

Deconstructing the Barbie Movie | with the Women of CIA 2023

(August 1, 2023)

Phoenix:

All right, we are recording the I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist midweek podcast. My name is Phoenix Hayes. And I am so excited to be here today with the amazing Hillary Morgan Ferrer, Alisa Childers, Natasha Crain, and Melissa Dougherty. We are fortunate enough to all be here together today, because we are all working, and attending, and speaking at the CIA Instructors Academy 2023, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

It's been phenomenal, and I'm sure we'll all weigh in a little bit on how it's going. But the real reason I have these ladies here today is to talk about the new Barbie movie. Now, not all of us have seen it. So, don't worry. I'm not going to make them give us a review of a movie they haven't seen. We don't do that around here. But the three of us who have watched it, identified some very interesting underlying themes. We all have a slightly different take on whether we liked it, whether we didn't, what we liked, what we didn't like.

So, we're going to weigh in on that. And then we're going to have Natasha and Dougherty share some thoughts on those themes that have permeated our culture in a general sense, way beyond the Barbie movie. So, Alisa, I'm going to start with you. You saw the movie. Give me a quick rundown of what you liked about it, what you didn't like about it, what you thought were some of the major issues or non-issues. We're not running into this saying, I know it was terrible. Tell me why...

Alisa:

So, are we giving spoilers?

Hillary:

We can't not give spoilers.

Alisa:

It's hard to do this without saying what happens in the movie.

Phoenix:

Right. Because either way, we get accused of just making claims without examples. And we're apologists and we don't do that. So, go ahead. Spoiler alert.

Alisa:

When I first saw the trailer of the movie, I was actually pretty excited to see it because it looked like it was going to be deeper than just a fun Barbie movie that was just goofy. You saw the scene where Barbie's got a tear coming down her eye. And I thought, maybe this is going to be really cool. Maybe this is going to be Barbie stepping out of the unrealistic beauty expectations



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and something like that. And there's some of that in the movie for sure. But I was really wrong about the enlightenment that happened in the movie.

And so, when I watched, I'll be honest with you. It was really hard for me to get through the movie. I found myself wanting to take breaks and just take a break from it for a minute and come back. Now, that doesn't mean there weren't some funny lines. There certainly were, and I particularly liked weird Barbie because all the Barbies I played with were weird Barbie. That's the Barbie you cut the hair and draw on the face and all of that.

Phoenix:

I was going to say, tell us about weird Barbie.

Alisa:

Although weird Barbie should not have had clothes on because you know, the weird Barbie is always naked, doing the splits with the cut hair. It was not entirely accurate in the movie. So, weird Barbie is the Barbie that's just been played with too hard. And we all had some of them. All of mine were those. And so, what happens in the movie is stereotypical Barbie, which is played by Margot Robbie. Which by the way, I thought she did a fantastic job. And actually, Ken played by Ryan Gosling, kind of stole the show a little bit for me. I thought he was so good playing those roles.

And so, she's in perfect Barbie land and then wakes up one day, all of a sudden having these thoughts of death. And so, there at this party and she says, hey, do you ever think about death? Record scratch. Everybody's like, what are you talking about? This is Barbie land. And so, then the next day she wakes up and just a series of events happen where her waffle gets burned. She notices cellulite later. But kind of the most iconic scene is when her feet go flat. Because you know, those Barbie feet are like this. And so, her feet go flat, and it's very symbolic. And I was here for that because I don't like heels anymore. I've got a bunion from those things.

Hillary:

She even says, if my feet were like this, I would never wear those shoes. And I literally went, Amen!

Alisa:

That was a funny line. That was a really funny line. She goes, I would never wear heels if my feet weren't shaped like this, you know? So, it's like yeah. That's not how our feet are shaped. So yeah, it was really fun in the beginning. We can at some point talk about the opening scene. So, right now maybe I can have a little extra time because I'm kind of doing a synopsis, because I want to give my thoughts too. So, I just need more time.

Phoenix:

I understand.

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Alisa:

So, then Barbie finds cellulite on her thigh. Which I'm sure they had to superimpose with CGI, because that's not there. But then she's like, what do I do? I don't know what to do. And so, she figures out she has to go to weird Barbie, because weird Barbie fixes all the Barbie problems. And so, weird Barbie played by...what's her name?

