



# Discovering Truth at the Movies



If We Listen, We Can  
Hear God's Plan



By David Lantz

## **Discovering Truth at the Movies**

### **If We Listen, We Can Hear God's Plan**

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## Introduction

There are some movies we watch in which a single line, or a repeated phrase, provides a common theme that viewers take away from watching the show. Consider the following:

<b>The Blues Brothers</b>	<u>We're On a Mission from God</u>
<b>Highlander</b>	<u>There Can Be Only One</u>
<b>Kingdom of Heaven</b>	<u>God Wills It</u>
<b>The Matrix</b>	<u>Choose the Blue Pill or the Red Pill</u>
<b>Star Trek: First Contact</b>	<u>Resistance is Futile</u>
<b>The Terminator</b>	<u>I'll Be Back</u>
<b>Underdog</b>	<u>There's No Need to Fear, Underdog is Here</u>
<b>The X Files</b>	<u>The Truth is Out There</u>

As my children (now in their mid 20s and early 30s) were growing up, we watched a lot of movies together. I began to notice that one way they and their friends could share experiences with one another was to say "It was sort of like that scene in the movie, ..."

Somehow, in sharing experiences with one another by relating them to a scene from a movie, they were able to connect via a "conversation with the culture." I thought about that, and how I might use this understanding to communicate the truth of the Scripture to them. You see, I had glimpsed something that, a few years later, was expressed by the character, Anna, in the movie **I AM LEGEND**:

### **If We Listen, We Can Hear God's Plan**

It dawned on me that in our fractured, multicultural nation, we are losing a sense of who we, as a people, are. In the midst of an increasing mixture of values and beliefs in what many have called a "post modern" world, the stories reflected in the movies and TV shows provide an important source of common reference.

And so, back around 2005, as a way to communicate the relevance of God's word to an American culture that is increasingly turning away from the church - yet is hungry for spiritual truth - I decided to launch a newsletter called **Conversations with the Culture**.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

At first done on a “hit and miss” basis, I’ve developed it into a monthly newsletter. Using the themes of modern movies and TV shows, **Conversations with the Culture** seeks to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people in search of an answer to the question, “What is Truth”?

The concept is a simple one. Using key ideas/themes/scenes from a variety of movies and TV shows, I have chosen to base short bible studies and my personal reflections regarding societal trends on these key ideas. One of the fun parts of writing the newsletter has been to identify a picture from a movie or TV show and then, either using a key phrase or idea from the movie, craft a brief statement that provides a set of “book ends” to bracket the picture.

Because I am sharing the pictures in this way, the newsletter, and this e-book, are free. I have gone through 50 past newsletters to compile them here in “Discovering Truth at the Movies.” It is my prayer that you will find at least one that speaks to you, and that in turn you might spark a “Conversation with the Culture” about the truth of God’s word among your circle of friends and family.

If you’d like, please consider signing up to receive the newsletter. It’s free, and you can unsubscribe at any time. You can either click on the image to the right, or simply [Click Here](#).

**You take the Red Pill, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember, all I'm offering is the truth.**



**Oh, and one other thing. You'll need to be Born Again!**

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**Sign up to Recieve our Monthly Newsletter, *Conversations With the Culture*:**

***It's Free!***

\* Email

First Name

Last Name

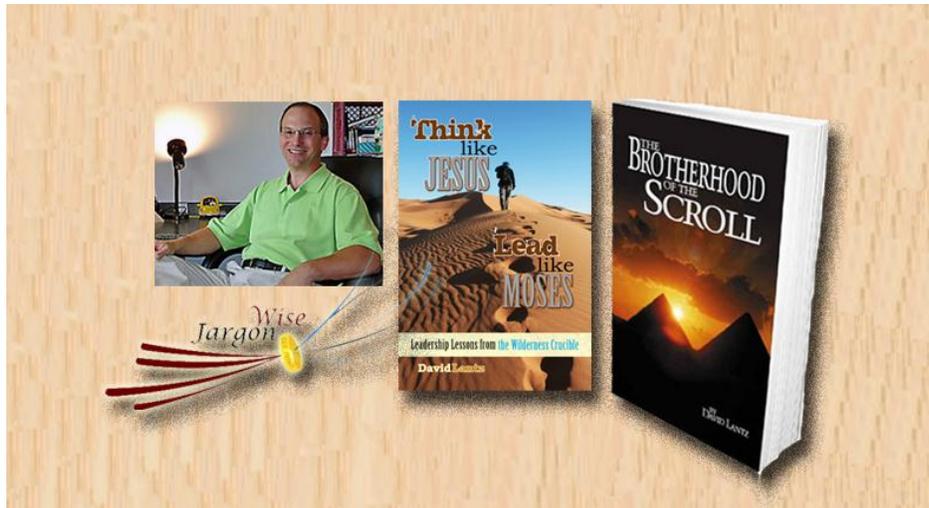
City

\* = Required Field

## Seeking Christ

How do we learn about the Kingdom of God? The same way Neo learns about the Matrix. In the movie, Morpheus tells Neo: **“No one can tell you what the Matrix is – you must see it for yourself.”** So what happens to Neo? When his digital self decides to seek truth by choosing the Red pill, his physical body is sucked out of an incubator he’s been in since birth and brought to Morpheus’s ship.

*In other words, Neo is “Born Again.”*



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*The Blues Brothers*

So, are you nothing but a grown-up germ  
that climbed out of a gelatinous sea of  
amino acids, or



Are you here on a Mission from God?

---

## Movie Background

In the movie, **The Blues Brothers**, Jake Blue (**John Belushi**) gets out of prison and goes to visit a nun in the orphanage where he grew up. During that visit he learns the orphanage will shut its doors unless it can raise \$5,000 to pay some tax debts. Not long afterward, Jake has a vision where Jesus gives him a mission to raise \$5,000 to pay off the orphanage's tax bill. Along with his brother Elwood (**Dan Aykroyd**), he leaves from that encounter to put his rhythm & blues band back together and raise the needed money. As he finds old members of his band, he tells them that they must help – because he's on a mission from God. To see some clips from the movie that capture this idea, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXCpa3XVc4A&NR=1>

## Digging Deeper

The Apostle Paul was a man who had “seen the light,” and Jesus’ call upon his life. In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul writes of how God set him apart when he was still in his mother’s womb “to reveal His son in me that I might present Him among the Gentiles.” Like Jake Blue, everything Paul did was in response to God’s call on his life. Paul had no doubt: He was here on a mission from God.

You too have a mission from God. The question is, have you come to recognize it – or do you walk around saying “Mission? What mission? God hasn’t called me to no mission!” If you don’t recognize your life’s mission, could it be that God has called you to a mission – but you’ve not been paying attention?

Have you ever seen the movie **Back to the Future**? George McFly is a bumbling, cowardly geek who allows a bully named Biff to control his life. Throughout the movie, Biff knocks on George McFly’s head and says “hello, Mcfly, anybody in there?” His son Marty McFly sees this and wishes his dad were different. He just can’t figure out what it was his Mom saw in George that made her marry him.

Through the twists and turns of the movie, Marty goes back in time 30 years and meets his parents when they were teenagers. One night, desperate to gain George McFly’s help, he dresses up like an alien from the planet Vulcan and wakes his father, commanding him to action. Galvanized by this event, George McFly confronts and defeats Biff, who even as a teen was George McFly’s nemesis.

When Marty finally arrives back in his own time – our present – he returns to find his father is a successful, self-assured science fiction author. And, in a twist of fate, Biff is now a handyman in the employ of George McFly. You see, George McFly had been called to a mission – but he never answered the call. After a while, he didn’t even hear the call. All he heard was Biff knocking on his head, saying “Hello, McFly – anybody in there?” It took his son Marty going back in time to actually get George’s attention.

**Jesus said in Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.**

Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart. He’s asking “Hello, McFly, anybody in there?” Like Jake, Paul and George, it’s never too late to see the light – and answer the call for your mission from God.

***Eph. 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

Picture source: <http://images.cardomain.com/sites/cardomain/features/john/blues-brothers.jpg>

## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. What motivates you when you get out of bed in the morning?
2. Eph. 2:10 talks about how we are created in Christ to perform good works that God has prepared beforehand for us to do. Do you think that what you are passionate about leads you to help others, or just yourself?
3. Lots of people have read Rick Warren's "The Purpose Driven Life." Not many have written out their own personal mission, or "purpose," statement. If you've never done this, take a moment to write down some thoughts on what that might be for you.

## *The Matrix*

You take the Red Pill, and I show you  
how deep the rabbit hole goes.  
Remember, all I'm offering is the truth.



Oh, and one other thing.  
You'll need to be Born Again!

---

### Movie Background

In the movie, **The Matrix**, Neo is seeking truth. He comes to Morpheus at night to learn about the Matrix. Morpheus tells Neo that he has two choices. He can choose the blue pill, “**and believe whatever you want to believe.**” By this, Morpheus is saying that if you want to believe whatever you please about what the world is really like, that’s your right. *Trouble is, you’ll be believing in a lie, but because you’re dead to the truth, you won’t know the difference.*

Morpheus continues: “**You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. All I’m offering is the truth, nothing more.**” If he takes the Red pill, Morpheus offers to expose Neo to what the *REAL* truth of the world is.

### Digging Deeper

In the Bible, there was a man by the name of Nicodemus who sought The Truth. He was a prominent leader among the Jewish Priests, and like Neo, he went at night to the one man who had all the answers – Jesus. You see, Nicodemus was afraid that the other Jewish leaders would find out he was beginning to believe what Jesus had to say. That’s why he went at night.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

He was afraid that if they found out he was asking Jesus what The Truth really was, they'd be after him – just like the Sentinels were after Neo in **The Matrix**.

The story of Nicodemus's quest for truth is found in Chapter 3 of the Book of John. Nicodemus's question was a simple one. Had Jesus really been sent from God? But instead of answering him straight out, Jesus said: **"Unless you are born again – unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."** Jesus was essentially saying: "Take the Red Pill – Be Born Again – and I'll show you the Real World – the Kingdom of God."

How do we learn about the Kingdom of God? The same way Neo learns about the Matrix. In the movie, Morpheus tells Neo: **"No one can tell you what the Matrix is – you must see it for yourself."** So what happens to Neo? When his digital self decides to seek truth by choosing the Red pill, his physical body is sucked out of an incubator he's been in since birth and brought to Morpheus's ship.

