

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Being Brave: New Pixar Film Offers Lessons for Mothers, Daughters
By Paul Asay

What Happened:

Merida doesn't like anyone telling her what to do—especially her mother. The main character in Pixar's new film *Brave* is almost an adult, for goodness' sake, and when her mom tells her that she needs to get married for the good of the kingdom, the teen pushes back.

By tradition, Merida's suitors must compete to see who gets to marry the girl; but after a trio of would-be husbands finish firing their bows, Merida pulls out her own and announces, "I'll be fighting for my own hand!" Of course, she wins.

Merida's mother, Elinor, is furious. Her daughter willfully disobeyed her—rebellious against her training and upbringing and putting the future of the kingdom in danger. She and Merida have strong words: Merida calls Elinor a beast. Elinor throws Merida's bow into the fire. Merida flees the castle, crying. Before long, she runs into a witch—and begs the witch to change her mother.

In the end, change comes to both characters. After she realizes how much she hurt Elinor and the kingdom with her actions, Merida takes on much of the responsibilities and duties Elinor always wanted her to take. When Merida does, Elinor finds a way to get around the kingdom's stipulations for betrothal. In other words, she allows Merida not to marry until she's ready.

Most importantly, the two of them are reminded of a couple of important things: the importance of listening to each other and the fact that although they sometimes fight, they still love each other very much.

Talk About It:

Merida and Elinor's relationship isn't that much different from how many moms and teenage daughters—and sons, for that matter—relate to each other. Most teens want the ability to make more of their own decisions. Parents want to teach their kids responsibility and, by extension, make the sort of decisions they would make themselves. It's a natural part of growing up.

What sort of relationship do you have with your parents? Do the conflicts Merida and Elinor have look familiar? Can you understand Merida's desire to find her own destiny and Elinor's desire for Merida to be a responsible princess?

Merida asks a witch to change her mother. Is there anything you'd like to change about your parents? Is there anything they might want to change about you? Are there times

when you'd like your ability to relate to each other and talk to each other to change and get better?

One thing Merida and Elinor wish is that the other would listen better. Can that sometimes be a problem with your family or friends? Does it sometimes feel as if no one actually hears what you're trying to say? Can you be guilty of not listening, too? When?

Merida and Elinor remember at the end how much they love each other. Merida apologizes to her mother. Her mother takes Merida in her arms, essentially thanking her for helping them both change. How do you show your parents that you love them? How do they show their love for you?

What the Bible Says:

The Bible often uses a mother's love as a reference point to show us how much God loves us.

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you" (Isa. 49:15).

"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem" (Isa. 66:13).

It also underlines the importance of respecting your parents and of listening to other people.

"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck" (Prov. 1:8).

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance" (Prov. 1:5).

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" (James 1:19).