Hillary:

Kate McKinnon

Alisa:

She's hilarious. She's so funny. But she basically says, okay, the only way to fix this is you have to go to the real world, right? So, Barbie goes to the real world. I won't belabor it, but Ken hitches a ride. So, he pops up, you know. Hey, I'm here too. So, they go into the real world, they end up on Venice Beach and basically in these ridiculous, funny outfits.

Phoenix:

The quintessential rollerblade Barbie and Ken outfits.

Alisa:

And immediately Barbie starts being harassed by you know, the toxic masculinity that's absolutely everywhere. And then Ken, you know, gets checked out too. But he doesn't feel afraid because there's no violence behind it. But for her, she's feeling this violence. And so, the real world in my opinion, was a caricature of the real world. It was so ridiculous to think...I'm from LA. First of all, there's not construction workers sitting out on the strip on Venice Beach harassing women.

Phoenix:

Wait, you mean a construction worker has never slapped your butt walking on Venice Beach?
[Laughter]

Alisa:

I've never had that experience.

Hillary:

Venice Beach in general is like the most antithetical real world ever. They actually did pick a really good spot to have a fake real world. It's not that far from what Venice Beach is like. It gets even weirder in real life.

Alisa:

Yeah. So, anyway, they go there, and the real world is awful for Barbie. But then Ken's like, oh, this patriarchy thing is pretty cool. Because in Barbie land, I forgot to say this. The Kens are sort of just there. They're useless. They don't even really interact with the Barbies. And Ken at one point, kind of wants to have a relationship with Barbie. And this was funny. Like, he tries to kiss

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her. And he's like, can I spend the night? And she's like, to do what? And he's like, I'm not really sure.

So, you know, I was actually kind of enjoying all of that. Then they go to the real world. And that's when I was just like, oh, I'm going to hate this movie. And so, the whole movie, in my opinion, portrayed men as either really innately evil. And I'm not talking about an original sin kind of thing where we're on our path to sanctification and men have the law of God written in their heart, made in the image of God. There's none of that. Men are just evil, or useless. And I think that's because Hollywood, they actually tried to create a couple of good male characters, but I don't think they could do it. Because Hollywood doesn't know what a good man is. Hollywood vilifies masculinity, complementarity, which also is non-existent in Barbie land.

There's no children or families in Barbie land. So, everything that makes a woman a woman or how you identify those claims is all without the lens of Children and Family. So, it's just crazy like that. So, Ken's kind of useless. He finds this purpose in bringing the patriarchy back to Barbie land, which he does. And so, then all the Barbies are like serving the men, just getting them beers, you know. And basically, I was hoping, like, okay, maybe they'll wrap this thing up with some sort of complementarity between the sexes. Some sort of a, okay, it's better if people have their roles. But it wasn't that at all. In fact, I was so disturbed by the ending.

Maybe somebody else can talk about how they trick the Kens into going to war with one another but ends up in a song and dance. And basically, the Barbies reclaim the power in Barbie land and kick the Kens back out. So, it's back to the way it was. And they say in the movie, this made me so sad. They say in the movie, maybe one day the Kens will have the same rights that the women do in the real world, which was a swipe at the real world. It wasn't saying, oh, they'll have rights too. It was like, oh, yeah. We're going to keep you guys down. We're going to keep you under our feet.

And there's no complementarity between the sexes at all. And the message that I think the movie is trying to convey is that male led culture, or family, or whatever (of course family wasn't even on the radar), it's toxic. It's patriarchy. And they use that word so many times.

Phoenix:

Your head will spin at the number of times the word patriarchy is dropped, and also cognitive dissonance. That I was partially impressed by. I was like, wow, they slipped that number in a couple of times. Barbie was encountering a situation of cognitive dissonance. I was like, Barbie can't spell cognitive dissonance. But I digress.

Alisa:

And then I'll wrap up my thoughts here. I've talked a long time, I'm sorry. But then at the end, Barbie decides to go into the real world and become a real woman. And this is really disturbing for me. She wants to be a real woman, right? She doesn't have reproductive organs or genitalia. And she finds the inventor of the Barbie. And the inventor says, you know, I can't do this for you.

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This is something you have to feel. You have to do it for yourself. So, basically, the message was what makes a woman a woman? Feelings.

