

Cinematic Outreach: Using Film in Evangelism Multimedia Workshop

Why do some movies connect with us so deeply, speak to us so powerfully? It could be that movies offer some arrestingly honest reflections on the nature of humanity, the unanswered questions and important discussions of today. But is there more to it than this? This seminar will explore these questions and show you through viewing some fantastic film clips why engaging with movies is one of the most fruitful ways to go about engaging with those who need Jesus Christ. As well as giving you practical advice, full movie/film clip recommendations, and tips for those conversations and discussions.

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I. A BRIEF THEOLOGY OF FILM IN EVANGELISM

🎬 Paul in Athens: Acts 17

🎬 1 Peter 2:9-12

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

¹¹Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹²Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

II. WAYS OF USING FILM IN EVANGELISM

🎬 Show "Christian" films

🎬 Show full secular films (with a discussion afterwards or at another time)

🎬 Clip-based secular film discussions

🎬 Film clips in talks

III. USING FILM IN EVANGELISM

🎬 People like films

🎬 People talk about films

🎬 Films are not threatening

🎬 Films touch on big questions

IV. BIG THEMES IN FILMS

🎬 Moral

🎬 Political

🎬 Sexual

🎬 Religious
🎬 Happiness

🎬 Freedom
🎬 Love

🎬 Spirituality

V. PRIMARY ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS

- 🎬 Where do you see truth in this movie?
- 🎬 Where do you see untruth?

A. PRINCIPLES FOR USING FILMS

- 🎬 Let films speak on their own terms
- 🎬 Ask questions
- 🎬 Be positive
- 🎬 Be clear
- 🎬 Keep a biblical perspective on human beings

B. RIGHT PERSPECTIVES ON PEOPLE

- 🎬 Human beings bear God's image (Genesis 1:26-28)
- 🎬 Human beings are rebels against God (Genesis 3)
- 🎬 Humans still long for God (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

C. WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

- 🎬 Truth, insight, right sensitivity, evidence of the quest for God
- 🎬 Error, blindness, misdirection, God substitutes, willful rebellion
- 🎬 The possibility of grace

VI. DISCUSSION-STIRRING QUESTIONS

- 🎬 What is this film asking me to believe?
- 🎬 What issues and themes does it examine?
- 🎬 How do these ideas ring true or false?
- 🎬 Who is my favourite character and why?
- 🎬 Which characteristic would I want to imitate?
- 🎬 Why would I give the film a thumbs up or a thumbs down?

VII. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS AND TIPS FOR USING FILM IN EVANGELISM

- 🎬 Be a cinema/movie fan
- 🎬 Expect films, music and TV to communicate questions
- 🎬 Think while you watch:
 - 🎬 What deeper questions are being asked by this?
- 🎬 Don't advertise a film showing or a film discussion and then give a talk

- 🎬 Be strategic about showing the whole film
- 🎬 Avoid using a “Christian film”
- 🎬 Try to let the art speak for itself
- 🎬 Try to connect naturally into a part of the Christian gospel
- 🎬 Identify a clear theme/challenge
- 🎬 Work hard and test out your group discussion questions
- 🎬 Don’t be culturally conservative and/or negative about the movie/music/art or culture (without very good/exceptional reasons)
- 🎬 Choose your clips wisely, don’t go too safe, or too edgy
- 🎬 Be bold and clear with the gospel challenge
- 🎬 Invite a response/prayer or reflection, don’t wimp out, but do offer a way out for those who are not ready.

VIII. SELECTION OF THE FILM/TOPIC

- 🎬 Does it have a clear theme?
- 🎬 Is it popular?
- 🎬 Can it be shown to teenagers, or just adults?
- 🎬 Is it funny?
- 🎬 Do your research
- 🎬 Selection of a single main theme within film

Resources

Books

Godawa, Brian. *Hollywood Worldviews*
 Watkins, Tony. *Focus: The Art and Soul of Cinema*
 Rookmaker, H.R. *Modern Art and The Death of a Culture*

Online Articles

Price, Tom <https://www.bethinking.org/apologetics/corinth-and-acts-17>
 Dahle, Lars. <https://larsdahle.no/acts-17/>
 Watkins, Tony. Running a film discussion evening
 (<http://www.tonywatkins.co.uk/media/film/filmdiscussions/>)
 Watkins, Tony. Twenty Questions to ask when watching a film
 (<http://www.tonywatkins.co.uk/media/film/20questions/>)

