

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Week #1 of a 3-Week Series, "Metaphysical Movie Fun"

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Sunday, August 9, 2026

Welcome to our three-week series, "Metaphysical Movie Fun" I like to call it. Because I take some of our favorite beloved movies and I grab all the little spiritual nuggets in them that I can share it with you, and we can all apply some spiritual ideas and lessons to our lives based on these beloved movies that we've all seen before.

So, I'm starting today, as you've just heard, with "The Sound of Music." Here's a few movie facts, before we begin, about this movie. It was released in 1965. It was the highest grossing film for five years. It won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture. The story is based on a book by Maria von Trapp -- as in Maria from the movie: the actual real Maria. She wrote a book in 1949 called "The Story of the von Trapp Family Singers." And before it became a movie, it was a Broadway play where it won five Tony Awards. So, lots of awards for both the play and the movie.

Of course, the movie changed some of the history. The family was bewildered by some of the changes, bemused by other changes. In fact, the oldest son, Rupert, when people found out that he was one of the original von Trapp families -- and they would say, *"Oh, where were you in the line in the movie? You know, what lineup are you?"*

And he would curtsy and say, *"I'm Liesel,"* because there was no Liesel. He was the oldest of all the children. So, Hollywood romanticized it. added their own touches. And yet it's one of our most favorite, delighted, beloved musicals of all time.

So, just so that we're all on the same page, I always like to do a little recap about the movie, because how long has it been since everyone watched? Who's watched the movie, "The Sound of Music?" Yeah, almost every hand. But it's probably been a little while. I know it'd been a while for me, too. So, just to catch us all up -- remind us of what this is all about -- or if you haven't seen it, so you're aware of. Here's the movie, "The Sound of Music."

It's set in Austria in 1938, on the eve of World War II. It tells the story of Maria, played by Julie Andrews, who is a joyful and spirited young woman studying to become a nun. Although she loves God deeply, she's told that perhaps the convent is not where she's meant to be. So, she's sent to become the governess for the seven children of the widowed Captain von Trapp. That's played by Christopher Plummer.

He's a decorated Navy officer who runs his household with military precision. There he is. He has a whistle. The children are expected to obey the whistles instead of laughter or play. His home has become quiet and joyless ever since the death of his wife.

So, Maria, she does not fit the military mode at all. She encourages the children to climb trees, explore the countryside, sing. There they are even singing outside and in the town. They dance, they laugh, and they become children again.

And the captain at first disapproves but, over time, he begins to soften as he sees the happiness returning to his children and to himself. And so, it's music. It had disappeared since the death of their mother, and now once again it starts to fill their home. Here he is with the kids singing. Well, of course, eventually Maria and the captain fall in love and get married, creating a family. Really, this just beautiful, warm family of love.

And so just as their lives seem complete, Austria is now annexed by Nazi Germany. The captain is ordered to come back to serve in Hitler's Navy. He refuses to compromise his conscience. So, the family makes the courageous decision to leave everything behind. After performing together at a music festival -- while they're counting the ballots of who's going to win this festival -- they escape under the cover of night with the help of the nuns at the abbey that Maria had been living at. And they just trust in their future. There they are at the music festival. So, they just trust if they stay together, they'll find a new future together.

And so it is a story filled with unforgettable music, breathtaking scenes. I mean, they didn't have drones at that time, so it was a helicopter with the overview of the mountains and the villages. It's absolutely gorgeous. There's humor, there's romance, there's adventure. It has something for everyone. So, it is really, it was a delight to watch it last Sunday. So, if you haven't watched it for a while, I would say definitely do so.