So, it was very implicit, but gender, sex in that movie, the message that it's sending out to a lot of young girls that are seeing it, and probably young boys, is that your sex and your gender is rooted in your feelings. You feel it, and then that's what you are. And then the whole thing ends with Barbie having her first gynecology appointment, which is so stupid to me. As if that's the pinnacle of being a woman, is going to the gynecologist. And that's because our culture has made, feminism I think has made everything about that. Can I say that? Feminism starts with trying to have equal rights to vote on property. And it ends with wearing "V" on our head. We're not squeamish people. There's a lot of guys in the room. We don't want to make them uncomfortable.

Phoenix:

Right. Hold that thought because you've made some excellent points. And I want to pass it over to Hillary who has a different take on the film. But before I do that, I want to just highlight one theme that I saw recur again and again, that you just hit on is the ongoing hypocrisy that you see throughout the film. So, as Alisa just said, what made Barbie a woman ultimately came down to what she felt she was. And then Barbie, you're a woman. You're entering the real world. I'm going to the gynecologist. It was like immediately a contradiction of, I'm a woman because I feel like it. I'm a woman because I'm going to the gynecologist. Which is it?

So, this recurring theme of this internal contradiction that we see with leftist media and ideology, and the ones that we're all just meant to consume, and not really question. It just continually collapses on itself with any real prodding. And you just mentioned one. I identified so many that I'll mention later. But first, I want to take it over to Hillary. Because Hillary, you had a very different take on the film. So, tell me your thoughts.

Hillary:

For the record, when I was going to the theater, I was listening to your analysis Alisa. So, I was like it's okay if I get some spoilers. And so, I had my notebook all ready to go and be like, ahh this is being male bashing. And I was just surprised at how funny I thought it was. And so, one of the things I think we do need to realize is that we can absolutely ruin humor by over analyzing something.

Phoenix:

For sure.

Hillary:

And I think that's something that a lot of times, both sides kind of criticize each other. On the left criticizes to the right, the right criticizes the left. Sometimes we just need to be able to laugh at something that's funny.

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Alisa:

But most of the jokes in the movie are only funny if feminism is true, though. They're at the expense of men. That's why I couldn't find them funny.

Hillary:

I disagree with that. So, I think you're right that they didn't show a complementarity. I did think they showed a type of equality, in the sense that showing that if women were in charge, what do we have with the Kens? They had nowhere to live. They had no jobs; they had no purpose. It's like in fact, one of the Ken says the only highlight of his day, is if Barbie looks over at him for just a little bit. And I think one of the meta themes of this is that we're not just looking at how people are trying to make a statement about culture. But we're actually looking at the interplay between play in the real world and Barbie land. Because you always saw something going on between what was happening in the real world, the way the children were playing, and what was happening in Barbie land.

And I think this shows how a lot of times, girls have no idea what to do with Ken. He is Barbie's accessory. And I think it was also interesting like we say, oh, the Barbies tricked the Kens into going to war. I actually don't think that's what was going on. What you saw happen is you know, Ken got back, and he turned it into Ken's Mojo Dojo Casa House?

Phoenix:

Yes. The best name ever.

Hillary:

And then it flips to the real world real briefly. And there going oh my gosh, this Ken's Mojo Dojo Casa House, we can't. It's flying off the shelves. So, what does that mean? It means that boys in the real world were suddenly buying all these Ken dolls. What will boys do with Ken? They will turn lacrosse sticks into weapons and go and give each other purple nurple. Otherwise known as the Texas Titty Twister in Texas. And basically, send them in going to war.

And I was like, what they're showing almost that I think a lot of people missed, is what we saw going on with the Kens, is what would happen if you had boys in the real world that are playing with Kens. And the boys with the age range that's playing them, they don't know what to do with Barbie. Just like the girls don't know what to do with Ken. And so, we're actually seeing kind of a statement on play, that the boys and the girls really do have gender differences, and they don't know what to do with the other gender. Which is one of the things that I thought made it really funny.

Alisa:

Do you think most people watching the movie would get that out of it?

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Hillary:

No, I don't. There might be some people, but I think it was still there. And that's why I was saying, I think some of these themes when people said oh, is this good to take my kids to? And I was like, not because I think it's crass. Not because I think it's so inappropriate. But I think the things that make it actually funny are going to go over their heads. I think it's going to go over a lot of people's heads.

