Discussion Questions for *Pay It Forward* (2000)

123 minutes (2 hours, 3 minutes), PG-13 rating for mature thematic elements including substance abuse/recovery, some sexual situations, language, and brief violence

Summary: Trevor (Haley Joel Osment) starts a chain reaction of goodness for a social studies project with a plan to change the world for the better. In this film, Trevor is a high school student whose mother, Arlene (Helen Hunt), struggles with alcoholism and whose father is abusive. He rises above unfortunate circumstances with the kindhearted idea to do a good deed, but instead of requesting payback, asking the receiver to “pay it forward” to at least three people – and on and on. While the movie has a bittersweet end, the message is uplifting and powerful.

1. Have you even seen anyone apply the concept of doing good for others simply because others have done good for them? Discuss.

2. How did Arlene’s addiction impact Trevor?

3. Arlene “hits bottom” when she slaps Trevor. Describe your own “bottom” below.
4. The movie fails to show an important part of Arlene’s battle to stay sober. What was it?

5. Do you think Trevor’s family could have healed itself while Arlene was in active addiction? Why or why not?

6. How does the concept of “pay it forward” relate to addiction and recovery? Discuss.