*In other words, Neo is "Born Again."*

Like Neo and Nicodemus, we have been born into a system we cannot smell, taste or touch – a prison for our minds. This world system blinds us to The Truth. To discover The Truth and see the Kingdom of God, we must be born again. It is for this reason that Jesus says to Nicodemus in **John 3:16**:

**For God so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

The question is: Do you believe? If you do, then choose the Red Pill. Jesus will welcome you to the Real World – the Kingdom of God.

Picture source: <http://www.dvdmg.com/matrixpic1.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Have you ever believed something, say "X", but then over a period of time you were shown information that something else, say "Y", was true? Why was it so hard to accept this new understanding of the TRUTH?
2. In John 3:10 Jesus says to Nicodemus, "Are you the teacher of all Israel, and do not understand these things?" Evidently, Nicodemus not only believed the wrong thing about God, but he had been teaching this wrong theology to others. What did Nicodemus risk by following Christ?

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

3. In John 19:39-40, Nicodemus helps to bury Christ after the crucifixion. He became a true follower of Christ. What would the impact on your life be like if you made a complete change in what you believed about Jesus Christ? For someone in your family?

## Kung Fu Panda

**Just Because You Think You're Special  
Doesn't Make You the Dragon Warrior!**



**Without "Talent on Loan from God,"  
You're Just As Likely to Turn Out to Be  
Somebody's Punching Bag.**

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### **Movie Background**

In the movie, **Kung Fu Panda**, Po the Panda (voice of **Jack Black**) is a loveable, clumsy son of a noodle maker. He dreams of being a great Kung Fu master, but seemingly lacks the skills to succeed. Through a series of humorous events, he comes into possession of the "Dragon Scroll," which holds the secret to Ultimate Power. Upon opening the scroll, Po learns that it's nothing more than a mirror. The message: He is the "Secret Sauce," and of his own accord, he can transform himself into someone "special." Thus, with enough positive thinking and self-esteem, anyone can obtain the powers of "the Dragon Scroll." To see the trailer for this movie, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RR4TIYEAmIk>

### **Digging Deeper**

People want to be special, but on their own terms, through the work of their own hands. Herod the Great was King of Israel at the birth of Christ, and he built many facilities. He built [Masada](#), the port at [Caesarea](#), and a fortress called the [Herodian](#) which overlooked the town of Bethlehem. His greatest work was the finishing of the Temple Mount. When the Three Wise Men came to see the Christ Child, he tried to use them to direct him to where the baby lay. When they refused to reveal the baby's location, he ordered that all baby boys under the age of two years of age be killed (Matthew 2:16). Herod spent a lifetime of building monuments so that people would remember him – and killing anyone who got in his way. At his death, his own

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

family wanted him dead. Before he died, he had one of his sons, Antipater, murdered and divided his kingdom between his remaining three sons. Today, much of what he built has disappeared back into the sands from which they were built.

You see, when Herod looked in a mirror, he saw what he thought was the “secret ingredient” to being great: Himself. In the end, he died a lonely man, hated by all who knew him.

### **Kung Fu Panda and the Secret of the Sauce**

In the movie, Po the Panda is the son of a noodle maker. The noodles taste great due to a special ingredient that no one but Po’s father knows. At one point in the movie, Po’s father reveals that the secret ingredient is .... Nothing! His noodles are only special because He says they’re special. And so, because people think his noodles taste special, they are! Imagine if you were to buy water bottles for \$1.00 per bottle and were told they were special because they contained water from the summit of Mt. Everest – only to discover that it really came from a kitchen tap. Wouldn’t you feel cheated? Wouldn’t you say “This isn’t special! It’s just ordinary – why am I paying extra for this!”

In **Kung Fu Panda**, Po’s father teaches his son that *he* is what makes *himself* special. And, while Po is a nice guy, this is the same belief that Herod had. And, it’s the same belief that many of us in society today have: The person staring back at us in the mirror holds the key to our being “special.” We become our own “secret sauce” that makes everything happen – until, like Herod, we eventually learn that if we rely only on ourselves, we will be greatly disappointed.

That, I think, is the lesson of Christmas. Christ is the “Secret Sauce.” Born into this world in a lowly manger, he grows into a man who is sacrificed on a cross as a ransom for our sins. If we will but accept him, His Holy Spirit enters into us, transforms us, and makes us into the special kind of people He intended us to be. I can’t help but think of the words from the hymn, “**O Little Town of Bethlehem**”:

**How silently, how silently the wondrous Gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven. No ear may hear him coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.**

In this Christmas season, May God impart His Son, the “secret of the sauce,” to you. Just looking in a mirror may make for a nice story at the movies, but it is not enough to make us special people:

**O holy child of Bethlehem, descend on us we pray. Cast out our sin, and enter in. Be born in us today.**

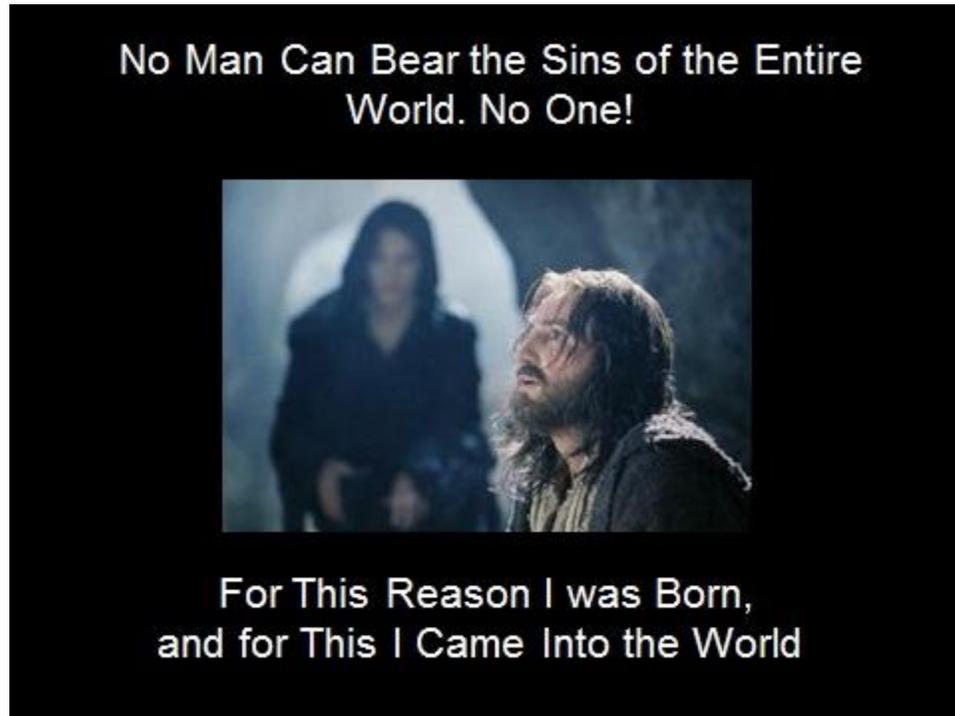
Picture source: <http://z.about.com/d/kidstvmovies/1/7/Z/G/KFP002.jpg>

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. When you die, what are the things/relationships you built/developed that will carry on your legacy – that people will remember you by?
2. What is the Secret of your “sauce”? Upon what foundation/guide for living is it built?
3. For a Christian, the “secret sauce” is Jesus Christ. What talent do you have “on loan” from God?

## *The Passion of the Christ*



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### Movie Background

**Mel Gibson's** movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, unfolds the last 12 hours in the life of Jesus (as portrayed by **Jim Caviezel**). One of the most powerful scenes takes place at the beginning of the movie, when Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and Satan (**Rosalinda Celentano**) appears at his side. Attempting to convince Christ that He cannot bear the sins of the entire world, a snake slithers to where Jesus is praying prostrate on the ground. Gathering himself, Jesus rises to his feet, and crushes the head of the snake under his feet. To see a youtube video that provides a great synopsis of the movie, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNgbYdDZA8>

### Digging Deeper

This battle between good and evil is powerfully portrayed through the movie. It is an ancient story, because it begins when Satan tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and God cursed the snake, and said to Satan in Genesis 3:15.

**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

This story is also told in the heavens, though few Christians understand the relationship between the story of God's plan of salvation as it is unfolded in the stars. In Psalms 19:1-2, we read:

**The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.**

Did you catch that? "Night to night reveals Knowledge." What kind of knowledge? In Isaiah, we learn that God ordered the constellations. In Isaiah 41:26, we read:

**Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.**

And in Job 38:31-33, we see this amazing statement, as the Lord rebukes Job, saying:

**Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth?**

Two constellations that come together to declare the Glory of the Heavens are [Hercules and Draco](#). In Greek mythology, they tell the story of how Hercules, in performing his 12 labors, must battle a seven headed snake known as the Hydra. Each Spring, the foot of Hercules comes to rest above the head of the snake in the constellation Draco. Now, for most people, this is where the story ends. But in modern times, Christians forget that many ancient civilizations had their own names for these constellations – and saw the story of the heavens declaring a divine revelation

For the Hebrew, it was when "The Kneeler" would come to fulfill the promise of Genesis 3:15. In the New Testament, Paul makes this statement in Romans 16:20:

**The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.**

What a powerful statement. In this season of Easter, let us contemplate and rejoice over how God has defeated death, and crushed the power of Satan. Jesus Christ extends God's love to all of us. He bore our sins so that we might be made righteous before God. In humility, He made Himself lower than the angels. And it is for this reason that in Hebrew the Constellation Hercules is known simply as "The Kneeler."

Picture

source: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/1/1a/Medium\\_passion\\_du\\_christ1.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/1/1a/Medium_passion_du_christ1.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. How do you think the heavens reveal God's glory?
2. How might you use the science of astronomy to start a conversation with someone about the bible?
3. The Greeks named the constellation Hercules after a powerful, self-sufficient man. The Hebrews named the same constellation after a man who kneels, as if in prayer. What do you think of this depiction of Jesus Christ?

