

## **“Church in the movies: *Mr. Holland’s Opus*”** by Carol Duerksen

### **MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:**

- 1 Make plans to watch *Mr. Holland’s Opus* with your group. Note: Unless you have a contract granting permission to show films in your church building, it is illegal for you to show them in a public place. Make arrangements to watch the video in someone’s home.
- 2 Bibles for everyone
- 3 Questions (below) printed on sheets, one for each student.

### **SESSION OUTLINE**

- 1 Before watching the video, ask everyone to turn to 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 and read it together. Tell students to watch for connections they see between the passage and the film.
- 2 Hand out the questions and ask students to read through them, and to refer to them as they watch the movie.
- 3 Watch the movie.
- 4 Discuss the questions and the connection between the scripture passage and the film.

Here are the questions and answers which you can elaborate upon:

- 1 What is the Holland family’s goal in life at the beginning of the film?

*Mr. Glen Holland to become a rich and famous composer.*

- 2 What happens to that goal?

*He has to take a job teaching and doesn’t have time to write music.*

- 3 What stages does Mr. Holland go through in his approach to teaching?

*At the beginning, he gets out of school as fast as he can at the end of the day. As time passes, he becomes absorbed with the lives of his students, and at times his family suffers because he’s always working. At the end, he feels like a failure because he didn’t write his opus.*

- 4 What happens in the climactic scene when Mr. Holland's 30 years of teaching are being celebrated?

*The students make it clear that he did write his opus--his students are his symphony.*

- 5 What is the connection between what Gertrude Lang says and the 2 Corinthians passage?

*Here is part of Gertrude's speech: There is not a life in this room that you have not touched. And each one of us is a better person because of you. We are your symphony, Mr. Holland. We are the melodies and the notes of your opus. And we are the music of your life.*

*Paul says "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts....and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."*

*The message: We are to live and relate to others so that we are symphonies in each other's lives, writing letters of God's love on each other's hearts. That is how a church family should relate to each other.*

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- 1 What is the Holland family's goal in life at the beginning of the film?
- 2 What happens to that goal?
- 3 What stages does Mr. Holland go through in his approach to teaching?
- 4 What happens in the climactic scene when Mr. Holland's 30 years of teaching are being celebrated?
- 5 What is the connection between what Gertrude Lang says and the 2 Corinthians passage?
- 6 What else do you notice about this film that has moral and spiritual lessons for life?