



## HOW TO USE FILM TO EXPLORE SCRIPTURE AND THEMES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Most young people spend a lot of time watching DVD's making it an ideal resource for youth leaders to use. There are so many films out there you don't need to just stick to the obvious titles of Cecil B De Milles-The 10 Commandments, The Prince of Egypt or The Man Who Would Be King and The Passion. In fact, using popular films encourages young people to theologize – see God – in all things they watch. But how to find appropriate films or clips, what to choose and what the pitfalls can be, are the issues for most leaders.

When thinking about choosing films it is helpful to be aware of the ones not to choose before you begin! Firstly of course is censorship. Check the ages of your group and the rating of the film. If you are still unsure whether a film is suitable check the back of the DVD box and it generally tells you why the rating has been set and what to expect. For example the film Bruce Almighty is a 12 with the following explanation: Language - Once strong, frequent mild, Sex & nudity - Some moderate references, Violence - Some mild slapstick.

It may be possible in some instances to use a film rated older than the group by using clips but if you do this be sure to watch the clip yourself in advance and listen and watch for inappropriate behaviour and language. The best thing to do is to watch the whole film yourself and decide if it, or part of it, is suitable for your group.

If film nights are a regular feature of group activities then try to vary the types of films you use. It is easy to fall into using only films you like or the ones the loudest young people ask to be shown! Many boys will watch 'chick-flicks' once in a while and likewise some girls will watch boyish films but neither will want to watch the same genre every time.

How you watch your films will vary according to the number of people watching, the size and shape of the room, and the facilities you have. A movie can be played on a laptop, but can only be seen by 2 viewers! Everyone must be able to see and hear clearly for the session to be a success. Obviously if you have a video projector and a large screen that would be best but a TV or two TV's linked together can work too. Make sure you have the plugs and extension leads you need and that it is safe to use the number of items you need. If you haven't used the equipment before, do try it out and familiarize yourself with it well before the session begins.

Finding the right film can be a puzzle. If you are a regular moviegoer, or someone in your household is, then it will be much easier. If not, don't despair – there may be someone in your congregation who is a movie fan. They may not be active in youth work but may be more than happy to share their knowledge with you if you ask. Movie Buffs love to talk about films! If you have a theme, or a point you want to make, ring

them and ask if they can think of a clip that would illustrate the point. Otherwise the web is an excellent resource. At the end of this article are several websites you can use for this purpose.

Make sure you know how long the film will last. It would be a failure if they couldn't see the whole thing or there was no time left to discuss it. If you wish to use a longer film perhaps you could show it over two sessions or extend your meeting times, making sure the parents know the pick-up times.

When you watch the film in advance of the session, it might be worth making a note of the main characters names and any quotes you feel may be useful. It may be helpful to note the DVD timings of the most interesting sections so that you can quickly find them to replay and illustrate a point. This also applies if you are only using clips.

Prepare questions for discussion beforehand as starters but do allow the group to divert from your ideas and to develop their own too. When planning try to think of similar illustration from scripture and have your Bible bookmarked ready. The best thing about watching films is that you are sharing this story together - have popcorn or nibbles, laugh together, have tissues ready for the sad bits - but most of all enjoy it!

### **Examples of Resources**

<http://www.thesource4ym.com/videoclips> is a really useful site. Films are listed according to themes. Click on the film and a synopsis and discussion questions will appear followed by a suitable Bible passage and how to relate them.

<http://christianteens.about.com/>nd type 'film' in the search box. Several links will appear. The 'Best Movies' is very helpful.

<http://www.textweek.com/> has a whole section looking at different Biblical themes and characters, and then suggesting film titles that correspond.

Each month, Youthwork Magazine publishes a ready-to-use meeting guide corresponding to a particular Bible passage or theme. You can purchase the magazine at any Christian Bookshop, and at many larger well-equipped churches. ([http://www.youthworkinternational.com/articles/20080110\\_1](http://www.youthworkinternational.com/articles/20080110_1) is an interesting article previously published in Youthwork Magazine about using film for ministry)

There are books that you may find helpful such as: 'Lights, Camera... Faith!' by Peter Malone and Rose Pacatte follows the lectionary cycle, tying in films to the weekly readings at Mass.

You could also try 'Reel Issues: Engaging Faith and Film', published by the Bible Society.

Browse or ask in your Christian Bookshop as there are several similar titles