Alisa:

See, I get what you're saying. But I think there's a more sinister motive underneath all that. I don't think it's just about play. Because in the real world, how the boys play with the Kens would be informed by this totally toxic patriarchy, just male dominance, and rule, and abuse, and oppression, and harassment. And even the way the girls are taught to play with Barbies based on the movie's worldview, is from a toxic place too. So, it's flying off the shelves because of that.

Hillary:

They're singing ad nauseam for hours and hours. "I wanna push you around." I mean, I think it was making fun of this. It is making fun of this caricature of what is going on, where there is that kernel of truth. But the purpose is...and maybe this is me. Because like number one, sometimes when I go into a movie expecting to hate it, like I was totally like, Okay, everybody. I'm going to take one for the team. Here we go. And I was expecting to hate it. And sometimes that ends up being the movies that I like the most.

Alisa:

Our expectations certainly do. Like I kind of expected to like it.

And so, I can still see someone...because if we did that to women, we would probably at some point be like, okay, this is old. We've seen this before. Is this really what you think? So, I do understand that. But I do think that there was a lot more tongue in cheek, that if we allow ourselves to laugh at it, we can really enjoy this movie. But at the same time, having these conversations. If there is that kernel of truth, what is that kernel of truth that they're trying to say? But we can still enjoy the way that they made fun of this kernel of truth.

Hillary:

So, we were the opposite. So, sometimes it's like when it defies what your expectations were depending on your expectations, that's how you see it. I just thought a lot of things were so ridiculous and so funny. I just enjoyed the levity of being able to laugh at it. And I think that if you're really trying to portray someone as a bumbling idiot, but try to actually make a statement on reality, you're not going to use Will Ferrell. His character was like a mixture between Buddy the Elf and Mugatu from Zoolander. And so, it's like they were making fun of themselves on that.

Alisa:

I don't think they're trying to communicate that. I don't think that's the message they were meaning to convey. How could Hollywood possibly be trying to convey that? Everything in

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secular culture right now is to destroy the family, destroy the complementarity between the sexes.

Phoenix:

And that's where I'm going to jump in. Because I know you ladies have awesome brains and awesome ideas to share. And I want to make sure that everybody gets to comment on these topics, because this isn't just going to be a Barbie review. So, I came in hitting somewhere in the middle. I went in with a nerdy notepad, which I've never done before. And I'm scribbling down notes. And I came out. My husband calls me and says, how bad was it? And my answer was, I have to think about that. Because honestly, I enjoyed my experience there. But I know that there were underpinnings that didn't align with my biblical worldview, and I had to take a step back and process what had they snuck in, in a nice, pretty, pink, glitzy, comedic way, delivered by witty, good-looking actors, that your average person who doesn't really want to deconstruct a movie, they just want to go and have a good time, wouldn't pay attention to.

So, what I walked away from was a few points. I guess the two that I want to highlight, because then I can bring in our other really intelligent ladies into the conversation is, first of all, there was a ton of internal contradictions, which I already mentioned. Alisa gave me a great example. It was a world where when they were commenting on reality, they wanted a reality that didn't exist. For example, they had a world of Barbies. They wanted a diverse world of Barbies.

So, we saw that in the ethnic representation, but there was the token Barbie in a wheelchair, and there was the token obese brunette Barbie. Thus, Barbie was treated as though she was equally desirable and attractive as all the other rail thin Barbies. So, we're talking about two extreme ideals of beauty. Neither which represented globally, what you typically see. And the walking contradiction was, well, if the morbidly obese woman was just as pretty and desirable as all the others, why aren't they all like that? It was so obvious that that wasn't...we're all pretending that you're just as desirable in the same way.

And I feel really comfortable talking about this because I'm someone that struggles with my weight. And I'm not going to pretend for a second that someone who's carrying more weight is equally desirable than someone who's not, for multiple reasons. It's simply a matter of, have you got self-discipline? Is this someone who is in control of how they take care of themselves? There's a lot to unpack there. So, I don't want to go down a rabbit trail there.

But I thought, you're saying one thing and then giving us another. Another example was the idea that Barbie wanted to be able to dress in sexualized clothing, and yet didn't want the world to look at her sexually. And that is a common complaint I hear from women. It's like, it doesn't work that way. If you want to dress in a way that's going to draw the attention of men, don't be mad when men notice. Right?

So, that's two examples. The one that I really want to bring the other ladies here in on was the condescending view of motherhood and family. So, the movie, I'll let you talk about the opening.

