

**The Frozen movies and their potential
application to spiritual direction
with young people**

**by
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**A Research Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
Spiritual Directors' Formation Programme of Spiritual Growth Ministries**

Introduction

I am choosing Frozen movies because I can almost see myself in these movies, as one on a call journey - a journey to discover the path to the wholeness of the self and a transformative journey to grow from False Self to True Self.

This project covers four themes: The False Self, the Call, the Shadow Self & transformation, based on Richard Rohr's understanding of the spiritual journey¹. In each section, there will be brief notes about the topic with reference to the movie and suggested ways for applications. This project is best to read alongside watching the movies. It could be used with millennials or younger ages, either in a workshop, retreat or in one-to-one direction, as an introduction to spiritual growth or illustration of various themes.

The two movies provide a rich source of scenes, images and music that stimulate and awaken our subconscious minds. Young hearts may resonate with different scenes in the movies, with the help of a director, may help develop awareness of their inner life. The movie can also help to highlight the ways that God might present Himself, for example: the inner voice, the north star, the courage, the wisdom, and guidance or companionship (e.g. Olaf & Anna) along the way and help young hearts to know that God is in all things and expand their understanding of how God communicates himself.

Guideline for directors: 'Resource' indicates the part of the movie that is related to the theme. It would help to show the resources before the workshop.

Theme: The False Self

Resource 1 : The whole movie - Frozen

Resource 2 : Song - Let it go ²

Guideline for directors:

Resource 1- The whole film can be viewed as a journey to uncover our False Self and highlight the different stages of the journey.

Resource 2- The song 'Let it go' can be used to illustrate topics like: 'the illusion of letting go'.

¹ Rohr, Richard, *A Spring within us: A book of daily meditations* (London, UK: SPCK, 2018).

² Kristen Anderson-Lopez / Robert Lopez, *Let it Go* © Universal Music Publishing Group
<https://www.google.com/search?q=let+it+go+lyrics&oq=let+it+go&aqs=chrome..69j57j46j0l3j46j0.5072j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

A) A written section on the topic

In early days, we followed rules given by our parents and culture as such to give us structure in order to keep us secure and safe. The False Self is, hence, a social construct by our parents, family, neighbour, school, culture and religions that causes us to become who we 'think' we are. It is created by our mental ego, we define this by what we have, what we do and what people think of us as opposed to the self that was given by God - the True Self.

The False self is not a bad self that we should not like, although being named as 'false' already creates a negative impression. Rather it is good and necessary to build our early identity but it is incomplete & temporary. As we are growing, our False Self needs to die because it is not the potential self that God sees in us, not whole and not who we really are. Scripturally, the false self aligns with 'the flesh,' or the part which the bible says we need to put to death: in Mk 8:35 'lose **ourselves** to find ourselves'; Jn 12:24 'Unless the **single grain of wheat** dies.....'; Gal 5:16-24 the '**flesh**'. To let go of the False Self at the right time and in the right way will feel like freedom and liberation.

B) How the clip illustrates the topic

The movie illustrates the journey of Elsa 'letting go' of her False Self and how she makes it at the end.

Elsa could be an Enneagram One who needs to be perfect. After she strikes little Anna with her magic, her parents decide to isolate her in order to protect her (0:07:47). But this act probably makes her feels heavily criticized, punished, or not good enough³ and becomes her childhood wound. The fear and inner frustration builds up and when she can no longer be the 'good girl' she wants to be, she runs away from her community and isolates herself in an ice castle. She thinks what it means to 'be free' (0:28:59) is :

"don't care what they're going to say
It's time to see what I can do
To test the limits and break through
No right, no wrong, no rules for me
I'm free⁴"

³Heuertz, Christopher, *The Sacred Enneagram: Finding your unique path to spiritual growth*, (Michigan, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2017) p.113.

⁴ Kristen Anderson-Lopez / Robert Lopez, *Let it Go* © Universal Music Publishing Group
<https://www.google.com/search?q=let+it+go+lyrics&oq=let+it+go&aqs=chrome..69j57j46j0l3j46j0.5072j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

But she is not free, her ego self hasn't died enough, her past and her fear still control her (0:55:38). She thinks of others as constantly having expectations of her that she cannot measure up to. She feels constant guilt or shame for her behaviour (0:57:13), the whole world is to make life tough for her and certainly not there to help (1:13:13). These are some common feelings for people who get stuck at an early stage of spiritual growth.⁵ Elsa is trapped at the stage where her thoughts and feelings define who she is⁶ (0:54:53).