## Robots

See A Need, Fill A Need



If God Were to Visit Us,  
I bet He'd Come as a Repair Man

---

### Movie Background

**Robots** is the story of a young robot, Rodney Copperbottom (**Ewan McGregor**) who wants to grow up to invent things. Rodney dreams of meeting his idol, the master inventor Bigweld (**Mel Brooks**). Bigweld's saying, that Rodney whole heartedly believes is as follows: See a need, fill a need. Rodney is a great robot repairman, and wants to prove himself by going to work for Bidgweld. He leaves his parents to go to Robot City where he encounters a sinister truth: That evil has taken over Bigweld Industries, and that robots everywhere need someone who can repair them. Bigweld has been tricked into relinquishing control of his company to someone who wants to force robots to buy "upgrade" models. If they can't afford the upgrades, they'll be sent to the scrapheap. Rodney meets Cappy (**Halle Berry**), a beautiful executive robot with whom he falls in love, and together they set out to rescue Bigweld and make life better for robots everywhere. To see the movie trailer, click

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8u2L-CqHX8&feature=related>

## Digging Deeper

I dated my first girlfriend on and off through High School. Ours was an odd relationship. We'd go out to a movie and pizza, and then she wouldn't speak to me. Time would pass and she'd call me up. We'd do things like walk to school together, get a coke, and just generally hang out. And then, all of a sudden, she wouldn't speak to me for several weeks or months, and then the cycle would repeat itself. Once she invited me to come ride her horse at the county fair, and afterward, wouldn't take my phone calls. After high school, I didn't see her again.

Then, one day, I saw a TV report about a woman who had walked into a church and, when the service was concluded, pulled out a gun and shot the minister. It was the girl I had known in high school. What could have possibly happened to cause such a thing? Speculations ranged from the minister breaking an engagement of marriage after being intimate with her to a chemical imbalance causing her to go berserk. Whatever the reason, a man died, lives were devastated, and my former girlfriend went to prison for murder.

We are broken people. We need to be fixed. Even the best of us have something wrong inside. We pass laws that tell us how we should behave toward our fellow man. We read self-improvement books on how to improve our "inner self." But, as a society, we are ignoring one other key aspect of morality: Our relationship with the Power that made us. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said:

**The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**

Seek and save that which was lost? Hmm. Why are we lost? Maybe it's because our inner compasses – what we call our conscience – are broken. We need to be fixed.

We can't fix it ourselves. We need someone outside of us to do it for us. We do stupid things and justify our actions with the cliché, "I'm not hurting anyone else." Well, if you fiddle with a car's steering apparatus, it's only a matter of time before what you're doing to your own car causes you to crash into other cars.

**In Hebrew, there is a phrase called Tikkun Olam. Do you know what it means? It means "Repair the World." That is what the Son of God came to do: To repair the world – to repair you and me.**

There is no way we can pass enough laws to make ourselves behave the way we should. We need the Master Repair Man to fix us on the inside so that we'll be OK on the outside. Too often, we see the Bible as a set of rules that take all the "fun" out of life. Maybe instead we should view it as an owner's manual to keep ourselves in good working order.

**Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**

*Tikkun Olam*

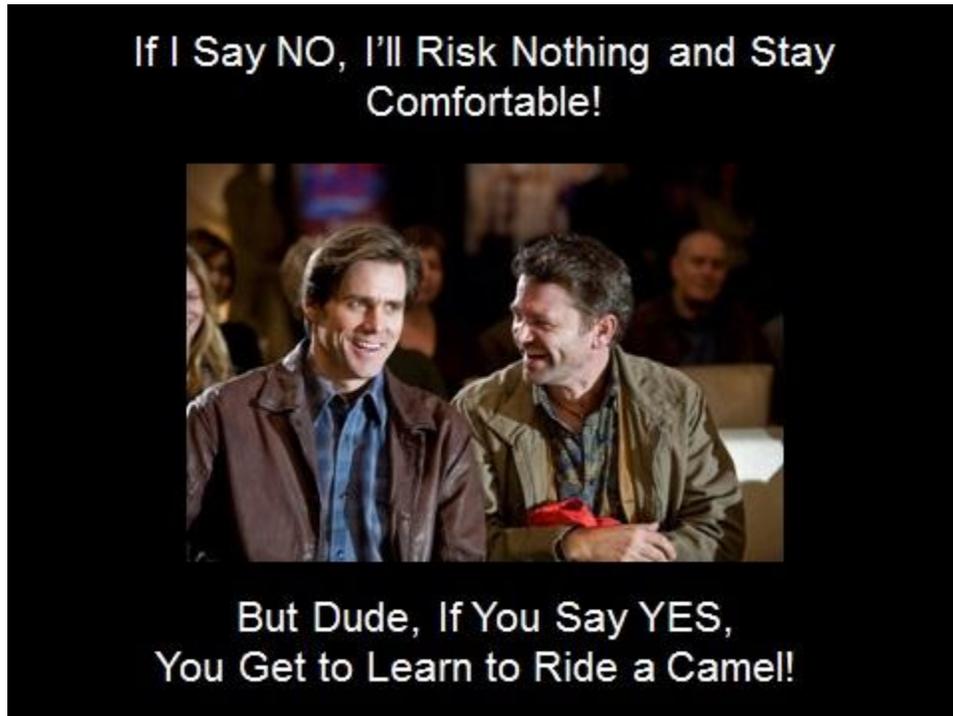
Picture source: <http://www.thezreview.co.uk/images4/robots205.jpg>

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## Questions for Further Reflection

1. Our society has taken God out of everything. Do you think that by removing prayer at school, at work, and in other aspects of life, it has helped us to become better people?
2. Think about a tragedy that has befallen a friend, relative, or loved one. Now consider the web of people who were affected, either directly or indirectly by that tragedy. Once you've thought of an example, find a story in the news about a similar tragedy that happened to someone you don't know. Pray for that web of people affected by event described in the article.
3. Is there a sin that you tend to repeat over and over, like a broken record? 1 John 1:9 says that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Take your sin to Christ, and ask Him to come into your heart and repair your brokenness.

## Yes Man



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### Movie Background

Carl Allen (**Jim Carey**) is a bored bank loan officer. His life is in a rut. He says “no” to every opportunity that comes along. And then, he sees an old friend who invites him to a self improvement meeting. Allen goes and is challenged by the seminar speaker to say “yes” to every opportunity – no matter what it is. While at first reluctant to follow these instructions, Allen begins to do just that. And, to his surprise, he begins to enjoy life more – both professionally and personally. Only by stepping out of comfort zone does his faith increase. To see a scene from the movie, go to

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQmzC7sA5zs&feature=related>

### Digging Deeper

In Genesis 24, Abraham realizes he needs to find a wife for his son, Isaac. He is adamant that his son’s future wife not come from among the pagan people of Canaan. So, he sent a trusted servant to his home country to find a wife for Isaac from among his relatives. We’re told in Genesis 24:10 that the servant brought with him ten camels – perhaps to carry the gifts he would provide as a dowry to the family whose daughter would return to become Isaac’s wife. Arriving in Mesopotamia, the servant goes to the town well and waits for a woman from among

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

the village folk who will offer to bring water for him and his animals. The servant offers a prayer to the Lord, silently thinking (Gen. 24:14):

May it be that the girl to whom I say “Please let down your jar so that I may drink,” and who answers “Drink, and I will water your camels also;” – may she be the one whom Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and by this I shall know that Thou hast shown lovingkindness to my master.

Finally, a woman named Rebekah approaches the well. Indeed, Rebekah does just as the servant prayed, and so he goes with her to her family to ask that Rebekah be given in marriage to Isaac, and travel with him back to Canaan, some 500 miles to the West. After negotiating the “bride price” and paying her family a large sum of money, they agree that Rebekah will leave with the servant in the morning. But when morning comes, the family suggests they wait ten days, and then begin their journey. Fearing that the family would delay their leaving indefinitely, he protests. And so, to settle the matter, the family asks Rebekah what she would like to do. Rebekah responded (Gen 24:58, 61):

“I will go.” Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

While the focus is on Rebekah, one has to ask: What about her maid servants? Remember, Abraham’s servant had brought ten camels. Were Rebekah’s 10 maids ready to leave THEIR families behind and travel 500 miles away? **Had they led a life that had prepared them for a HUGE change in life – a change in career, if you will?**

In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells the parable of the 10 brides’ maids and the importance of being ready. The parable begins this way in vs. 1-4:

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.”

In a sense, Jesus picks up the story of Rebekah and focuses on the lives of the “bit players” – people like you and me. Five of the maids are prepared. Watching the movie “**Yes Man**,” I saw the meaning of this parable: The five maids have enough oil for their lamps because they’ve learned to say “yes” to small opportunities, and so when the big opportunity comes along, they’re ready.

What about you? Christ is coming again, and if we’ve not said “yes” to new opportunities, like learning to ride camels, we may be in for a rough journey.

Picture source: <http://ia.media-imdb.com/images/M/MV5BMTU1MTA4Njk4NI5BMTI5BanBnXkFtZTcwOTI3NDcwMg@@. V1. SX599 SY400 .jpg>

## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Are you saying “yes” to opportunities for ministry that God is providing you, or have you adopted the motto “Just Say No”?
2. Rebekah said “I will go.” What would it take to leave all that is familiar and go to a place you’d never been?
3. Today, we can get on the Internet and learn about a place before traveling there. What type of faith must it have taken missionaries of a hundred years ago to travel to a place they’d barely heard of?

## *Saving Private Ryan*



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### Movie Background

In the movie, **Saving Private Ryan**, a team of combat veterans is sent out immediately after D-Day to search for a certain Private Ryan (played by **Matt Damon**). His brothers have all been killed and the army wishes to send him home so that his family is not completely decimated. In the end, out of a team of eight, only two of the men sent to find Private Ryan survive. The last to die is Captain John Miller (played by **Tom Hanks**), who with his dying breath tells Ryan to “Earn this.” The end of the movie shows Private Ryan as an old man, visiting Arlington National Cemetery. As he approaches Captain Miller’s grave, he falls on his knees and says: “Every day of my life I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge.” And then he turns to his wife and asks, “Have I lived a good life?” Ryan’s question – and ours – is “Am I a good man (a good woman)? Did I earn this?” To see a clip of this scene, click here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOatpR4mf\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOatpR4mf_o)

### Digging Deeper

Several years ago, my daughter Sarah gave the sermon for College Sunday as a graduating senior. Using the story of **Saving Private Ryan**, she wove this scripture from Colossians 1:9-10 into her message:

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way.**

How do we live a life worthy of the call? How do we “earn this?” The Apostle Paul provides further insight through his letter to Timothy in II Timothy 1:8-9:

**Join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.**

The key is that to live a life worthy of the call, we can't do it on our own power. We can only “earn this” by relying on God's power – and His gift of grace. A Christian isn't someone who never messes up. A Christian is a person who will repent, seek forgiveness, let God pick him up, and then get back to the work of living a life “worthy of the call.”

In the movie, when they finally find Private Ryan and tell him he's going home, he asks: “Why me? Why am I so special? These guys fought just as hard as me!” Indeed, we might ask why God would choose to save us? If we're not good to begin with, why would He choose to love us?