But while watching this movie, I found a lot of wonderful spiritual messages for us. But I've boiled it down to four. **The first being: have the courage to be your authentic self. Follow the call of your heart. Another one: create loving community, especially in difficult times. Remember to play and delight in life, which helps us to fully embrace the present moment. and discover the power of music, which unites us and also heals us.**

So, let's jump into that first one. One of the big overarching themes here really is this powerful lesson about the importance of **EMBRACING WHO WE ARE** -- our talents, our skills, our purpose, our own personality. And, with that in mind, to also stay open to where your gifts and strengths are needed. Maybe you think you know where your gifts and strengths and talents are needed, but perhaps they're needed somewhere else. So, embracing who you are -- the strengths and beauty that make you -- while also staying open to where maybe the universe needs you.

Because at the beginning of the movie, Maria -- Julie Andrews -- is, again, this student nun. She's singing in the hills. She's enjoying the hills. They're beckoning her. The sky is so blue. The grass is so green. And yet, she's always this head-in-the-clouds, distracted, late to any of her responsibilities at the abbey. Some of her nun sisters are not too happy about this.

So, the Reverend Mother of the abbey sits down with her and asks, *"Why are you here? Why did you come to the abbey? Why did you want to be a nun?"*

And Maria replies, *"To find out the will of God and do it wholeheartedly."*

Well, now that sounds great, doesn't it? To find out the will of God and do it wholeheartedly. To which Reverend Mother replies, *"It seems to be the will of God that you leave us."*

So, it reminds me of: we may know our purpose. We're living wholeheartedly to be the hands of God on earth, just like Maria. And yet, that importance of listening and being open to where our soul is calling us to be.

A lot of times it shows up if we're along our journey/our purpose, and it just starts to keep being just hard. I didn't say challenging. Challenging is life. But when it just becomes hard -- where we just keep hitting roadblocks. Usually what's happening is the Universe is saying, "Hey" -- your soul's calling is saying -- *"Hey, your gifts need to be shared somewhere else. Maybe not where you think, but somewhere else or to someone else differently than what you're doing right now."*

So, the key is really to embrace our own uniqueness, the gifts that you have been given to share with the world while trusting, just like Maria did. I love this line too -- that when one door closes, a window opens. And to have faith: to have faith that the Divine is always guiding you; guiding you to exactly where you need to be and where you're needed for other people.

It's clear to everyone around her, especially her nun sisters – *“How do you solve a problem like Maria?”* -- that she is not made out for the abbey. She's playful. She's energetic. She loves to sing. She has a lot of talents to share, but maybe not as a nun.

So, when she gets redirected to be the governess of these seven children to a widowed Navy captain -- again, Christopher Plummer -- she's nervous. It's new to her. She's never been a governess before. She was an only child. So, change while embracing what we know: *“Okay, here's where I'm being called to be. Here's my soul's journey.”*

And it can be scary. Getting that call to adjust or change can be scary. I know for my own self, moving here to Phoenix two-and-a-half years ago, I felt that same way. You know, it was clear from my time in meditation, my divine journaling, that I was meant to be here. I was meant to move to Phoenix. I was excited. And, like Maria, I was a little nervous.

And also, there was some grief there. There was some sadness about leaving people behind -- mostly family and friends behind. But I could embrace both. I could be excited, and I could have some grief around it. She can be excited, and she can be nervous.

And she, Maria, turns her nervous excitement into a confidence-building song: *“I have confidence in me.”* I almost wish I had asked, Cassie to do that one for us! I have confidence in me. She sings, *“I'll show them and I'll show me.”* I'll show them and I'll show me!

I just saw this Instagram post. It was a quote from a five-year-old that said, *“I told myself I'm brave and then I believed me.”*

And what if we all did that? What if we told ourselves we were brave and then we believed ourselves? Or act as if -- act as if you have the confidence, or the bravery, or whatever that quality is that you feel like you need, and claim it.

Because once she's in the role of governess, we see all of her beautiful qualities come out. And for just the right people! That's where she's meant to be. Her youthful vigor, her playful nature, her creativity, her joy -- it saves this family. And it's much more useful -- serves more there in that family -- than it did in the abbey.