Elsa finally gets out from this cage through experiencing and accepting love - sacrificial love that is offered by Anna (1:27:48). This act takes Elsa out of herself, this is the dying to Self, the real letting go and heart knowing. It breaks her free from her self-imprisonment (0:58:24) of fear, energises her and changes her perception of reality.⁷ She surrenders herself to this love, accepts her self-worth, moves out of her isolation and goes back into the caring community where she belongs as a changed person.

C) Suggested application for directors

- To illustrate the different stages in 'letting go' of the false self.
- To help understand the part of Self that needs to die (Mk 8:35; Jn 12:24; Gal 5:16-24).
- To highlight the 'help' they might need during the process. For example: to accept their worthlessness & love from others, to reduce isolation & go back to the loving community where they belong or to learn to give up self-defeating behaviour.
- To discover the way God might be present. For example: Through Anna's faithful, sacrificial love and persistence in looking out for Elsa.

Questions for exploration:

- How are you feeling as Elsa sings 'let it go'?
- What might you want to let go of or how do you want to be free?
- What image from the film relates to you the most? What does it remind you of?

Theme: A Voice- the Call into the Unknown

Resource 1: Frozen II 12:36-19:59

⁵ Hagberg, Janet, & Guelich, Robert, *The Critical Journey: stages in the life of faith*, (Salem, Wisconsin: Sheffield Publishing, 2005) p. 43.

⁶ Rohr, Richard, *A Spring within us: A book of daily meditations* (London, UK: SPCK, 2018) p. 49.

⁷ Hughes, Gerard, *God in All things: The sequel to God of Surprises*, (London, UK: Hodder, 2004) p. 25.

Resource 2: Song - "Into the unknown"⁸

Guideline for directors:

This part highlights three key ideas that can relate to the movie: the voice inside us, the call and the unknown.

A) A written section on the topic

'Voice'

There are two voices inside of us; the voice of our 'superego'-- the voice of guilt and shame. This voice is pre-rational, immediate, deep, constant, and unconscious, and it feels like absolute right and wrong, determining what we value and what we don't. There is also a deeper voice of God, it will sound like the voice of risk, of trust, of surrender, of soul, of common sense, of destiny, of love, of an intimate stranger, of your deepest self⁹.

A Call

We are all gifted differently and called to do our part in the ongoing creation of the world- the missions of God¹⁰. This is a call to live a fulfilled life- to the 'life to the full' (John 10:10). This is not only for ourselves but for the good of others. The call is about becoming what, and who, we are meant to be, the wholeness of Self/Soul, in the light of something we've already got in our heart: the talent, the personality, the skills and the commitment¹¹ but not more than what we have to offer. To follow the call is to discern the direction toward which the heart inclines and make spiritual choices that will bring transformation.

Into The Unknown

The Call takes us into the Unknown: It is the beginning of a search for the longing in life, a deeper faith journey into the depth of our soul. We might experience both fear, that grows out from our inability to grasp what is ahead, and excitement in the eagerness to explore the

⁸ Kristen Anderson-Lopez / Robert Lopez, *Into the Unknown* © Universal Music Publishing Group https://www.google.com/search?q=into+the+unknown+lyrics&rlz=1C5CHFA_enHK913HK913&oq=int&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j69i59j46l2j0j46l2j0.3437j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

⁹ Rohr, Richard, *A Spring within us: A book of daily meditations* (London, UK: SPCK,2018) p. 141.

¹⁰ Chittister, Joan, *Following the path: the search for a life of passion, purpose and joy* (NY, USA, Random House, 2012) p. 25.

¹¹ Rohr, Richard, *A Spring within us: A book of daily meditations* (London, UK: SPCK,2018) p.19.

meaning and the more in life. We are invited to drop our guard and let our curiosity lead us into this adventure. The deeper faith journey begins when one starts to listen to and follow God's inner voice.