It's like when the angel of the Lord appears to a man named Gideon. In Judges 6:12, the angel greets Gideon by saying “Hail, valiant warrior.” If you read the story of Gideon, you see that he was not a valiant warrior – at least, not at first. In time, he became one. I find in this story the following principle:

**God sees us, not for who we are, but who we may become. While He loves us the way we are, thank God He loves us too much to leave us the way we are.**

Are you disappointed in yourself? Feel like you don't measure up? Convinced you're not worthy?

**Then turn your life over to the one true power in the Universe capable of making you all you can be: An army of one, totally reliant on Him.**

Picture source: <http://www.moviemarket.co.uk/library/photos/167/167882.jpg>

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. In God's eyes, how much are you worth? He wouldn't send His only begotten Son to die on a cross if you – or I – were worthless would He?
2. In Matthew 13:45-46, Jesus tells the parable about the peril of great value. How was Private Ryan the pearl of great value in the Army's eyes? How are you and I the pearl of great value in God's eyes?
3. Into what sort of "valiant warrior" is God modeling you? Are you being receptive to this molding process – or are you resisting being molded?

## *The Terminator*



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### Movie Background

In the movie, *The Terminator*, **Arnold Schwarzenegger** plays an android that has been sent back in time by a futuristic world ruled by machines. In the movie, he comes back to kill Sarah Conner (**Linda Hamilton**), who will become the mother of the human resistance movement's future leader, John Conner (**Edward Furlong**). The Terminator fails in his attempt to kill them in the first movie. Through several sequels, he comes back as a sort of Guardian Angel, protecting the young John Conner as he grows into maturity. In so doing, he must fight other Terminators more technologically advanced than he. To see a brief movie clip of the "I'll be back" scene, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgPePk3kGZk>

### Digging Deeper

Throughout *The Terminator* movie series, one single machine is portrayed as being sent back in time by an adult John Conner to save lost humanity from destruction by the evil machines. Believe it or not, we've seen this in the Bible, when Jesus Christ comes into the world and dies on a cross for our sins.

In Luke 19:20, we read:

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**

Left to our own resources, we cannot save ourselves. We are like lost sheep who go astray. We long for direction – yet at the same time, resist being told what we should do.

Satan, the Prince of Lies, feeds on our resistance to having authority in our lives. He promises freedom from rules, yet enslaves us with the dire consequence of not living as God designed us to live. Thus the second reason for Jesus' coming to earth, as stated in I John 3:8, is this:

**The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**

Here's the analogy: The Terminator comes into the world to save us from our lost situation. To do so, he must defeat the work of the evil machines. But he needs the willing cooperation of those he has come to rescue. Like Sarah Conner and her son John, we have the choice of obeying or not.

In *The Terminator*, the situation is make believe. But in life, the stakes are real. Jesus Christ doesn't force us to do anything – He just offers us a choice.

The thing is, you'd best make your choice before Judgment Day.

Picture source: <http://worldofwonder.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/i-will-be-back.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

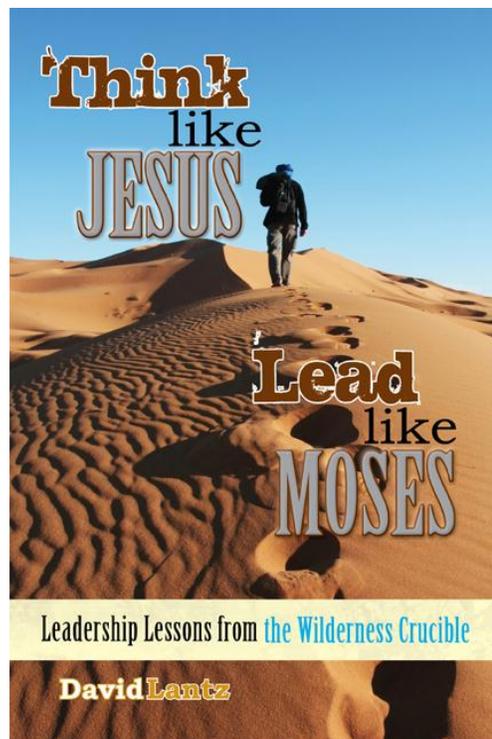
1. Ephesians 2:10 says: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." What do you think of the idea that God has created something He wanted you to do before you were ever born?
2. In Esther 4:14, Queen Esther is told that if she doesn't chose to do the right thing, God will raise up someone else to do the job. Her uncle, Mordecai, says: "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" What do you think Mordecai meant by this?
3. In the movie, **Terminator II: Judgment Day**, Sarah Conner is a lost soul whose only chance for survival is to do as the Terminator advises. You and I are lost souls without God. Jesus has come to seek and save the lost. Has He found you yet?

## Do You Hear His Call?

We miss God's love, and we miss the love of those whom God has placed in our lives. And, because we've become distracted from the person God has called us to be, we allow ourselves to become "hooked" on a lie about substitute love. We want to follow our plans, even though they never seem to work.

God has a plan. THE GOD. Throughout the ages, He has found a way to make His word known. He uses "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" as His only offensive weapon to accomplish that task.

If we listen, we can hear HIS voice – HIS plan. He's calling us to light up the darkness. Can you hear His call on your life?



To order the Kindle Version of the book, [Click on the image](#) above.

## Highlander

Choose Whom You'll Serve: God or Satan?



In the End, There Can Be Only One

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### **Movie Background**

In the movie, the Highlander, Conner McCloud of the Clan McCloud leads the life of an immortal. The only way he can die is if his head is separated from his body. He and other immortals like him live in a shadow world of sword duels to the death – “in the end, there can be only one” immortal, to whom the power to rule mankind will be given. Though Conner McCloud does form friendships with other Immortals (the TV series even creates a cousin Duncan McCloud for him!) his life is, for the most part, one of solitude. In the end, McCloud and all Immortals like him serve their own self interest. To see a clip from the TV show, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnJt9p-sHho&feature=related>

### **Digging Deeper**

Serving one’s own interests. Is that not “the truth” of this world – the truth the Father of lies, the Devil – would have us believe? We hear it every day. “Be all you can be.” “You deserve a break today.” “Just do it.” “Have it your way.” “No one is the boss of me.” In the Garden of Eden, the serpent comes to Adam and Eve and sells them on the power of being equal with God. If they eat the forbidden fruit, they’ll know good from evil. They will be God’s equal – they’ll gain the power of self determination, the power of self reliance.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

### **In a life of solitude apart from God.**

The thing is, God does want us to be like Him. But here's the difference - **He wants us to become like Him by relying on His strength.** Instead of leading a life of solitude, God wants us to live in community with Himself and other believers. It is for this reason that Jesus says in John 15:5:

**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit. For apart from Me, you can do nothing.**

Here's a way to illustrate this: Go out and find a vine – with green leaves and everything. Now, cut off a branch from the vine. Still looks alive, doesn't it? Go put it on a shelf and take a look at it in two weeks.

Ok, two weeks have gone by. How does the branch look now? Sort of brown? Dead, in fact, isn't it? The truth is, it was dead the moment you cut it off from the vine – ***it just didn't know it yet.***

That's the way we are. Cut off from Jesus – the one true vine – we're dead in our sins. We just don't know it. Just as the vine provides life-giving sustenance to the branch, Jesus gives us "living water" that keeps us renewed and alive in God the Father.

You and I have a choice. We can be a part of God through Jesus Christ, or we can choose not to be. That is the practical conclusion one must come down to. Satan offers a fake life. If we choose the way of evil – seeking to please only ourselves – we may think we're "really living." But, in fact, we'll be dead. But, if we choose Christ, and seek to serve others instead of ourselves, we live. So, choose this day whom you will serve.

**In the end, there can truly be only one Lord of your life.**

Picture source: <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Film/2317/macleod12.jpg>

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. It has been said that we live lives of quiet desperation, yet God wants us to live in fellowship with Him. How can we do that?
2. A branch is connected to its other branches through the vine they all grow out of. Christians are connected to the body of Christ by being intertwined in the lives of other Christians. Are you intertwined with others – or do you tend to "go it alone?"
3. The Devil wants us to buy into the lie that we have a right to this and a right to that. What is our obligation to others?

## *I Am Legend*

Why Can't the Bad Guys Take a Day Off  
from Doing Evil?



And Another Thing. It's Hard to  
"Light Up the Darkness" When You've  
Run Out of Candles!

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### Movie Background

In the movie, **I am Legend**, Robert Neville (**Will Smith**) is a scientist trying to stop the spread of a man-made virus. Immune to its effects, he is that last man left in New York City, and perhaps the world. While he seeks a cure, mutant victims of the plague (the Infected,) lurk in the shadows, watching for a chance to kill him. One day, a woman and a boy, show up and save his life from the mutants. In speaking to Anna (**Alice Braga**) about why he continues to try to find a cure, Neville says:

**Bob Marley ... had this idea, it was kind of a virologist idea. He believed that you could cure racism and hate, literally cure it, by injecting music and love into people's lives. When he was scheduled to perform at a peace rally, gunmen came to his house and shot him down. Two days later, he walked out onto that stage and sang. Somebody asked him why. He said 'The people who are trying to make this world worse are not taking a day off. How can I.' Light up the darkness. (To see the movie clip, click this link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTLXh\\_K5tZc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTLXh_K5tZc) )**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

In response to Neville's desire to stay in New York, Anna tries to get him to see that they must leave and go to a place where survivors are – a place Neville doesn't think exists. Anna says to him:

The world is quieter now. We just have to listen. If we listen, we can hear God's Plan.

### **Digging Deeper**

Watching this movie, and especially this interplay between Neville and Anna, we are presented with a common theme that has two different solutions. The common theme is this: "We are surrounded by darkness. We must fight against the darkness. We must shine a light, and bring hope."

Few people would argue against this theme; but the solution to combat the problem? Ah, now there is where the two camps come to a deep divide, and like Bob Marley, say: "The bad guys never take a day off, so how can I?" The solution Will Smith offers is "I can fix this." The focus is on what "I" – what man – can do. In the course of the movie, he has been following this course for three years. Yet, he still insists that he can "fix it." He's got all of his medical tools and high tech solutions. Yet, he is making no progress. Or at least, he thinks he isn't. Anna has a different solution. Follow God. Listen to His voice. She really doesn't have a lot of details. She just follows what He is telling her. She hears a radio message Neville is broadcasting. She's willing to trust God that He will take care of the details. At the end of the movie, she's able to bring the antidote that Neville created to the colony of survivors. And, what is God's Plan? The Prophet Isaiah spoke of this in Isaiah 2:5:

#### **Come, House of Jacob, and let us walk in the Light of the Lord**

When Jesus, the Messiah came, he applied this statement to His ministry, calling His disciples to follow his example. In these two verses, Jesus lays out His plan:

**I am the Light of the World; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of Life. (John 8:12) ... You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden ... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14, 16)**

Such a simple message. Why is it so hard to do? Maybe there's too much noise, and we not only can't hear Him. We refuse to hear Him. We want to follow our plans, and keep following them, even though they never seem to work.