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But the running joke is that Midge, being the pregnant Barbie, was discontinued because she was weird. And you know what, I thought, I agree. That is weird, a pregnant doll. Of course, there's no mothers in the Barbie world. The one mother who is one of the lead characters, played by America Ferrera, is constantly complaining, inserting lines like, I'm just a boring mom. Let me do this.

Alisa:

A boring mom with perfect hair and makeup through the whole movie.

Phoenix:

Right? And it's her daughter that is giving her permission to live her life as if somehow it had stopped when she became a mom. Another line that really bothered me was from the woman who...

I don't know if it was the actual woman or if it's an actor, Ruth Handler, who's the creator of Barbie. She delivers the line and says something to the effect of mothers need to stand back so that as their daughters grow and achieve their goals, they can turn back and see how far they've come. And everything in me hated that. I thought, one, why would any young girl want to be the person who stands back so that someone else can go ahead in their family? And I thought, that's not the example I set for my daughter. My life doesn't stop so that my children can succeed. My life keeps going to show an example to my children of what success, and ambition, and intelligence, and integrity looks like.

Hillary:

Standing on the shoulders of giants, not being the passive spectator as you watch someone else doing what you can't do now that you're a mom.

Phoenix:

Right. And so, it was just understanding that moving away from that toxic idea of women who compete with their daughters, and going the other direction of these women who think that their entire life now ends so that their daughters can take off. And I thought, what kind of endorsement is that for family and everything? So, would you like to speak to the opening?

Alisa:

Why don't you describe it? Because to be honest with you, I was watching the opening, but I missed some of that significance because I just didn't know what it was all about yet. So, you describe it.

Phoenix:

So, the opening scene, I think they also used this for the trailer. For those who have seen it, is a little bit of a parody of a very famous scene from Space Odyssey. So, the scene opens. It's a dry, dirty planet, and you've got little girls dressed in different shades of brown. They're all playing different domestic roles. One of the girls is pretending to iron. Another girl is kind of

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rocking her ugly doll baby. And then all of a sudden, they see Barbie standing there. Shiny, pretty, amazing. And they all just start going nuts. These little girls, they're like, liberation! And one of them even starts smashing her doll on the ground because that is what one of the apes do in Space Odyssey. And so, the entire idea is domestic life is brown, beige, oppressive. Barbie is glitzy, pretty, fun, freedom.

Hillary:

And they also say, you know, they would play these mother roles. But that's only fun for so long. Just ask your mother. And it's this idea of yeah, your mom was probably like, yay! Let's have kids. And then after X amount of time she's like, okay. This isn't fun anymore. But can we contrast that with the final scene though? Because I did pick up on that.

The very final scene in the movie after the whole gynecologist thing, was a song that's talking about what is your purpose and what gives you meaning? And it's a whole montage of family, of having babies, and raising families, and going to barbecues with friends. And I thought that that was a really interesting juxtaposition that they actually put. It was almost like with the words in the song, this is what actually brings meaning, is family. And so, I haven't heard anybody else talking about that though.

Alisa:

I must have not seen that.

Phoenix:

I wish we could talk about this so much more. Maybe Frank will let us do it again. But we're making the most of the time that we have. I want to get Melissa's thoughts on what she's observed in terms of the messaging that we're seeing sent to our little girls, the messaging you're seeing in the media, and things like that, in terms of what it means to be a woman today and how that contrasts with the biblical idea of being a woman, and how you've wrestled with being a female voice, speaking out. And yet, a lot of people would say, that's not your place.

Melissa:

I think we all get that.

Phoenix:

We all get that. What are your thoughts on that? What's kind of a message that you would love your daughter to know, and other daughters to know, based on what you're hearing here of the general messaging we keep seeing? How would you respond to that idea of you do have a voice. You do have liberation. But it doesn't look like that. This is what it looks like. Can you give just a couple of thoughts on that?

Melissa:

Well, kind of what you just said, you know. I mean, I didn't see the movie. Me and Natasha didn't. But you know, I've heard all these reviews about it. And I have a 13 year old. She's

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almost 13. You know how you round up. And so, one thing that I do is I will watch these things with her. And we'll discuss it. Because I don't like sheltering her. Because there's a saying that you don't pave the road for your child. You pave your child for the road. Because you can't always...they're going to go and she's going to see this stuff. And I can't stop that from happening. So, I prepare her.