B) How the clip illustrates the topic

This clip describes how Elsa is aware of a voice calling her (7:35), as well as the different stages she takes in responding to the call and feelings & emotions that evolve.

Initially, she finds the Voice distracting and disturbing (13:35), it also brings back her fear of failing others and messing things up (14:59). She tries to deny it but it only further reveals her deep insecurity and low self-image that she doesn't see herself as who she really is or even how others see her.

Then she begins to dialogue with the Voice (16:47-19:59) and (18:20) starts wondering what the Voice wants from her. The Voice awakens Elsa's dissatisfaction in life and the longing to explore the more to life that lies in the Unknown:

“or are you someone out there who's a little bit like me?
Who knows deep down I'm not where I'm meant to be?
Every day's a little harder as I feel your power grow
Don't you know there's part of me that longs to go
Into the unknown?”¹²

She quiets down and listens (18:46). The Voice reminds her what she knows deep down in her heart: she wants to know her purpose in life (18:59) and the longing to know her inner strength, her power, the unexplored area in her life. And Elsa decides to follow the Call into the unknown.

C) Suggested application for directors

- To illustrate the different stages of a call journey, for example: resistance at the early stage (17:10) and reclaiming the missing part of her desire (18:36).
- To help understand how feelings and emotions can lead to deeper Self-knowledge.
- To introduce topics like: discernment, resistance and contemplation.
- To discover the ways that God might present Himself, for example: the inner voice.

¹² Into the Unknown by Kristen Anderson-Lopez/Robert Lopez © Universal Music Publishing group
https://www.google.com/search?q=into+the+unknown+lyrics&rlz=1C5CHFA_enHK913HK913&oq=int&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j69i59j46l2j0j46l2j0.3437j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

Questions for exploration:

- Listen to yourself, what is your fear and desire?
- What might your inner voice be trying to awaken you to?
- What might the Unknown represent for you?

Theme: The shadow self

Resource 1: Frozen II 29:08- 31:23 - Olaf;

Resource 2: Frozen II 31:55-40:26 - Elsa against wind and fire,

Resource 3: Frozen II 59:59-1:03:00 - Elsa against water.

Resource 4: Song- "When I am Older"¹³

Guideline for directors: Resource 1 and 4 are the same, can be used to illustrate the 'Enlightened' people described below.

A) A written section on the topic

The Shadow Self

In order to build & protect our chosen public image (the False Self), there are aspects of us that we do not want others to see and may even be hidden from our own awareness because they are considered negative and hateful. These forgotten and denied qualities make up the 'Shadow self.'¹⁴ But sometimes, the shadows aren't necessarily bad, it could be part of our personality, strength, talents or feelings. For example, suppressing one's talents and considering this as humility. The Shadow Self is what Jesus calls 'the log in your own eye' (Mt 7:4). The way forward is to acknowledge the fact that we are blinded to the log in our own eye - the Shadow self and ask for help to reveal it. When we begin to realise our own half-heartedness, deceit and illusions of self, this will destroy most of their destructive power. As a person grows from encountering their shadow, they will show real 'character development'¹⁵.

¹³ Kristen Anderson-Lopez/Robert Lopez, *When I Am Older* © Universal Music Publishing Group
<https://www.google.com/search?q=when+you+are+older+lyrics&oq=&aqs=chrome.0.69i59l2.2501958j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

¹⁴ Rohr, Richard, *A Spring within us: A book of daily meditations* (London, UK: SPCK,2018) p. 151.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 153.

B) How the clip illustrates the topic

The group enters the enchanted forest, which is like entering our heart space, and faces the spirits. The spirits are like our Shadow self: they are “unknown” to us, they seem harmful, dangerous, to have their own will and are out of our control.

Resource 1 & 4: Olaf approaches the spirits with a childlike manner; he is curious; he admits his limited understanding towards the present situation and his insecurity; He accepts himself as he is. He is hopeful and feeling confident about growing in understanding and courage that the world will start to make sense and he will do away with childish fear. Olaf is like the Enlightened people described by Richard Rhor¹⁶ : *do not need to be perfectly right; they know they cannot be anyway, so they just try to be in right relationship. In other words, they try, above all else, to be loving.*

Resource 2 &3: Elsa receives the spirits differently. Threatening as they seem, she instinctively wants to fight and gain control over them, thinking this may be the only way out.