God has a plan. THE GOD. If we listen, we can hear HIS voice. He's calling us to light up the darkness.

Picture

Source: [http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/10007640/photo\\_04.jpg](http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/10007640/photo_04.jpg)

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## Questions for Further Reflection

1. In the movie, **I Am Legend**, God is trying to communicate to Neville through the recurring image of a Butterfly. What means do you think God uses to communicate with you?
2. In Matthew 5:13, Jesus says “You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything.” How would you evaluate your saltiness?
3. Neville focuses on how he can use his talents and expertise to fix a problem. Anna follows God’s leading. There is always a tension between reliance on God vs. reliance on our own talents and abilities. In your life, how do you balance these two tensions – to rely on your abilities vs. God?

## First Contact

Let's see, I either get absorbed by the Borg Collective, or I become One with God.



That's an Interesting Spin on the Phrase,  
"Resistance is Futile!"

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## Movie Background

**First Contact** is the story of how Jean-Luc Picard (**Patrick Stewart**) and the Star Trek Next Generation crew follow after an alien race called The Borg as they seek to attack Earth at a point in the past. The Borg are a race of cyborgs, beings who are half living organisms, half machine. Whether by chance or by plan, the Borg have gone back to the day before humans launched the first faster than light vessel that made contact with an intergalactic race, the Vulcans. Captain Picard and his crew must stop The Borg before they assimilate the entire human race into their communal society, where individuality is completely sacrificed as each member of the Borg becomes an automaton in service to the Borg "hive". In an interesting conversation between Commander Data (**Brent Spiner**) (a robot member of the Star Trek crew seeking to become more "human") and the Borg Queen (**Alice Krige**), the two discuss the ultimate philosophy of the opposing races. A portion of this conversation can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNwTwzNzvBQ> Below is the dialogue from that scene:

**Borg Queen**: Are you ready?

**Commander Data**: Who are you?

**Borg Queen**: I am the Borg.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**Commander Data**: That is a contradiction. The Borg have a collective consciousness. There are no individuals.

**Borg Queen**: I am the beginning, the end, the one who is many.

**Borg Queen**: I am the Borg.

**Commander Data**: Greetings. ...I am curious, do you control the Borg collective?

**Borg Queen**: You imply disparity where none exists. I am the collective.

**Commander Data**: Perhaps I should rephrase the question. I wish to understand the organizational relationship. Are you their leader?

**Borg Queen**: I bring order to chaos.

**Commander Data**: An interesting, if cryptic response.

**Borg Queen**: You are in chaos, Data. You are the contradiction. A machine who wishes to be human.

**Commander Data**: As you seem to know so much about me, you must be aware that I am programmed to evolve and better myself.

**Borg Queen**: We too are on a quest to better ourselves, evolving toward a state of perfection.

**Commander Data**: Forgive me. The Borg do not evolve. They conquer.

**Borg Queen**: By assimilating other beings into our collective, we are bringing them closer to perfection.

**Commander Data**: Somehow I question your motives

## **Digging Deeper**

With the above dialogue as background, consider how in Mark Chapter 5, Jesus and His disciples take a boat to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. They come to a place called the "land of the Gadarenes" and were met by a demon possessed man. Jesus speaks to the man, and in verses 8-9, has this conversation:

**For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many."**

After Jesus exorcises the demons from the man, the former demoniac regains his sense of self-identity. He had once been under the control of Satan – a consequence of having been

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

assimilated into the twisted collective consciousness of Hell. We see this expressed in Mark 5:15:

**They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened.**

Contrast this loss of identity to the community of saints Christians experience as being part of the Kingdom of Heaven. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we become intricately connected with all the saints. Christ offers a oneness with God the Father, but this oneness does not require us to surrender our individuality. In John 17:3, 22-23, we read

**This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ... The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.**

In spite of this unity with God the Father, the Kingdom of God does not force us to relinquish our individuality. This is made evident in Mathew 17:3 when John, James and Peter are with Jesus on a mountain. We read:

**And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.**

Notice that the disciples recognized Moses and Elijah – and unless they had retained their individuality, they would have been little more than Borg automatons.

Many people resist Jesus. They cling to their individuality without realizing that in community with Christ, their individuality is made complete. Satan is eager to encourage our penchant to be free – and lead us into relinquishing ourselves into total subservience to him.

Picture source: <http://images.starpulse.com/Photos/Previews/Star-Trek-First-Contact-p11.jpg>

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. What has been your conception of what becomes of your individuality in Heaven? Has this study impacted that conception, and if so, how?
2. In John 17:22-23, Jesus pray us for us to be one with the Father and Christ. How do you think this comes about?
3. In the movie, Data seeks to be an individual and to be wholly self-sufficient. The Borg, however, are servants of the "collective." How does following Christ blend our individuality with living amidst a community of believers?

## Hook



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### Movie Background

In the movie **Hook**, Peter Banning (**Robin Williams**) is a hard charging forty year old mergers and acquisition lawyer. Though he has a wonderful wife and two children, he spends no time with them – he is consumed by his career. During a working vacation to visit “Granny Wendy” in London, his children are kidnapped by the infamous Captain Hook (**Dustin Hoffman**). Tinkerbell (**Julia Roberts**) comes to Peter and brings him back to Neverland to rescue his children, but he first needs to be reminded that he is Peter Pan. Tinkerbell must teach him to love himself, and in so doing, love others – and she has just three days to accomplish her job.

In **Hook**, there are two scenes that connect to communicate the problem facing Peter Banning. Early in the movie, his son, Jack, has a baseball game, and expects his father to be there and watch him win the game. Peter, however, is too tied up with his work, and so arrives after the game is over. Later in the movie, Hook reminds Jack of how his father let him down. (The scene can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXVzfsrha6o&feature=related> ).

The second scene comes when Captain Hook re-enacts the game. In this way, Hook seeks to substitute himself for the boy’s real father – and if Peter doesn’t wake up to the fact that he’s Peter Pan, and this is his last chance to demonstrate his love to his son, he will lose Jack’s love forever.

## **Digging Deeper**

### **Are You HOOKED on Distractions?**

Like Peter Banning, we have become distracted. We miss God's love, and we miss the love of those whom God has placed in our lives. And, because we've become distracted from the person God has called us to be, we allow ourselves to become "hooked" on a lie about substitute love. In 2nd Corinthians 11:2-3, Paul writes about how Christians can be lead astray, saying:

**For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.**

For those who are without Christ, the devil ensnares them even more. Referring to Satan as "the god of this world," Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 4:4:

**The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

In the movie, Tinkerbell has just three days to help Peter Banning realize he is Peter Pan and prepare him for his showdown with Captain Hook. Peter has to find that "happy place" in his heart – and only then can he truly see that he has a family that loves him, and needs him. As in the movie, we in America have only a limited amount of time to awaken from the downward spiral of a society in which over 1 million kids run away from home each year. Nearly 40 percent of those children run away because of the brokenness of family life. How relevant are the words of Ephesians 5:14-17 for us today

**For this reason, it says "Awake, sleeper, awake, and arise from the dead. And Christ will shine on you." Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**

Trust God to keep you from getting Hooked on the distractions Satan throws your way. Wake up, exchange bitterness and resentment with love and forgiveness, allowing Christ to live in your heart.

Picture source: [http://thumbs.filmstarts.de/image/Hook\\_scene\\_01.jpg](http://thumbs.filmstarts.de/image/Hook_scene_01.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. What distracts you from God's love?
2. What distract you from investing yourself into relationships with friends and family?
3. What distracts you from praying that God might help you remove these obstacles from your life so that you can become more devoted to Him and to your family?

## Prince of Persia

You don't understand what's at stake! A sword, a sword, sharpened to make a slaughter, polished to flash like lightning



Which Sword will you choose? The one wielded by the Prince of Darkness, or that drawn by the Prince of Light?  
In the end, there can be only one!

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## Movie Synopsis

The **Prince of Persia** is based a video game in which the rogue prince Dastan (**Jake Gyllenhaal**) and the beautiful princess Tamina (**Gemma Arterton**) race against dark forces in the mystical lands of Persia to safeguard a powerful weapon called the Dagger of Time. Capable of releasing the Sands of Time, the dagger is a gift from the gods that can reverse time and allow its possessor to rule the world. The Persian king, Sharaman (**Ronald Pickup**), rules with his brother, Nizam (**Ben Kingsly**), who secretly seeks to obtain the dagger and control The Sands of Time for his own evil purposes. In the game upon which the movie is loosely based, the two kings represent two Zoroastrian deities: Ormazd, the god of light, and Ahriman, the god of darkness. To understand how these two Zoroastrian deities are presented in the game, the following description, found at [http://princeofpersia.wikia.com/wiki/Tree\\_of\\_Life](http://princeofpersia.wikia.com/wiki/Tree_of_Life), is instructive:

The Tree of Life is a sacred tree residing within an ancient temple in the Persian desert. It is the prison of [Ahriman](#), the God of Darkness. His brother [Ormazd](#), the God of Light, had imprisoned him within the tree and left the Ahura tribe to guard the fragile tree to prevent [Ahriman](#) from ever escaping again. During the events of Prince of Persia, [Ahriman](#) breaks free from his prison with the aid of The Mourning King

## Digging Deeper

Christianity is under attack in a number of ways, perhaps none more diabolical than the slow but methodical process of displaying paganism as the “true” Christian orthodoxy. No single method of introducing Western culture to ancient pagan belief systems is as powerful as the world of online gaming. The Prince of Persia and related games is just one example of this phenomenon.

Another area where Christian orthodoxy is challenged is through a genre of shows on TV channels, such as the History Channel, which present the ancient heresy of Gnosticism in a favorable light. Such shows as Banned from the Bible I and II leave the viewer with the thought that it was somehow just not right that these “Gnostic gospels” were excluded from Scripture.