And even when she shows up in this house run in military precision, you know, she continues to really honor herself and who she is. When he says, *“You're going to have to memorize these whistles.”*

And she says, *“Oh, no, I'm not memorizing whistles. I'm not a dog. The kids are not a dog. We're not doing that.”* So, she really honors and has those healthy boundaries of, *“No, this is who I am. This is my conscience around this.”*

Midway through the movie -- as she's realizing she's falling in love with the captain, but she doesn't want to compromise the captain's relationship with his girlfriend, the baroness. So, she returns to the abbey. She's in seclusion for a long time. She's not talking to anyone. So again, Reverend Mother steps in and intervenes and tells her, *“You need to follow your dream. You need to follow your purpose. Follow every rainbow until you find your dream.”*

Now at this point, her dream is her love for these children; her love for the captain to create this warm family life together. So, I really find that the first lesson that we can draw from *“The Sound of Music”* is to listen to your inner calling. Honor yourself and the gifts and your dreams that you have. And don't be afraid if you feel like life is moving you to bring your unique talents to a new area. Because that's where life is leading you. It needs you there. The universe will place you exactly where you are needed with the people who need you with what you have to offer. So, trusting that.

Our second lesson from *“The Sound of Music”*: **HOW IMPORTANT COMMUNITY IS TO OUR WELL-BEING.**

And we've seen this -- as the pastoral care minister -- we've really seen this over the last month, in particular, here even at our own church. How important it is to have community, whether it's immediate family, extended family, or both. We need each other. We really need each other, especially when life challenges us or when there's frightening outer circumstances happening around us or to us. We need a support system.

And this movie -- it shows this in several ways. First, it's Maria's community of nuns. They see her strengths, but they also see her weaknesses. So that they could help guide her to ultimately where her heart and life could grow bigger, larger, more in alignment with who she is.

We see community in this new family, the von Trapps. You know, their shared love of music opens the door to even more love and a deeper love with one another. Maria's life expands through this warmth, this joy, this trust, really; this connection that they create together. Their community of family.

And then their friend, Uncle Max. This character, Uncle Max. Now, at first, he selfishly wants to promote them and their family singers so he can make a profit off of them. But ultimately, Uncle Max is the one who helps them to escape to freedom. That's also community.

And then, lastly, the nuns once again. This community of nuns -- they take the family in when the Nazis are after them; they hide them. And then, when they're found, they get away -- the family gets away -- because some of the nuns have adjusted the cars a little bit. So, they aren't able to drive the cars to go after the family.

So, there's lots of examples of different ways the characters individually as well as the family itself are supported and helped by community.

And I like this quote by Gloria Steinem, activist and author. She writes, *"Human beings are communal beings and we can't exist or prosper by ourselves. We need each other's support."* Because we're all Divine Energy that's flowing together; you and every person on earth are connected by Divine Energy, this essence. We're all tied to this invisible sacred energy.

Here's what Rev. Eric Butterworth, famous Unity minister/author, writes. It's here on your screen because it's so important. I want you to be able to see it in words, as well. He wrote, *"The whole Universe is concentrated at the point where you are. More than this, you are the Universe expressing as you. You are its living enterprise."*

You are its living enterprise. That's true for you. It's true for the person sitting next to you, the person in front of you, behind you. It's true for all of us. We are all the universe expressing as you, its living enterprise. So, as an extension of God -- as this living enterprise of the Universe -- we start to realize that we're all connected in this Oneness. And therefore, we're here to extend loving kindness to one another; to support and help one another, especially when one of us or a group of us is struggling.

We can choose. Where there's chaos and pain, we can choose peace. We can choose to be the helper. And I like this reminder too from the movie: when we are going through these rough times, and when we're there to help support somebody, and even ourselves, to remind ourselves to focus on gratitude -- a few of our favorite things. It gets Maria and the kids through the scary storm that's happening.

But gratitude is a spiritual practice and it can help us get through life's storms, as well. So, as expressions of this Divine God Energy, we can't do life alone. We weren't made to do life alone. We're too connected to one another. We need the support of all the other lights in the world, in the state, in our neighborhood, in our church, in your workplace, where you volunteer. We need the support of all the lights together.

