

THE
MASTERLESS
JOURNEY

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The Masterless Journey

www.masterlessfilm.com

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

List of Episodes:

Episode One: Introduction to the MASTERLESS Journey	3
Episode Two: Do You Have An Inner Wanderer?	4
Episode Three: Who's Your Master?	5
Episode Four: What Do You Hunger For?	6
Episode Five: Are We Alone in Life?	7
Episode Six: No Easy Answers	8
Episode Seven: Is Faith Relevant Today?	9
Episode Eight: Is There Any Hope?	10

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

Welcome to *The MASTERLESS Journey!* We've created a series of short videos to explore the themes, questions, and symbolism of the film *MASTERLESS* in greater depth. Each video ends with a few discussion questions you can reflect on personally, or discuss in a group setting.

We've also created this "leader's guide" for each episode, to provide more depth and resources for those who may be interested in leading a small group through the video series — whether at church, home, or workplace. You may use as many of the eight videos as fits your needs, and you may discuss them in any order you wish.

We believe everyone is on a journey, just like Kane Madison, the main character in the film. Through this series, we hope you experience the freedom and joy that comes in sharing our journey with others. Have fun!

Discussion Questions:

1. Every journey has a beginning. What's one past experience that made you into who you are today?
2. How would you describe the journey of your life right now — on a quest, or wandering? Why?
3. What do you hope to get out of *The MASTERLESS Journey*?

For Further Exploration:

Exodus 40:36: In the Bible, the Israelites embark on a long journey from Egypt through the desert, in search of their home. What can we learn about the nature of spiritual journeys through exploring the Israelites' story?

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

The story of MASTERLESS takes place in two realities – the external world of architect Kane Madison, and the internal world of the Ronin. The film suggests there might be a spiritual nature to life, where each of us in a sense wanders in search of something more.

It's easy to go through the motions of our everyday lives, in our jobs, school, and relationships without thinking much about our inner lives — the state of our emotions, fears, and even our souls! Is there more to life than the physical world around us? What might be going on for us beneath the surface of our lives?

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think humans have a spiritual nature or soul? Why or why not?
2. What's one thing you're going through that most people can't see just by looking at the surface level of your life?
3. Do you have an inner wanderer? What are you searching for?

Action Step: Interview a counselor or pastor to learn more about the inner world or soul.

For Further Exploration:

Ephesians 6:12-20: This passage contains the quote that introduces *MASTERLESS*. What are some of its ideas for engaging spiritual struggles?

Suggested Book: *Soulkeeping*, John Ortberg

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

In feudal Japan, masterless samurai were known as ronin. The spiritual life of Kane Madison is represented by a ronin because he is searching for meaningful purpose and ultimately a master to follow. Throughout the film, he tries to find his “Master” in his job, in himself, and in other places.

One of the central questions of *MASTERLESS* is, “Who or what is our master?” What drives us, and sometimes even consumes us in ways we don’t fully realize? Kane’s struggle and journey may be familiar to us, because we all wrestle with the competing demands of work, relationships, and life.

Discussion Questions:

1. In our society, what are the most common “Masters” that people tend to follow, even at cost to other parts of their lives?
2. What kind of “Master” does the Madam represent in the film?
3. Is the “Master” that dominates your life the one you most desire, or are you searching for more, like Kane?

Action Step: Read a chapter from one of the two books listed below.

For Further Exploration:

Matthew 4:1-11: In the first days of Jesus’ ministry, he wanders through the wilderness facing numerous spiritual battles. What kinds of “Masters” does the devil tempt Jesus with?

Suggested Books: *In the Name of Jesus* (Nouwen), *Counterfeit Gods* (Keller)

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

One of the central themes of *MASTERLESS* is hunger, and specifically spiritual hunger. Can our lives be full, but not fulfilling? Even though Kane Madison has a job and marriage, there seems to be an overall sense of emptiness in his life.

We all hunger for purpose and intimacy, beneath the surface of our jobs, school, and relationships. What is missing in our lives? Deep down, what do we most hunger for?

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever felt that your life is full, but not fulfilling? How so?
2. What do you think Kane was missing in his job and relationships that he hungered for?
3. At this point in your life / spiritual journey, what do you most hunger for?