At its heart, Gnosticism has two basic beliefs. First, that there is a spiritual world run by an all knowing, but unknowable, good god. In Zoroastrianism, this god is Zurvan. (In other forms of Gnosticism, this “supreme god” creates a series of supernatural beings.) Zurvan had two sons: Ormazd, and Ahirman. Ahirman, the “God of Darkness” in the Prince of Persia, creates the material world as a mistake. In other forms of Gnosticism, he is simply referred to as the “Demiurge” or “crazy god”.

The second point of Gnosticism is that this evil god Ahirman, or Demiurge, created the earth and its life forms, and is none other than the God of the Old Testament, a deity who was viewed as fundamentally evil. Thus, from the Gnostic point of view, when Satan, disguised as the snake, offers fruit to Eve in the Garden, he’s really trying to set mankind free from this evil demiurge by sharing gnosis, or knowledge, of good and evil.

## Scripture and the Gnostic Heresy

Whether you call this idea Gnosticism, dualism, ascribe to it the Asian concept of the Yin and the Yang, or claim the Egyptians preached this concept in worshiping their god Osiris instead of his evil brother Set, the idea of competing, counterbalancing gods has been around for a long time.

And the Bible has condemned the concept. In Isaiah 45:5-7, we read:

**I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides Me there is no God; I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that men may know, from the rising to the setting of the sun, that there is no one besides Me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.**

It is instructive to note that this passage comes from a section where Isaiah is recording the Word of the Lord addressed to a man known as Cyrus. Isaiah writes this in about 700 B.C., but Cyrus – otherwise known as Cyrus the Great, King of Persia – conquers Babylon in 539 B.C. By the time Cyrus becomes King of Persia, Zoroastrianism, the belief that a war rages

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

between the god of light (Ormazd) and the god of darkness (Ahirman) is a well established dogma in Persia, and of course, Babylon.

Is it possible that, through the prophecy of Isaiah, and the preparation of the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel, God had planned for just the right time to make known to Cyrus that he would need to choose whether to follow The Lord, or a false faith? Now, what good is a prophecy written in 700 B.C. directed to a man who does not come on the world stage for a century and a half UNLESS God also provided a way that Cyrus would discover that prophecy?

In Ezekiel 21, five “sword oracles” are recorded, depicting the Sword of the Lord being wielded by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. The King of Babylon must make a choice in which way he should go. In Ezekiel 21:9-10 and 21, we read:

**Son of man, prophecy and say, “Thus says the Lord.” Say “A sword, a sword, sharpened and also polished. Sharpened to make a slaughter, polished to flash like lightning. For the King of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the household idols, he looks at the liver.”**

While Biblical commentators concur that this passage refers to Nebuchadnezzar, we also know that Daniel and Ezekiel were contemporaries of Cyrus the Great, and that Daniel was still alive when the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. In Ezra 1:2 we read:

**Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia. “The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.”**

Ezra records that this was done to fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah – but that prophecy was preceded by the following, recorded in Isaiah 44:28:

**It is I who says of Cyrus, “He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.” And he declares of Jerusalem, “She will be built,” and of the temple, “Your foundation will be laid.”**

## **Who Will You Choose to Serve?**

Throughout the ages, God has found a way to make His word known, and to combat the heresy of Gnosticism. He uses “***the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God***” (Ephesians 6:17) as His only offensive weapon to accomplish that task. One man The Lord has raised up to speak out on this issue is Dr. Peter Jones, author of such books as **The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back** and **Spirit Wars**.

Several years ago, Dr. Jones inspired me to conceive of a writing project to use the power of historical fiction to address the topic of paganism in modern culture. The result of that conversation is my new novel, **The Sword of the Scroll**.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

The novel pits the prophet Daniel against the mystic, Zoroaster. When I began writing **The Sword of the Scroll**, I had no idea that a video game, much less a movie, was being planned around the teachings of Zoroastrianism. But just as The Prince of Persia has its Dastan and Tamina, my novel has the prophet, Daniel and the Lydian princess, Aryenis. At a crucial point in the story, Daniel makes the following statement to Aryenis – and through the characters in the story, to you, the reader:

**“Aryenis, behold ... A sword, a sword, sharpened and polished to flash like lightening. Two ways for the sword are being made ready. Before you stands the parting of the way, at the head of two ways. One path leads to life; the other, death. It all depends on who you will choose to serve.”**

Picture source: [http://www.movie-vault.com/uploads/photo\\_gallery/2479/prince5.jpg](http://www.movie-vault.com/uploads/photo_gallery/2479/prince5.jpg)

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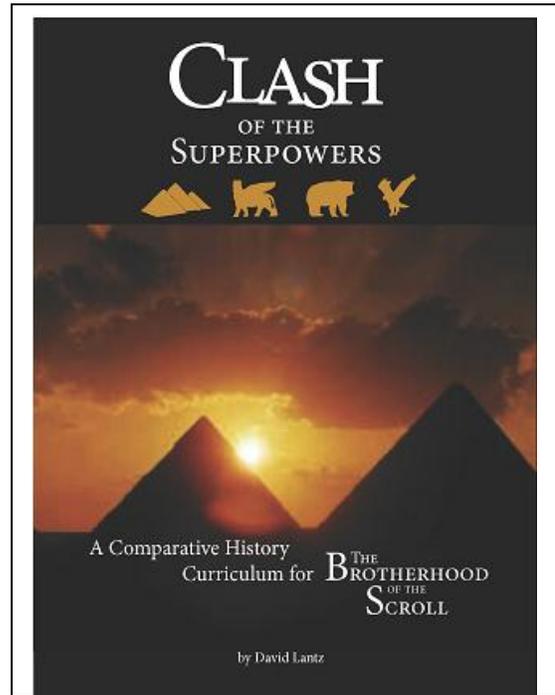
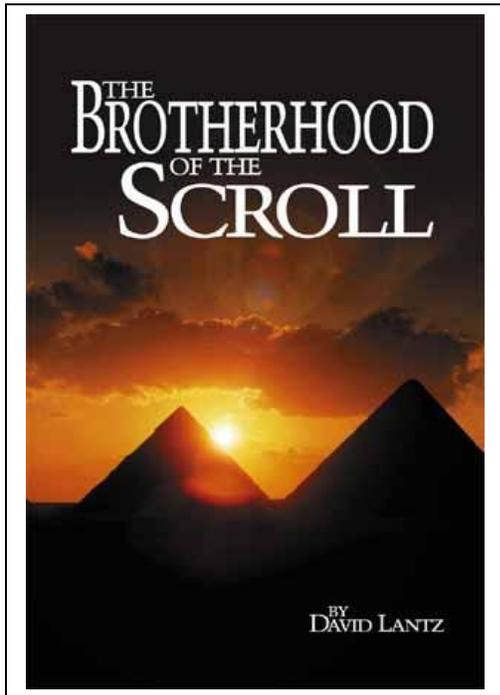
### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns us to not get taken in by false doctrines. Even in his day, Gnosticism was a problem that he had to confront. Can you think of an example of false teaching that you've seen or been exposed to?
2. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet talks about a man, Cyrus, who wasn't born until about a century and a half later. Isaiah also talks about rebuilding the temple, even though in his day, it still stood. What are your thoughts about the omnipotence and omniscience of God?
3. Have you ever been faced with a difficult choice, where the path you followed would be drastically different based on the choice you made? What might have happened had you made a different choice?

## Truth

Are you seeking for truth – spiritual truth? Many people are looking for spiritual truth, but they're afraid that if they look too hard, the spiritual truth they find will tell them that they must change. What they'd rather find is spiritual truth which tells them "you're OK the way you are."

So, if the kind of truth you think you're looking for is the kind that says you're fine just the way you are, chances are it's a fake truth to keep you in bondage. Look instead for the kind of truth that forces you to realize that there's a God bigger than you. He wants to clean you up and get you pointed in the right direction.



To learn more about **The Brotherhood of the Scroll**, and the accompanying Comparative History curriculum, **Clash of the Superpowers**, [CLICK HERE](#).

## Conspiracy Theory



### Movie Background

In the movie, *Conspiracy Theory*, Jerry Fletcher (**Mel Gibson**) is a man in love with a woman who thinks he's crazy. She works for the government, and he sends her information about his conspiracy theories for everything from aliens to political assassinations. Throughout the movie, he does two things. First, he **MUST** purchase a copy of "Catcher in the Rye." (He in fact owns many copies, but has never read the book). Second, he keeps saying "the truth will set you free." If we were to ask Jerry what the passage, "The truth will set you free" means, he might well tell us: "If I can just get Alice Sutton (**Julia Roberts**) to take me seriously, she'll fall in love with me." To see a movie trailer, click [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svphE\\_WU5Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svphE_WU5Y)

### Digging Deeper

I've been writing my newsletter, *Conversations with the Culture* for nearly two years now. The original idea for it came to me when I watched Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" when it first came out in 2004. I remember how I was so profoundly struck by the question Pilate asked in John 18:38: "**What is Truth?**"

So, today, I want to speak with you about the following statement: "The Truth will set you free." This one's a little longer than usual. I hope you'll bear with me.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Recently I taught a class on Critical Thinking where we wrestled with this statement of Christ's. Now, I'll come back to the passage in a moment, but first, I need to talk about what a premise is, and how there is a certain unspoken premise that permeates everything we talk about in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

A premise is an underlying starting point that supports one's world view. Can you identify the premise that lies behind the following question:

***“What does the passage mean to you?”***

Notice that in answering this question, you get to be the judge of what it means. Not only that, but I get to be the judge of what it means too. We can both decide it means totally different things, but we're both “right”.

Why? Because the premise of the question is that absolute truth does not exist. You and I can have completely different ideas about the “truth” of the passage, and both “truths” are equally right.

This idea, this premise, has come to be called Post Modernism. At <http://www.pbs.org/faithandreason/gengloss/postm-body.html>, we find this statement:

**In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually.**

Now, Postmodernism is the "world view" that lies behind the premise of the first question I asked, "What does the passage mean to you?"

The postmodern world view wants us to think about this emotionally, not intellectually. It puts you in charge of deciding what truth is. And, it's the ultimate in teaching you to be tolerant, because you understand from the get-go that just as no one gets to tell you that what you think is wrong, you don't have the right to tell anyone else that what they think is wrong either.

But, there's a second way of looking at this, with a second premise. Read the following question carefully:

***“What does the passage mean?”***

See the difference? I'm not asking what it means to you. I'm asking you what the passage ***actually means***.

And, to answer that, we must find out more about who said it, and what the context of the quote is. Keep in mind; we may not like the answer we'll find. We may even disagree with it. But, we have to acknowledge that the underlying premise is that there is one and only one truth as to what it means – it means what the author intended it to mean.

