

Series Title

At The Movies

Grab a snack, find a seat... you're *At the Movies!* Each week we'll see how God uses characters and situations in our lives to move us along on our journey, so we can discover what He has for us.

Sermon Title

Marly and Me

After their wedding, newspaper writers John and Jennifer Grogan move to Florida. In an attempt to stall Jennifer's "biological clock", John gives her a puppy. While the puppy Marley grows into a 100-pound dog, he loses none of his puppy energy or rambunctiousness. Meanwhile, Marley gains no self-discipline. Marley's antics give John rich material for his newspaper column. As the Grogan's mature and have children of their own, Marley continues to test everyone's patience by acting like the world's most impulsive dog.

Ice Breaker

- What part have pets played in your life?

Sermon Guide

At the beginning, we see John and Jenny adopt Marley, who they purchase at a discount. Soon they develop a close bond with the dog. Marley feels loved and valued. That is what each of us crave, yet Satan can whisper we are "less than" and tries to get us to believe that is true. We can feel we are not worthy.

- Share where you struggle to believe you are valued. Have you been in a situation where you have sold yourself short because you don't believe you are worth it? Read [John 15:16](#) and [Proverbs 16:9](#). How does this speak to those moments?

We see that Jenny is a planner, but she soon discovers things don't always turn out the way that we planned, and that life is filled with unexpected surprises.

- Share a time when something unexpected comes your way. How did you react and what kept you moving forward?

Although Marley doesn't seem to be maturing, John certainly is. Isn't that how life always works, the things that stretch us are also the things that grow us? Marley's unruly behavior has given John a reason to write and become a columnist, preparing them for the very next big step in their lives.

- Maybe you are in a period of your life that has you thinking it sure seems like it's been a long, long night. Read [Psalm 30:5](#) and [Jeremiah 29:11](#). Where might God still

be at work in you? Can you handle not knowing how until later? Why or why not?

- Where in your life do you need to see a comma instead of a period, believing there is no hope? Where can you find hope this week?

Perhaps the greatest gift Marley gave Jen and John was perspective. In the movie Jenny and John walk toward Marley's grave together. When life throws the unexpected at you, don't face it alone. Lean on others, lean on your small group, lean on your church family and lean on God.

- Read [Romans 15:13](#). Where does your hope come from? Are you someone who tries to do it alone or do you embrace help? What holds you back from sharing your struggles?

In the movie they say "a dog doesn't care whether you're smart or whether you're dumb. You give him your heart and he'll give you his." John Grogan said of Marley, 'When you give Him your heart, He'll give you his.' Read [Romans 8:1](#). On what basis does God accept you?

Prayer

- Break into small groups and pray for each other.
- Pray for clarity where it seems confusing
- Pray for hope for those who are struggling to see God in their situation.