Action Step: Pick a meaningful cause and volunteer for 2 hours this week.

For Further Exploration:

Isaiah 55:1-2 & John 6:25-69: These passages talk about food that does not satisfy, and food that spoils. What are some real-life examples that illustrate this? What is the better alternative, according to these passages?

Suggested Book: *The Prodigal God* (Tim Keller)

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

One of the big questions in *MASTERLESS* is, “Are we alone in life?” In the film, when we are introduced to the Ronin we see only his feet, walking alone to the left. He has grown used to traveling without a master or other companions. At one point, he flatly states, “Man is alone. There is no other.”

There is a certain tension in the film related to the role of relationships and community. On one hand, Kane must make an intensely personal decision about faith that nobody else can make for him. On the other hand, Kane would never have made it through his journey without the people in his life. What is the role of relationships in your life and spiritual journey?

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think we are alone in this life? Why or why not?
2. When in your life have you felt most alone, and why?
3. Can real faith be achieved with the help of others, or must the decision be private?

Action Step: Share one thing you learned in *The MASTERLESS Journey* with a good friend, and ask them to share something in return.

For Further Exploration:

2 Timothy 4:9-17: In this passage, what kinds of effects do people and God have on the Apostle Paul?

Suggested Book: *Loving People* (John Townsend)

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

MASTERLESS is about a spiritual journey, and part of the message of the film is that there aren't always easy answers, especially when it comes to faith. Kane Madison encounters many obstacles on his particular faith journey. He encounters problems at work and in his relationship with his mother-in-law, who lashes out at Kane for exploring faith.

Moreover, he struggles to understand faith as he sees portrayals of religion in the media and on the Internet. Kane continually wrestles with doubt. The film seems to imply that it's okay to struggle and ask hard questions in our spiritual journeys.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the other obstacles to faith that Kane faces in the film?
2. What are some of the biggest obstacles you've encountered on your personal journey of faith?
3. Do you agree that doubt can strengthen one's faith?

Action Step: Go to church and ask the pastor to meet to discuss some of your biggest questions and doubts about faith.

For Further Exploration:

Matthew 13:1-23: What kinds of obstacles are described in Jesus' parable? Which can you most relate to, and how so?

Suggested Book: *The Reason For God* (Tim Keller)

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

On our spiritual journeys, we will meet many kinds of people who see and practice faith differently. In MASTERLESS, the Ronin encounters an Old Man who symbolizes traditional religion and rules. Although he points to truth, the man is intellectual without much warmth or action.

Later in the film, the Ronin is helped by a mysterious figure in white who symbolizes the Holy Spirit — or a faith that is personal and actively engaged in the world. Is traditional religion still relevant today, to address the realities in our lives and in the world?

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your experience with traditional religion?
2. Do you think religion has answers that speak to today's world and challenges? What are the benefits and downsides of religion?
3. If the Old Man represents traditional religion, what do you think the Fool represents spiritually?

Action Step: Visit both a traditional and modern church service, to compare.

For Further Exploration:

James 1:22-27: What are some things the passage says about true and false religion? To what extent do you agree or disagree, and why?

Suggested Book: *Jesus > Religion* (Jefferson Bethke)

THE MASTERLESS JOURNEY

Throughout Kane Madison's journey in *MASTERLESS*, one theme that comes up repeatedly is hope. As he struggles through circumstances that often seem hopeless, he wrestles with three sources of potential hope.

The first source of hope is found in cultural superstitions or objects that have symbolic value. The second source is Kane trying to find hope in his own abilities and judgment. The final source of hope is the love that comes from people and God. We often look for hope in the midst of our challenges and tragedies, but perhaps not all sources of hope are equal.

Discussion Questions:

1. In the midst of our pain, it's common to lose hope. When have you felt this in your life?
2. The film seems to suggest that trusting in superstitions or in yourself is empty, but what do you think? Why?
3. What are the sources of hope in your life?

Action Step: Share some of the major reflections you've taken away from *The MASTERLESS Journey* with a friend or family member this week.

For Further Exploration:

Psalm 33:16-22: What does this passage say about various sources of hope, and why? To what extent do you agree or disagree, and why?

Suggested Book: *The One Year Book of Hope* (Nancy Guthrie)