And one of the things that I always tell her is that, you know, right now in our country, there is this going on. Where you have the Barbie movie talking about this imaginary thing, problem. However, there's some underlying things that maybe there are problems. Like, we're all moms. And we understand that there's differences between how we parent. But there's also like, okay. I remember one time having to talk to my husband about stepping it up. Because it's like, there's an element of work that goes into parenting. But that's the point. I think that that is the absolute point of having a family and struggling with children, is that it matures you.

Phoenix:

And are you talking about the complementarian nature of mother and father?

Melissa:

Because if you don't have that, and I can't remember. Somebody brilliant pointed this out. It's like in society in general, though. Maybe it was Frank in his book. Maybe that's why it's fresh in my head. You can't have a society that flourishes without mature men. How do you mature them? You marry them, give them kids, struggle, and draw those things out of yourself. Yes. And you grow. And so, these are the kinds of concepts that I don't think a movie like this even...

Phoenix:

It can't fathom the benefit of self-sacrifice for someone else.

Melissa:

Yeah, exactly. I do have a question, though. So, one thing I've always wondered about movies like this is, you know that saying, go woke go broke kind of thing? It's kind of woke. Why did this one take off though? Like, why do you think that this one...?

Hillary:

I don't think it's fully woke, because I really think that they showed the damaging things of feminism as well. When it showed Barbie suddenly realizing...when Ken took over her house, they don't have jobs. All of a sudden, she realizes, well, where did you used to sleep? And that's one of the places where she gets the tear. She realizes, and then she has this flashback of Ken standing outside waiting for attention and her saying, every night is girl's night. And she's realizing all the things that she hated about the real world were exactly what she had done to Ken this entire time.

Alisa:

And then they do it again, though.

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Phoenix:

Unfortunately, it was a short-lived moment of empathy. So, Melissa's run off. She's going to give her excellent talk on New Age, which is a book that she's working on. So, all of you listeners, I want you to keep an ear to the ground for when that emerges. The book publishing business is a slow process. So, by the time it comes out, you probably would have forgot about this shout out, but I'm giving it to you anyway because she's a lady to watch.

So, Natasha, you're still here with us. And you have a lot of excellent insights on all kinds of things. I know you haven't seen the film. But that doesn't stop you from being able to make a comment on some of these recurring themes that we're seeing, not just in the film, but everywhere. Some of the points that we've made and ideologies we've identified, what are your thoughts? What stands out to you? What's something you want to speak on?

Natasha:

Well, like you said, I haven't seen the movie. But just hearing this conversation, which I have enjoyed so much, by the way. Just hearing you talk about the movie, I want to go see it now. I just haven't had the chance to yet.

Phoenix:

I want to make this a five part series now. Just keep going, go ahead.

Natasha:

But I keep hearing kind of this idea about freedom. And it seems like that's really the ongoing idea today. Everyone wants their freedom. They want their freedom to have the authority of themselves, like we often talk about. They want the freedom to be anyone that they want to be and do anything that they want to do. And that's why you see so many books that are very popular, best-selling books that are telling women, hey, go be your best self. Go live your best life now. And you see women who are leaving their families to do this, going to marry someone else, and entering same-sex relationships.

You see all of these things going on in culture, because that is now this top priority, is being free, being liberated. And so, that's kind of what I'm hearing you guys talk about that I see in culture so much. I think as Christians, we have to remember that freedom, true freedom, isn't just the ability to do anything that you want to do. It is the freedom to do what you ought to do. It is the freedom to be who you ought to be in Christ, who God has designed us to be. And that is a completely different view than what something like this would put forth, that you need to be free to do whatever you want to do, to be whoever you want to be. Very different views.

And so, the Bible would have a very different view of motherhood and what it means to be free, to be free to fulfill the Bible's commands. To be free to go out and be fruitful and multiply, to raise families. This is a good thing. Hollywood especially loves to show that women need to be empowered through things like abortion. I mean, how many times have we heard a celebrity

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stand up and say, you know, I am happy today. I am able to do what I'm doing, and to be who I want to be, and have the career that I have, because I had an abortion several years ago.

Phoenix:

And all I hear from that is, you're telling me you couldn't have done it with a baby. That's a very limiting mentality.

Natasha:

It was more important to be freed from the constraints of motherhood while killing an innocent human being. That was more important to that person, than to supposedly be held back.