Websites

bethinking.org
www.arealhope.wordpress.com
www.tonywatkins.co.uk
www.ransomfellowship.org
www.rottentomatoes.com
www.imdb.com

Great films to talk about

- 12 Years a Slave
- 13 Conversations About One Thing
- About Time
- Amazing Grace
- Babette's Feast
- Casino Royale
- Chocolat
- Counterfeiters
- Crash
- Dark Knight
- Divergent
- Elysium
- Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
- Gravity
- Groundhog Day
- Heaven
- Hunger Games
- Inception
- Iron Man 3
- Juno
- Mandela
- Noah
- Shawshank Redemption
- Skyfall
- Slumdog Millionaire
- Stranger than Fiction
- The Bourne Supremacy
- The Hunger Games
- The Island
- The Kings Speech
- The Truman Show
- To The Wonder
- The Batman
- A Hidden Life
- Wonder Woman
- Arrival
- Into the Wild
- Lord of the Rings
- The Passion of the Christ
- Alfie
- Collateral
- Avatar
- Transcendence

Film genres and big questions: 5 big questions

1. **Detective fiction and truth/reality/order questions:** Can we know the truth? Can we get to the facts? Can we overcome human attempts to obscure it/hide it? (reality/truth issues) Why is detective fiction so popular as a genre of fiction? What makes it so interesting and appealing? How does detective fiction speak to the human heart? What does our interest in detective fiction say about us? What does it tell us about ourselves?

'WHAT THE DETECTIVE STORY IS ABOUT IS NOT MURDER BUT THE RESTORATION OF ORDER.'
P. D. JAMES

Poirot, Dirty Harry, Insomnia (2002), The Third Man (1949), Blade Runner (1982), Memento (2000), The Big Lebowski (1998), Seven (1995), Vertigo (1958), The Silence of the Lambs (1991), Wallander, Lie to Me, Vantage Point, Sherlock, Luther, House, Bosch, Endeavour, Morse, CSI.

2. **Moral thrillers and ethical reasoning:** What is right? In a world of complicated ethical choices what is the right thing to do? Can you harm the one to save the many? Is torture morally permissible? What happens to moral agents who have to do that (integrity objection to utilitarianism)? Is it morally permissible to do wrong in the service of a greater good? Are human beings morally compromised? What do you do when you don't know the answers?

24, House MD, Dexter, Taken 1-3, Juno, Atonement, The Dark Knight, Watchmen, Toy Story 2, Sophies Choice, A Hidden Life, The New World, No Country for Old Men, The Island.

3. **Romantic comedies and tragedies: How can you keep love?** Is long-lasting love possible? Can love shape reality? Does love always find a way through? What is the purpose of life? How

does sex relate to love? Is it ever just sex? What is the true nature of love? Is romantic love an ethical starting point?

Love Actually, Sex & City, Closer, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Brokeback Mountain, Love Island, As Good as It Gets, Slumdog Millionaire, Sleepless in Seattle, No Strings Attached, Annie Hall, Four Weddings and a Funeral, 40 Year Old Virgin, My Best Friend's Wedding, When Harry met Sally, Notting Hill, Bridget Jones' Diary, You've Got Mail.

4. Films that deal with **Human nature**: why do human beings do things that are wrong? What explains murder or evil in the human soul? Why are humans such a mixture of good and bad? Can bad people change? What is a bad person? What are the consequences of wickedness? Can evil be transformed or confronted? Is there a way of fighting against human wickedness or selfishness?

No Country for Old Men, Before the Devil Knows That You Are Dead, There Will be Blood, The Last King of Scotland, The Interview, The Hunger Games, The Lord of the Rings, Insomnia, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, Pay It Forwards, Forgiveness, The Tree of Life, Badlands, Bonnie and Clyde, Ironman 1-3, Batman, Avengers, Spiderman, The Mask, Liar Liar.

5. **Science-Fiction, hope and purpose: What is worth living for?** What can we hope for? What is coming next? What will the future be like? How will being human look in the future? What is our relationship with technology? What is technology? How much hope ought we to put in scientific possibilities? Is there a way of confronting and overcoming death? Does space exploration help us to answer fundamental questions? What is 'out there'?

The Grey, Collateral, Garden State, Into the Wild, Batman-Dark Knight & Dark Knight Rises, Gravity, Transcendence, Existenz, The Matrix 1-4, Terminator, iRobot, Ex Machina, Ghost in the Shell, Gattaca, Star Trek.