***That's absolute, unequivocal truth. The kind of truth a Postmodernist hates.***

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

So, what is the original context of our passage, "The Truth will set you free"? Well, it's a logical proposition – a valid, if/then proposition. Logically undeniable. In John 8:31-32, Jesus said:

***"If you abide in My word, Then you are truly disciples of Mine. And, you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free."***

In John 14:6, Jesus also said "***I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.***"

When Jesus is brought before Pilate, He says to the Roman Governor in John 18:37:  
**"Everyone who is of the Truth hears My voice."**

In response, Pilate looks into Jesus' eyes, and asks the question that is on the hearts of each and every one of us. I think that when Pilate asked his question, a light bulb as brilliant as a billion suns burst in his brain. Maybe his thoughts went to his wife, who had warned him to **"have nothing to do with that righteous man."** (Math. 27:19).

Whatever his thoughts, I believe that when he uttered the words "What is **trut...h!**," he did it in such a way that at the exact moment the word escaped his lips, he saw that the answer to the question stood right before him. That answer was the very **SON OF THE FATHER.**

And so, Pilate went out to the Jews. He told them that he washed his hands of the whole affair. And then, he offered them a choice of two men that he would release to them. They could choose either Jesus, the **SON OF THE FATHER.** Or, they could choose the thief Barabbas, whose name meant **"son of the father."**

The crowds that day chose a counterfeit and called their choice "truth," when in fact what they had chosen was a lie.

The same choice faces us today. We can either choose a counterfeit, or we can choose TRUTH. In the end, only one will set us free from the bondage of sin and death. It all begins with our point of view. Are we interested in only what we want and ask "What does the passage mean to me?" Or, are we interested in finding out the real answers to life and simply ask "What does the passage mean?"

Picture source: <http://static.ibnlive.in.com/pix/slideshow/04-2012/rare-photos-of/jul9-9.jpg>

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. In John 17:17, Jesus says of the Father: “Thy word is truth.” Do you believe that the bible is God’s holy word, and that it is true?
2. American culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century places a great deal of emphasis on the idea that “my opinion is just as good as your opinion.” If this is true, then how can we objectively decide if one idea is better or worse than another?
3. First, write down what you believe “the truth will set you free” means. Next, try to find out what Bible scholars think it means. How is your answer different/the same as theirs?

## *Back to the Future*

Great Scott! They're Still Giving Sermons  
in 2009 About What it Means to be  
"Reformed" and Wondering Why So  
Many People are Leaving the Church!!



I Have to Send Someone Back to the Future  
and Tell Them The Church Isn't  
What it Was in 1955!

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### Movie Background

Over Christmas, I re-watched the "Back to the Future" trilogy with my daughter, Sarah. If you don't know the story line, Marty McFly (**Michael J. Fox**) ends up going back in time from 1985 to 1955 in a DeLorean which serves as Doc Brown's (**Christopher Lloyd**) time machine. With great humor, they fix the timeline of Marty's life, understanding that "The future isn't written yet." To see a movie trailer, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgHVlppvqUGM>

### Digging Deeper

Recently, I read a post by Dr. Scott W. Sundquist on his blog titled "[The Dangers of the Unconverted Seminary.](#)" It was a great piece. Here's part of what he said:

**We still use a curriculum that assumes Christendom. We assume that most people are Christian, we assume that if you put "Gloria Patri" in the bulletin, or if you talk about the "invocation" that a person understands what you are talking about. In short, as others have said, we are preparing priests and pastors for a church and a society that no longer exist."**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

In Acts 17, Paul walks into Athens, a University town with lots of “smart people” living on past glories. Paul encountered four groups: Stoics, who taught that you should live in accordance with nature & self sufficiency (today’s “green carbon free” crowd). The second group was the Epicureans, who taught that the supreme good is happiness, which they eventually saw as focusing on momentary pleasure & self-gratification (sort of like the “Let’s live it up because someone will bail us out” crowd). A third group, always present, were the Jews (this would be the modern equivalent of people in churches where they don’t want to change the way the Gloria Patri is sung). Lastly, there were the God fearing Gentiles – people hungering for spiritual truth, but just not sure which of the gods to worship.

Many of the Greeks worshipped the god Tyche, or “chance.” They saw their lives subjected to the whim of the Gods – and hence meaningless. It was into this mess of hodge-podge spirituality that Paul walked, where everyone had to be tolerant of what everyone else believed, and don’t you dare tell someone that you carry the message of ABSOLUTE TRUTH from the ONE AND ONLY true God.

Sound familiar? In speaking to these four groups of people, Paul modeled 4 principles:

1. Talk about Christ – up front.
2. Speak truth without fear
3. Speak to your audience with an understanding of where they’re at.
4. Surrender the results to God.

Let’s see what Paul said in Acts 17:22-25:

**So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things.**

Paul is saying “You all have seen God, but still don’t know who He is. You expect Him to be something He’s not.” I had this thought in mind when I wrote my novel, [The Brotherhood of the Scroll](#). I learned that most ancient religions saw man’s purpose was to serve the Gods. For example, the Babylonian flood story has it ending with the gods descending like flies to eat Unipishtom’s sacrifice, and the gods promising to never again destroy man because they want to have man feed them. This is why Paul says “**And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything**” Paul goes on to say that these Greeks are lost, that they constantly seek spiritual fulfillment, and that (vs. 27) **if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

This is why I start these Conversations with the Culture with reference to a movie. It connects where most of us are with the Scripture. For example, instead of the words “grope for Him” we find this line when Morpheus talks to Neo about **The Matrix**:

**It's that feeling you have had all your life. That feeling that something was wrong with the world. You don't know what it is but it's there, *like a splinter in your mind*, driving you mad, driving you to me.**

Did you know that Morpheus was the Greek god of sleep, and that Neo is an anagram for the word ONE? In 1955, you would never have heard a sermon connecting these concepts. In 2009, It's time to get Back to the Future.

**Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. (Eph. 5:14).**

Picture source: [http://www.lionking.org/~simba007/BACK\\_TO\\_THE\\_FUTURE-0.jpg](http://www.lionking.org/~simba007/BACK_TO_THE_FUTURE-0.jpg)

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. If you're not under the age of 25, think about the youth of your church/when you were in your teens or early twenties. Answer this question honestly: Which best describes how youth/young adults feel about church – that it's:
  - a. All about religion and tradition
  - b. All about God
  - c. All about how I am feeling
  - d. All about nothing that's relevant to me
  - e. Some combination of the above
  - f. It's a place to meet the opposite sex.
2. Why did you answer the way you did?
3. If church is supposed to be about God, about how we worship Him, and how we enter into a personal relationship with Him, what needs to change (if anything) about the way we “do church”?

## *The Incredibles*

I'll make it so Everyone will have Super Powers. That's my TRUTH!!



If everyone's super, then no one's SUPER.  
The same goes for truth - If everything's,  
true, then NOTHING IS TRUE!

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### Movie Background

In the movie, **The Incredibles**, Mr. Incredible is one of several dozen superheroes. Possessing super human strength, he saves humanity from various disasters. He marries another super hero, Elastigirl. All is good until a surge of lawsuits against superheroes submitted by the people they've saved forces the government to hide them in witness protection programs. It is as though people don't want to be reminded of the truth that some people are super – that there are some who are special. To admit that some people have superhuman powers is to acknowledge that most people don't. This is a truth of the movie that they don't want to hear.

The villain in the movie – Syndrome – invents technology to make it look like he has super powers. His plan is to sell his technology to people so that “Everyone can be super. And when everyone's super...no one will be.” In this way he will create new truth – truth based on a lie. To see a clip from the movie with this scene, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8I9pYCI9AQ>

### Digging Deeper

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

In Colossians 2:8, Paul writes: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men.” Even in Paul’s day, there were those who wanted to preach a different gospel – a different truth. In our time, there is great confusion over what truth is. More and more people want to say that all religions - all “truths” – are equal. But to paraphrase Syndrome, if everything is true, then nothing is true. This, in fact, is the goal of the evil one, Satan.

The question you and I need to answer is: To whom are you listening? In John 8:46-47, Jesus says:

**If I speak truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.**

One such truth is the truth that Jesus is the one means of salvation. In 1 John 2:23 and Jude 4, we read:

**Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. ... For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**

Lately, I've been reading a book by John MacArthur called "The Truth War." I recommend it to anyone interested in the general question of "What is Truth"? On page 76 of his book, he writes that The Truth War “is a very serious struggle to safeguard the heart and soul of truth itself and to unleash that truth against the powers of darkness – in hopes of rescuing the eternal souls of men and women who have been unwittingly ensnared by the trap of devilish deception.”

Sounds heavy, doesn't it? But it is a really profound thought, and begs this question: Are you listening to Jesus? Are you hearing the truth He speaks? Or are you listening to the philosophies and empty deceptions of men? Jesus says that if you aren't hearing – and believing – His words, then you are not of God.

**And that's the Truth.**

Picture source:

[http://images.artistdirect.com/Images/nad/video/tribune/36057/36057\\_co.jpg](http://images.artistdirect.com/Images/nad/video/tribune/36057/36057_co.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Take a look at Colossians Chapter 2. What were the “empty philosophies” Paul was talking about?

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

2. Can you think of “empty philosophies” that we get bombarded with in our day?
3. Are you of God? Do you want to be – to hear His word? If so, mediated on this simple prayer. “Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I know that I can’t fix myself. I can’t save myself. Dear Jesus, please come into my heart, and change my life, and make me into the kind of person You want me to be. Amen.”

## X Files

Mulder, see that Jesus Freak with the sign, "I am the Way, the Truth & the Life"?



You were right! THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE!

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### Movie Background

The theme of the television series, **The X Files**, is "*The Truth Is Out There*". Mulder (**David Duchovny**) is the "true believer," while Scully (**Gillian Anderson**) is the skeptic. Scully wants to believe, but she's not sure. Why? Because if she buys into the truth that there are aliens, it means ***she has to change her belief that humanity is in control of its destiny.*** For a video clip highlighting the series theme of The Truth is Out There, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8ynOPMNqUk>

### Digging Deeper

Are you seeking for truth – spiritual truth? Many people are looking for spiritual truth, but they're afraid that if they look too hard, the spiritual truth they find *will tell them that they must change.* What they'd rather find is spiritual truth which tells them "you're OK the way you are."