Phoenix:

And yet, I think, couldn't you have believed in yourself enough to say, I will keep my baby and I will achieve? Listen, there's a number of topics in this film. The fact that we have a male that is hired to play one of the Barbies. And that's something that we haven't had time to get into. There's a million other topics that we would love to dive into. But for those who are asking the ultimate question, is this a woke movie? Should I go? Should I let my daughter go? Alisa, what's your answer to that? Because I know audience, we like a black and white answer. Most things in life are not that clean and simple. So, I want to hear your takeaway.

Alisa:

Well, I certainly wouldn't discourage any adult from going to see it. I think that we need to be engaging with the things in culture, and thinking them through, and analyzing. As far as kids go, I think it's going to depend on your kids age and maturity level. So, it's a movie I will see with my daughter, because I've really prepared her for a long time for these types of discussions, and to analyze and think through things. And that was largely from the time that we worked on that first "Mama Bear" apologetics book. I've really been intentionally doing that with her.

So, I will definitely watch this with her. And we'll pause and have discussions. Maybe wait until it comes to streaming so we can pause it and say, let's just chat about this for a moment. But I would recommend if there's a parent out there that you have a child that's really being swayed by a lot of this stuff, maybe you press the pause button on it for now and start preparing your child to think through these topics, maybe in a more simple way. Because this movie is very, very subtle. Even we can't agree on it.

Hillary:

There's a lot of nuance here.

Alisa:

It's very nuanced. And so, I think that it's actually very complicated the way that they sneak things in, and then the mixed messages, the confusing messages, the hypocrisy, a lot of that. So, I do think the movie is you know, to use the word woke. I mean, that's such a generalization,

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Phoenix:

An overused word unfortunately.

Alisa:

It's actually though, I had heard that, that it was woke. And I would describe it more as just squarely feminist. Right? Woke would encapsulate a lot of other things. There is the trans Barbie. Of course, that would be in the woke umbrella. But I think it's just really for me, it was meant to be a persuasive parable for feminism, modern feminism. So, I would want to encourage parents to prepare your kids to engage with that, if you think they're ready.

Phoenix:

And the power of that messaging as I think all of us saw was, as they're delivering their monologues, which were really just these endless speeches, which was not suddenly inserted into the film. It drew you out because they did hit points of truth.

Hillary:

They hit points of truth. But I would also like to say, you need to remind yourself that as you're listening to this, especially the monologue by America Ferrera, that how hard it is to be a woman. But it's only that hard if you're taking all your cues from culture. It's like she really did place culture and people's opinions of how you're supposed to be, that was her authority. And she kept trying to obey her authority, culture. And it was really hard to obey her authority, culture. And these are all the mixed messages that her authority, culture, is giving her. And I'm like, you know what? I can understand some of those feelings. But I can't relate because that's not where I get my cues.

Phoenix:

That's not where I get my value from. Exactly. So, Hillary, I know you don't have children, but you love children. You're with children, you have children in your life. What would you say to the moms listening?

Hillary:

I would say this is more of a girl's night out where you just want to be ridiculous. You know, see some Kens beating each other with lacrosse sticks and just being kind of silly. I don't think this is the movie where you want to introduce your daughter to the concept of patriarchy. I think if your daughter is already aware of the patriarchy and you have already discussed it, yeah, sure. You can take her along and again, have really great conversations. Because I can't remember what it was, I think it was pavement that Melissa said but something that Amy, one of my mama bears says. That you don't child proof the world, you world proof your child, and that she's actually researched about girls that make good decisions.

And it's not the moms who protect them from all these things. It's the moms who talk through these issues, that the daughters actually go on to make better decisions. And so, I think anytime we have something that's really natural, and really organic in culture, and especially something

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like this that is getting such a huge response from all different sides. This is an opportunity to participate kind of in culture and be able to speak through it. I even had the opportunity while I was waiting in line to get popcorn. Some girl that was in front of me, she was standing by herself waiting for the Barbie movie, I was standing in front. And we were both waiting for someone that was coming. I actually talked to her because all her people had all loved it.

And I was like, well, a lot of the people I know, are talking about the way it portrays men. So, we had this long conversation about the way it portrays men. And so, John had mentioned this before, and I've done a talk on this before. C.S. Lewis talks about how art steals past watchful dragons, in the sense that watchful dragons are those things where someone's like, I know you're trying to teach me a lesson. I know you're trying to sneak in Christianity. And I've got that watchful dragon that is going to prevent anything from coming in.