The Dalai Lama said, *"We can live without religion and meditation, but we cannot survive without human affection."* We need each other. So, create and belong to community.

The third lesson that I took away from this movie: **ALLOW FOR PLAY IN YOUR LIFE.** Maria, having embraced her true self, also reminds us to awaken that childlike spirit within us, no matter what our age is.

When she first arrives at the home of the captain and children, like I said, because of his grief, he's treating his children like little soldiers. They have to answer to a whistle. They march. There's no play. There's only learning and memorizing and basically being serious little adults.

Maria, on the other hand, is inviting them to play, to get dirty, to sing along, to laugh, to climb trees. He's surprised when he sees these children in the trees, and he says, *"Oh, they must just be neighborhood kids."* Nope, they're his kids. They accidentally tip over in the boat, and they all get wet, and they laugh about it. They create a puppet show, another favorite part of that movie.

And the captain sees this transformation == how happy his children are -- and he starts to soften. And they invite him in to start singing with them, and his demeanor changes. It's from this embrace of joy -- of this childlike abandon and embracing once again what they all shared, singing with one another -- that their hearts open even more. And they even ... You can see the characters -- they look lighter. They look like a more warm, connected family.

We, too, can get so busy in life. that we create ourselves to be serious, focused-only-on-work-or-the-task-at-hand little soldiers. But when we embrace our inner child, we make room for happiness and joy to grow within us and to spread out then around us.

So, I want you just to take a moment to think about: What did you used to love to do as a child? Oh, I see a lot of smiles. Doesn't that feel good? Think back about: What did you love to do as a child?

My first career, I was a registered dietitian, and I started asking people this question, because I had read a study. It just came out. That, if you want to stick to something, go back to what you loved to do in your childhood. I remember I was talking about incorporating exercise into someone's life, movement. And I remember this one gentleman, he was having a hard time figuring out what he might want to do for movement or exercise. And I said, *"Well, what did you used to do as a child?"*

And he kind of lit up and he said, *"Oh, I used to ride my bike. I'd ride my bike all over the neighborhood. My little next-door buddy and me -- we would ride all over until dark, and then we'd come back for dinner."*

And I said, *"Well, do you have a bike?"*

And he said, *"I do, but it's up in my garage. I think I'd have to inflate the tires back."*

And I said, *"Well, what if you did that?"*

And he said, *"Okay, I'll give that a try. Maybe one day this week."* That was our goal: one day. He came back the next week. He was on fire. He had gone bike riding three times that week. He said, *"I re-found the joy of riding my bike!"*

Find what you used to do as a child. Now, you might need some adjustments to what you used to do as a child ... Make it safe! But also make that effort to tap into that childlike spirit within you. It's this taking time to nourish ourselves with fun, silly, creative activities that also help us to live in the present moment. It helps us focus on the moments to celebrate and this moment right here. As adults, again, we get so caught up in our lists and what we must do ... but rest and having fun are prescriptions for refilling our energy output and our soul's happiness input.

And just a note here -- not as a way to escape life. Because Maria does a little bit of that. She returns to the abbey, as I've said, when she realizes she's in love with the captain, and she doesn't want to interfere. So she goes back to the abbey. And Reverend Mother -- good old Reverend Mother -- steps in again, and she realizes what Maria is doing,

And she says, *"Our abbey is not to be used as an escape."* Meaning: don't hide from your feelings. Don't avoid what needs to be healed or the actions that you need to take to accomplish your dreams. Don't use your meditation practice/your affirmations to bypass the feelings and the healing that are underneath and that need to take place.

Spiritual growth isn't about avoiding all the hard stuff. It's about being willing to look at it, move through it, take action. So, we can be doing that while we also have this intention to fully engage with life; embrace the joy that's here and available to you.

And again, these activities keep us in the present moment, because we're so engaged and enjoying that activity or that hobby that we don't get ahead of ourselves. That we're not looking at what's going to come next. We're focused on exactly what's right in front of us: this present moment.