Fighting against the spirits is similar to the work of shadowboxing: We are fighting an unseen opponent - like fighting the wind. We draw it out into the light of our awareness¹⁷- like the horse in the water(1:01:11). We don't conquer them but look at it with compassion - like when Elsa looks at the 'fire monster' (39:13-39:37). Only when we befriend them, we find that all of them direct our path to our own truth.

Elsa grows through encountering her shadow and is ready to see her true self.

C) Suggested application for directors

- To illustrate the concept of shadow self and the work of shadowboxing as a way to grow.
- To reflect on Mt 18:1-5 using Resource 4- the song 'When I am Older' (29:08-31:23).

Questions for exploration:

- What did you experience when you saw Elsa battling with the 'water'?

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

B) How the clip illustrates the topic

Elsa continues her journey into the Unknown and she finally arrives at a place where she feels familiar - a place like home. At home, she meets her True Self, the one who is like a friend she has always known and been looking for all her life. What was an unknown journey turns out to be a journey to find her True Self.

Elsa bridges the 'spirits' (her Shadow self) together with love, all aspects of her are connected and her True Self shows up. She is connected to her purpose, power and identity (1:07:11). She is transformed into the confident and purposeful one.

More truth is revealed as she goes down the path of descent into the depth. She comes to a dark hole, a space where the truth lies, this space is like the God-shaped hole where lies the truth about oneself. She needs courage to jump down the hole in order to reach the bottom of the truth about the past. She did jump. At the bottom of this hole, her grandfather's evil plan is exposed. She is powerlessly frozen when she hits the bottom, in exchange for a life-giving message for Anna to rectify the wrong their grandfather has done and to transform history. In the same way, we expose the ego self and become powerless as we hit the bottom, but only at the bottom do we receive the Real Power of the Truth, the Truth that liberates and transforms.

C) Suggested application for directors

- Introduce the idea of finding one's True Self, the concept of path of descent & God shaped hole.

Questions for exploration:

- How do you feel as Elsa makes her way finding her true self?
- Where might you be if you were in the picture? What might you be doing?
- What is the invitation here for your own journey?

Theme: Transformation

Clip: Frozen II 25:30-1:28:02

Highlight:

26:41 Olaf: “.....Did you know that the enchanted forest is a place of transformation? I have no idea what that means but I can’t wait to see what it’s going to do to each one of us.....”

1:28:02 Olaf: “.....I still don’t know what transformation means, I feel like this forest has really changed us all.....”

A) A written section on the topic:

“Transformation does not begin and end in us; it has an effect upon the whole of creation. God’s gifts are never given simply for the good of an individual: they are given for the well-being of mankind, including the good estate of our enemies!”²²

God transforms us and we then are an instrument of transformation for others. It is a radical call to a deeper life and deeper faith that affects not only the self, but also others. In real life, it’s more than a one-time prayer and the process could be long (maybe days or months). For a time we may feel aimless and hopeless but this is part of the process for spiritual growth.

B) How the clip illustrates the topic

After Elsa has embraced her True Self, she is transformed. She reveals the truth of the past.

Anna (1:09:55), who has been through her own dark cave and is transformed by the pain of losing Elsa learns to follow her inner voice, discover her Deep Resource (The True Self) and move on. She takes a leap of faith, begins to trust herself and affirm her commitment to stay on the mission.

The King’s Soldiers, they (1:43:11) fight to protect the King’s order to protect Arendelle at all cost. After they learn about the truth(1:19:28), they help to rectify wrong and serve to give Arendelle a real future. In the same way we have a “loyal soldier” inside of us who keeps defending our parents’ order. We need to learn the truth about ourselves and discharge the old thoughts or false thinking patterns from their duties, then our True self begins to grow.

All of them play their part in reversing the wrong. With their Transformed Self, each one is able to accomplish their own task, only by which the Bigger Task can be accomplished. In the movie, the Bigger Task is to destroy the dam(1:20:58) and let the water flow freely again(1:22:29). The power that has been given to Elsa proved to be enough to stand all the tests in lives.

²² Hughes, Gerard, *God in All things: The sequel to God of Surprises*, (London, UK: Hodder, 2004) p. 50.

