

Session Four: “Encanto”

Rated PG. Running time: 1 hour and 45 minutes.

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. —Romans 12:4–6a

Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. — Joel 2:28

For Reflection/Discussion

1. Review the list (for groups) of the characters and their gifts. Which gift interests you the most?
2. Go around the group and ask each member to name their gift(s) and how it can be used in the church.
3. What about other members? What gifts do they bring to the congregation?
4. Now back to the film: How is this an outsider movie? Compare it to other outsider movies that you have seen. How must Mirabel feel when she is not included in the family portrait? In what ways was Christ an outsider? Do you think your congregation has been adept at including outsiders? (My experience at visiting numerous churches has been that most of the time, I was ignored at coffee hours, even when I went up to various clusters of people, members preferring to socialize among themselves.) How can a congregation do better?
5. There are three generations in the Madrigal family. What crisis did the first generation face years before? How has this been a frequent problem for people in South and Central America, right up to the present? And of course, now for the people of Ukraine? During the various influxes of refugees over the past decades, what role has your congregation taken up? For example, during the Vietnam War, a congregation I served turned over the use of the upper floor of our CE wing to our sponsored Vietnamese family — almost 15 adults and children. Teams of members worked on food for them, their orientation to America, and securing employment and permanent housing.
6. What do the songs tell us about the family and the singer(s)?
 - a. From looking at the song clip “The Family Madrigal,” what are some of the ways in which family members use their gifts for others? Compare this to what the apostle Paul wrote about the church and its members with their gifts. Which would most benefit your church? How are these gifts benefiting the community surrounding the congregation?



b. When does Mirabel begin to see cracks in their house? What is the reaction of other members of the family, especially of Alma? How is this typical? How do members of your church react to criticism?

c. What do the cracks that Mirabel sees signify — not only for the house, but for her family as well? Do you see “cracks” in your church? Do people ignore or deny them, as Grandmother Alma had done? What does Luisa admit to in her song “Surface Pressure”?

d. In “We Don't Talk About Bruno,” what are the reasons different people give for keeping Bruno out of their thoughts? How has his gift been anything but a blessing to him? Do members of your church tend to see critics as troublemakers and tend to dismiss them?

e. How is “What Else Can I Do?” a song of discovery and of reconciliation for Isabel and Mirabel? How is reconciliation in a congregation just as vital as in this film? Note what Jesus said in Matthew 5:23–26. In a Presbyterian congregation, who is especially responsible for bringing about reconciliation of its members?

(So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.)

f. In what ways in “Dos Oruguitas” do we see the estranged Alma and Mirabel coming to a mutual understanding? For Christians, how are the caterpillar and butterfly good symbols for what is happening between grandmother and granddaughter? Family members sing the parts in “All of You” as the family comes together in a lovely moment of confession and reconciliation. Joined together, they hear the approach of the villagers. How is this a sign of a larger community, a solidarity with their neighbors? Mirabel sings “It's a dream when we work as a team.” How has your church experienced this — perhaps in a food or a Habitat for Humanity project, or — ?



h. Mirabel sings in the above song “But the stars don’t shine, they burn/And the constellations shift.” How is this a recognition of change? How has your congregation dealt with change? Recognized or denied it is needed? How was (is) Alma’s recognition of fearing that change means loss present?

7. Is your church membership entirely of one race? Note how in the film, set in Colombia, Pepa’s husband, Félix, is much darker in complexion, indicative of a mixed-race culture. Does anyone in your congregation even think that the lack of racial diversity might be a “crack” or shortcoming? What relationships does your congregation have with those of other races?

8. How might this film contribute to a deeper awareness of the nature and role of your church? Look over the seven marks of congregational vitality. Which ones can you see in your church? Which need more work to make yours a vital congregation, an “encanto” of the Lord?

Luisa (Jessica Darrow) receives the strength of a Superman, enabling her to move massive stones and masonry

Isabela (Diane Guerrero) can make plants grow and flowers bloom

Pepa (Carolina Gaitán) can control the weather immediately surrounding her, depending on her changing moods

Camilo (Rhenzy Feliz) is a shape-shifter born to entertain

Dolores (Adassa) has such keen ears that she easily picks up the news and gossip of the villagers

Bruno (John Leguizamo) can see the future, but nobody talks about him since he disappeared, dismissed by the family

Julieta (Angie Cepeda), the mother, can heal by her cooking or touch

The house responds to each member, its floorboards and floor tiles rising up and down to provide whatever help they need.

7 Marks of a Vital Congregation

Lifelong Discipleship Formation
Intentional Authentic Evangelism
Outward Incarnational Focus
Empower Servant Leadership
Spirit-Inspired Worship
Caring Relationships
Ecclesial Health

