

Echoes of the Bible: How Its Themes Pervade Today's Movies and TV

Writers and film-makers may want to just tell a good story, but they inevitably communicate deeper messages. That is because our worldviews – most fundamental beliefs and values – always show through in what we communicate. The stories we tell touch on the big questions of life and function as what Peter Berger calls “signals of transcendence.” In all the countless films that have been made, most centre on a tiny number of underlying themes, which reflect central aspects of the Bible's storyline. This workshop considers seven key themes, their connection to the Bible, how they therefore point to eternal realities, and how we can communicate these realities more effectively.

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‘I would suggest that theological thought seek out what might be called signals of transcendence within the empirically given human situation. . . . By signals of transcendence I mean phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our “natural” reality but that appear to point beyond that reality.’ – Peter Berger, *A Rumour of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*

‘Our action emerges from how we imagine the world. What we do is driven by who we are, by the kind of person we have become. And that shaping of our character is, to a great extent, the effect of stories that have captivated us, that have sunk into our bones – stories that “picture” what we think life is about, what constitutes “the good life”. We live into the stories we've absorbed; we become characters in the drama that has captivated us.’ – James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*

I. The biblical story line

A. Creation

B. De-creation

C. Recreation

D. New creation

II. Breaking Free

III. Remaking the World

IV. Defeating Enemies

V. Overcoming Brokenness

The stories of sinners often have as much to tell us about the human condition as the stories of saints—usually more, because even on our best days, most of us are closer to sinner than saint: a work in progress, doing the best we can to confront the big issues, but often just kind of muddling through, doing the best we can. — Matt Zoller Seitz, foreword to Josh Larsen, *Movies are Prayers*

VI. Finding True Love

VII. Coming Home

Suggested Readings:

Berger, Peter. *A Rumour of Angels : Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (London: Allen Lane, 1970)

Cosper, Mike. *The Stories We Tell: How TV and Movies Long for and Echo the Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014)

Fraser, Peter, and Neal, Vernon Edwin. *Reviewing the Movies: A Christian Response to Contemporary Film* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000)

Godawa, Brian. *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films With Wisdom & Discernment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009)

Gould, Paul M. *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019)

Johnston, Robert K. *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006)

Larsen, Josh. *Movies Are Prayers: How Films Voice Our Deepest Longings* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017)

Pinsky, Mark I. *The Gospel According to Disney* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004)

Romanowski, William D. *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007)

Sire, James W. *Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really is Believing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014)

Smith, James K.A. *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013)

Watkins, Tony. *Focus: The Art and Soul of Cinema* (Southampton: Damaris Books, 2007)