And Liesel -- in the movie the oldest child. She has this boy that she's interested in and she's saying, *"Well, but I'm 16 going on 17."* She wants to be a year ahead. But everything she would miss if she missed that year! She would miss so many experiences growing up, learning, connecting more with her family. Everything that happens in that year!

So often we want to just skip ahead, And yet, there's so much to learn in every present moment. Even the captain, as he starts to see Maria as more than just the governess. He's so focused on keeping that tight ship and so filled with grief that he almost misses what's right in front of him. So, we can get so deep in our stress and our business of life that we miss what is right here in the present moment.

So, embracing our childlike spirit, it helps happiness grow; it helps peace grow; it helps joy grow in our lives; and it reminds us to cherish the present moment.

And then our last lesson, the fourth one: how amazing it is that **MUSIC BRINGS US ALL TOGETHER**. It brings the family together in the movie, but it also brings all of us together. Because this movie is now 61 years old. How many of us can sing or at least hum "A Few of My Favorite Things?" Right? How many can sing "The Sound of Music?" How about my favorite, "Edelweiss?" I don't know all the words, but I can hum it like no one's business. Yeah.

And in the movie, again, this family friend, Max; he points out -- and I love this quote, because I feel like it's relevant today. He says, *"Everybody is cross these days. The important thing is to get along with everyone."* And it's music that brings joy. It's music that helps us all get along with one another. It's a common denominator of connection and joy.

I shared with some of you that in February I went to Las Vegas. We went to a concert for an 80s band, Def Leppard. And as I looked around Caesar's Palace, 4,200 people all singing; all having a great time. And I thought, *"We probably don't agree on anything or everything. We have different beliefs. We have different political ideas."* But in those two hours, 4,200 people came together in joy; came together singing the songs, having these memories from that period in time that we all experienced together ... or the younger kids through their parents. But we were all there just singing and having a great time.

And science has found this, everyone. Guess what? That when we listen to music together, our brain waves synchronize with one another. Our brain waves synchronize with one another! And that -- the synchronizing of our brain waves -- enhances our feelings of connection and empathy with one another. Music can bring us together and heal us: heal us of our disconnection.

In the movie, it literally saves them. Because, again, they sing at this music festival and then escape -- use that as the cover to escape out of Austria. It also saves their hearts. It brings them together after the death of their mother, the grief of their father. It's music that brings the family back together.

So, beneath the unforgettable songs, the breathtaking scenery, "The Sound of Music" reminds us that the most beautiful life is the one lived authentically. It's where we can honor who we are. We can surround ourselves with people who lift us up and support us. We can make room for joy and play. We

can cherish the present moment. And we can allow music to connect us with one another. It's these four lessons that help us create a life of greater peace and joy and purpose.

So, here's what I'm going to invite all of you to do this week. I want you to ask yourselves a couple of questions. You may want to take a picture of this, or if you're at home watching later, screenshot it. Here on the screen --this week, I want you to ask yourself: Where is life inviting me to be more fully myself? Where is life inviting me to be more fully myself?

The next one: How can I strengthen the community around me? How can you strengthen something currently that you have, or how can you build more community, maybe in different areas of your life? But to really create community?

The third question for you: What would awaken my childlike joy? Finding something this week that would awaken your childlike joy.

And lastly: What song is wanting to remind me that life is still beautiful? What song is wanting to remind me that life is still beautiful? We can get really caught up in everything going on around us personally or in the world. But finding a song that will remind you that life is still beautiful.

Because the hills aren't the only thing alive with the sound of music. Your life can be alive with courage. Your heart can be alive with joy. Your relationships can be alive with love. When we fully embrace life, just like Maria did, we allow that unique song of our soul to be expressed. And that, then, enriches the harmony of the whole. And that's our spiritual takeaways, our lessons, our invitations from the movie "The Sound of Music."

Blessings, everyone!

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