But art has a way of sneaking past that. And so, if you can have your daughter be able to intelligently engage and point out things, and it doesn't even have to be like she just, you know, bashing on something. It could be like we talked about, putting a pebble in the shoe. Well, have you considered about the way that this portrays men? Do you think this accurately portrays men? Hey, that's a great conversation that literally 13 year old girls can have. And so, from that perspective, as long as you have a daughter who's willing to engage, who's ready to engage, and this isn't her first exposure with patriarchy, then that would be a good thing.

And also, to be aware of, I think, Alisa, you said. There's a lot of contradictory messages, which is why I think there's so much nuance. You have the beginning scene that's very much anti-mother. And I would say the final scene, where it's talking the song about purpose, and all that. And it has this montage of pictures of family and babies. It's like these two completely opposite messages. Or it shows how evil guys are.

But you also look at how Barbie world is structured, where it's horrible for the Kens. So, you do have a lot of like, it's like, corrective. It's like truth and correctives, all at the same time. But they're kind of probably hoping, they're going to come away from this with the overarching message that they're wanting. But they put just enough little peppered and sprinkled opposite messages in there so that those who want to see those opposite messages can.

Phoenix:

That's a great way to put it. It's, here's one option, but do what we say, not what we do. There's one message, but then there's an underlying, but that's not really what our collective theme is. So, yeah. I have three little girls, none of them are ready to see this movie. They're eight and under. But if they were a little bit older, I would let my daughter go if she had an interest in it. She may not. But it would be with me. And really, my request or hope for all the moms out there is to do the hard work that honestly all of us are too tired to do. We get it. And that's the critical thinking piece.

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So, I think most moms are either going to say no, it's woke. We're not watching it. You're not watching it, and that can kind create a rebellion...

Alisa:

Because they're going to eventually see it anyway.

Phoenix:

Yeah, exactly. And you're putting a gap between you and your child that doesn't need to be there. Or they're going to take the other road and say, hey, it's just fun. Everybody lighten up and let's just watch it. I say, go down the middle. If this is something suitable for your child, keep in mind, it as a PG-13 film. Go along, go with her, and just do the hard work. That means hey, let's just think about some of the messages that we got out of it. Yes, it was fun. But also, what were they really saying?

Hillary:

Plan in your discussion time afterwards. If you have a daughter that doesn't drive, you know what? You've got a captive audience for however long you want to drive after that movie. Or if you say we're going to go get ice cream, and we're specifically going to talk about this, plan in that time when it's fresh on their minds to actually discuss this. And I mean, that's going to be one of those things that they're going to be noodling on it for a while. And you want them to be able to have your voice in there with the mix.

Alisa:

That's really good because the driving is a good idea too. Because often, like with teenagers, they don't want to just...Yeah, mom.

Phoenix:

Way to ruin an experience, mom.

Hillary:

I know, why do we have to analyze everything? Well, you know, when you're not staring at each other. I mean, everybody just kind of chats when they're in the car on the way back from something. Utilize that time.

Natasha:

It sounds like there are so many different messages that are going on in this movie, that if you have a child who maybe doesn't want to have these kinds of conversations, you could legitimately ask, wow. You know, it seemed like there's a lot going on in that movie. I'm still trying to figure out and process what the main message is. What do you think the filmmakers were trying to do here? And a question like that can get them talking. When if you were to just sit down and say, we're going to talk about the movie, they might shut down. Because the older kids get, the harder that is to do. But in this case, that's a really easy question to ask. What do you think the main message is there? Because I'm still trying to figure it out?

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Hillary:

Right. Help mom out.

Phoenix:

Yeah. From a creative perspective, I'll say I loved Barbie world. I hated the ideology of it, but I loved the construct of it. And I think they did a great job. I agree. I think Ryan and Margot Robbie did a phenomenal job with the acting. They did not have an easy task to make either those characters super likable and relatable. The writers did save the script by inserting enough funny quips in there that really were genuine laugh out loud moments.

But for me, the underlying ideology couldn't support itself, though it desperately tried to. And those are my thoughts and the thoughts of some really smart ladies in this room, much brighter than me. Thanks so much for joining us and I look forward to having these ladies back for our next conversation.

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