

## 17 Again

“What if...” is one of the most painful and haunting questions that most of us will ever have to face. This is the heart of the movie *17 Again*. What if I had chosen differently; would I like my life better? That nagging, question destroyed Mike O’Donnell’s personal happiness and consequently his marriage and his relationships with his children. It was consuming and paralyzing.

Part of the reason what-if’s are so paralyzing is that what-if’s make you want to focus on the past and dream about alternate realities. They keep you from focusing on the future and making the most of your present – your actual reality.

The thing about what-if’s is they don’t really take into account an all-powerful, loving God. The Bible says that God can work all things, even bad choices, to the good of those who love him and are called according to his purposes (Romans 8:28).

*17 Again* has a very practical solution to the what-if depression. The movie shows how self-centered that plaguing question has made Mike. When he gets a chance to be 17 again, he originally thinks it’s all about him. He is going to get a chance to change his bad choices. But, it’s not long before he realizes that this isn’t a chance for him to change his choices, but a chance for him to make good out of the choices he made. Being 17 again allows Mike a fresh perspective. Where he once saw only disappointment, he is now able to see not just the good he has in his life, but also the needs and struggles of his family. Really seeing the needs of his loved ones for the first time is a huge paradigm shift for Mike. He suddenly realizes that his being 17 again isn’t about his second chance, but about his wife and children and how he can help them.

When Mike stops being so self-centered, when his wife and children become his joy, his life is transformed. It has meaning and purpose. His attitude changes, his marriage is restored and his relationships with his kids is transformed. The solution to the what-if depression in which Mike found himself in *17 Again* was to care for others more than for himself.

### **Personal Challenge:**

Do what-if’s plague you? What is your response to disappointments and missed opportunities? Maybe you need to prayerfully change your focus. What are the good things God would have for you to do in the future? Who are the people he wants you to serve in the present? Find someone else whose needs help that you can give – you’ll find yourself so lifted in the process. Also, stop dwelling in the past and letting disappointment color your vision. Focus on the future, remembering there is a God who can make good of all things in the past. What-if’s, left to themselves and unguarded can be dangerous and consuming. We serve a God of hope, not of disappointment; we as his people ought to represent the same.

### **Discussing 17 Again with Others:**

If you are talking about this movie with others, it’s a great opportunity to ask if they believe there is a God, and if so, what kind of role does he play in their life? How does he figure into their what-if’s?