life with his childhood sweetheart, Ellie. Together they shared a dream of one day visiting Paradise Falls in South America, but when Ellie dies, that hope is gone, leaving Carl as a stereotypical grumpy old man. Out of his love for Ellie, Carl decides to make the trip anyway, albeit in an unorthodox and fanciful way by flying his entire house across the world. Like all Pixar films, *Up* is about relationships, in this case the deep bond between a husband and wife. As the foundation of Christian ethics, love is one of the three so-called theological virtues (the other two are faith and hope) and, as such, demonstrates in some way the kind of love God has for us and desires us to have for the world. Love for God and for others is very much at the center of Christian ethics.

*Up* is also about friendship. There is, of course, the friendship in a marriage relationship, but also the friendship between Carl and the young boy, Russell. We sometimes can get so focused on our Christian lives that we forget the power of friendships beyond our comfort zones. But if we look at the pages of the New Testament we see Jesus befriending people of all kinds.

### What is your hope for the readers of *The Wisdom of Pixar*?

**Robert:** In many respects we've lost sight of the meaning and practical applications of virtue and wisdom. In relating these important concepts to popular culture from a distinctly Christian perspective, it is my hope that readers will enjoy and relate to the book while they also grow in virtue personally and, in turn, take action in order to positively influence culture. Pixar movies are a lot of fun. I don't want readers to lose sense of that wonder and enjoyment in the films, but I do desire to communicate the practical lessons we can learn from such films so we can apply those insights meaningfully as we seek to grow in our faith.