In the Bible, there was a guy like that who's name was Saul. He was a very intelligent guy. He was a top notch lawyer in his day, and he took it upon himself to go after any who broke the law. From his perspective, going after lawbreakers wasn't just his job, it was his duty. After all, the law he was defending was God's law, handed down from God to Moses. Saul was so on fire for God's law that he went after people, brought them to trial and then helped oversee their

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

execution. One of his first victories was over a guy named Steve, whom he made sure was stoned to death.

Then, one day, he heard there were some lawbreakers in a town called Damascus. He set out at once to apprehend them and bring them to justice. But along the way, he met THE TRUTH in the person of Jesus Christ. You can read the story of Saul in Acts Chapter 9 – of how Saul was blinded by Jesus, and finding real truth, changed. Saul, who's name means "demand of God," had his name changed to "Paul," which means "to become less." Paul went on to write many letters to the early Christians. In one to the Corinthians, he wrote:

Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (II Corinthians 5:17)

So, if the kind of truth you think you're looking for is the kind that says you're fine just the way you are, chances are it's a fake truth to keep you in bondage. Look instead for the kind of truth that forces you to realize that there's a God bigger than you. He wants to clean you up and get you pointed in the right direction.

But first, you have to be willing to change. Don't worry. If you say yes, He'll help you.

Picture

source: [http://l.yimg.com/img.movies.yahoo.com/ymv/us/img/hv/photo/movie\\_pix/twentieth\\_century\\_fox/the\\_x\\_files\\_fight\\_the\\_future/group\\_photos/david\\_duchovny1.jpg](http://l.yimg.com/img.movies.yahoo.com/ymv/us/img/hv/photo/movie_pix/twentieth_century_fox/the_x_files_fight_the_future/group_photos/david_duchovny1.jpg)

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## Questions for Further Reflection

1. Think about what you believe about "how the world works." Do you believe that you are the Master of your Universe? Do you believe God is the Master of the Universe? What difference does such a belief make?
2. Have you ever found out something that totally changed the way you believed about a subject, a person, or your view of "how the world works"? What did it take to make you completely change your thinking?
3. II Corinthians 5:17 talks about how we are changed when Christ enters our life. Deep down inside, we become a new person. Can you relate this to what Jesus said in John chapter 3 about being "born again"?

## *Battlestar Galactica*



### **Movie Background**

In the Sci-Fi channel remake of the old TV series, *Battlestar Galactica*, the human race has been nearly wiped out by a robot civilization called the Cylons. Not only are the Cylons more technologically advanced than the humans, they have created certain robots that look exactly like humans. This gives them the powerful advantage of infiltrating the few remaining human space ships fleeing in search of their only hope – the planet earth. To see series of clips from the TV series, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9CRFZXAAcl&feature=related>

In an interesting twist with religious overtones, the “good guy” humans worship many gods, while the evil “demon” Cylons worship only one god. The humans worship “the gods of Cobol,” and even have small idols they keep in their lockers. The Cylons worship only one god, and claim their god has a plan for everyone – even the humans.

### **Digging Deeper**

In Jesus’ time, people worshiped many gods. In Luke 8:22-39, Jesus got in a boat with His disciples and crossed the Sea of Galilee. While he slept, a storm came out of nowhere – and the disciples were afraid. But they weren’t just afraid of the storm – they were afraid because they were sailing to the eastern shore, where the pagans lived – and the demons ruled. Jesus

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

calmed the sea, and when they arrived on shore, they were met by a demon-possessed man. Speaking through him the demons demonstrated they knew who Jesus was and said to Him (Luke 8:28):

**What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of God?**

Jesus casts the demons out of the man, and then says to him (Luke 8:39):

**Return to your house, and describe what great things God has done for you.**

Jesus was not afraid to confront the presence of evil in His day. His purpose was to save the lost. He didn't worry about offending someone by saying **"I am the truth the way and the light: No one comes to the father but by Me."** For Jesus, truth was – and is – truth.

Are you running around, placing your faith in many "gods?" Even the demons know that Jesus is the Son of the Most High. Let the Son of the One True God into your heart, and let Him drive the demons from your life.

Picture source:

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. In today's world, we're told to be tolerant of other religions. Some say Christians shouldn't try to convert others to Christianity. What do you think of this?
2. The world is full of fads. Back when the Beatles were popular, they went to Indiana and studied Hinduism. Many of their fans wanted to do the same. How can we discern the difference between a passing fad and the real thing?
3. There is a battle in the world today over what truth is. Jesus claims to be the source of ultimate truth. After 2,000 years, is his claim just a passing fad, or the real deal?

## Stand in the Gap

In a 2006 “**Signs of the Times**” article printed on a foreign website, Oorsprong van artikel writes of Christianity in America: “**Mainline Christianity** continues to flourish abroad and languish in the U.S. ... Now whether you agree or not, something has radically changed in the eyes of our brothers and sisters around the world. **They see the American Church at best adrift, and at worst, apostate.**” (Emphasis added.)

Many individual US congregations within mainline denominations, such as the Episcopal Church, also sense this growing problem. In whatever denomination you look, individual congregations are leaving because they sense that the Ecclesiastical Leadership is moving away from the Bible. In Ezekiel 22:30, the prophet writes:

**I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.**

<p><b>Adventure + Biblical Truth = Learning</b></p>	<p><b>The Brotherhood of the Scroll</b></p>	<p><b>The Clash of the Superpowers</b></p>
		
<p><b>100% of people who have used</b> <i>The Brotherhood of the Scroll</i> and accompanying course, <i>Clash of the Superpowers</i>, to study the Bible say:</p> <p>"This book is a great way to mix adventure with Biblical Truths."</p>	<p><b>Are you looking for a tool, a novel, perhaps, with:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Accompanying High School level course</li><li>2. Weblinks to material on the Internet</li><li>3. Maps &amp; other study aids</li></ol> <p>Like Send You, Maurice Atkinson and 10 others like this.</p> <p>Tweet #brotherhoodscroll</p>	<p><b>The assignments focus on four broad areas:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ancient Biblical history</li><li>2. Modern History</li><li>3. Use of trade routes in ancient &amp; modern times</li><li>4. Discussion questions about character and leadership</li></ol>

Click on the image, or go to [www.wisejargon.com/brotherhood](http://www.wisejargon.com/brotherhood)

## *Pinky and the Brain*

Pinky, I Plan to Take Over the World. I'll  
Start by Telling People They Shouldn't  
Believe in God!



Wow, Brain. What Happens When People  
Stop Being Good for Goodness' Sake and  
Start Being Naughty Instead of Nice?

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### Movie Background

In the cartoon series, *Pinky and the Brain*, a crazed mutated mouse (with a huge light-bulb of a head) wants to conquer the world. However, he needs the help of Pinky, his amiable-but-stupid sidekick. To see a video clip with the show's theme song, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYXBzE-Cpec> Though they never succeed, the series teaches this important life lesson from Mark 8:36:

**What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?**

### Digging Deeper

Thanksgiving is a time when we in America celebrate God's bountiful gifts. It began when an Indian name Squanto walked into the camp of the Pilgrims and began to teach them how to grow crops. Did you know that Squanto spoke English? To learn more of why William Bradford wrote later that Squanto was a "*... special instrument sent by God for their good beyond their expectations ...*" read the article [\*Squanto: The English Speaking Indian Who Helped the Pilgrims.\*](#)

**Why Believe in God? Be Good, for Goodness Sake**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Recently, the AP news service ran an article about a new ad campaign by the American Humanist Association. [According to the article](#), “Ads proclaiming, ‘Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness’ sake,’ will appear on Washington buses starting next week and running through December.” This saddens me. It’s as if there were a plot to remove God from our civic experience.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Ezekiel was afraid that leaders at the very highest echelons of Judah, both its priests and its nobles, were attempting to do just that. In Ezekiel 22:25 – 27, we read.

**There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst like a roaring lion tearing the prey ... her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things ... Her princes within her are like wolves tearing the prey, by shedding blood and destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain.**

The scary thing is that, as in Ezekiel’s day, so in ours. Let’s see what other history of American history we can uncover on this month’s newsletter.

### **The Princes**

In 1934, a man named Norman Woelfel published his Doctoral Dissertation in book form. His book, called **Molders of the American Mind**, was a review of 17 prominent educators of that day. Near the end of his book, Woelfel concluded:

**The things of highest value for individual experience and for ethical standards in modern America will not, however, be found out so long as intellectual leaders maintain sensitivity over the supernatural significance of Christian mythology or a sentimental personal attachment to the character of Jesus.** (Woelfel, Norman. Molders of the American Mind: A Critical Review of the Social Attitudes of Seventeen Leaders in American Education. (Columbia University Press: New York), 1934, pp. 205, 229.)

Along with many others who believed similarly, efforts were made to remove any Christian references from our public schools. Today, one would be hard pressed to find a public school textbook informing students of how Squanto had been exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ even before he met the Pilgrims

### **The Priests**

In a 2006 “[Signs of the Times](#)” article printed on a foreign website, Oorsprong van artikel writes of Christianity in America: “**Mainline Christianity** continues to flourish abroad and languish in the U.S. ... Now whether you agree or not, something has radically changed in the eyes of our brothers and sisters around the world. **They see the American Church at best adrift, and at worst, apostate.**” (Emphasis added.)

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Many individual US congregations within mainline denominations, such as the Episcopal Church, also sense this growing problem. In whatever denomination you look, individual congregations are leaving because they sense that the Ecclesiastical Leadership is moving away from the Bible. In some cases, [denominational leaders](#) are attempting to quash any such attempts to leave.

### **Will We Stand in the Gap?**

For regular readers of this newsletter, I want you to know that I've really struggled writing this month's issue. I've taken it away from what I normally write, which is a message that directs one to search the scripture for those who may not know Christ. Today, however, I really feel the need to convey the message of the Ezekiel 22:30, where the prophet writes:

**I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.**

Picture source: <http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51Aq6K9pQOL. SL500 AA300 .jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. In your experience, what does it mean to “stand in the gap?”
2. Those who have left denominations over the authority of scripture have had to ask an important question: What does it mean to be apostate? How does one decide if this is the condition of the church or denomination one belongs to?
3. Consider the statement from Norman Woelfel from his book, Molders of the American Mind. Do you think there are elements in American society today that want to remove Christianity from our schools and general public life?

## *National Treasure*

56 Men Pledged Their Lives, Their Fortunes  
and Their Sacred Honor to Create A Nation  
That Honors God, Providing Liberty and  
Justice for All



They Had The Ability to Take Action in a  
Time of Peril, and Recognized God Had Laid  
Upon Them the Responsibility to Take That Action

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### **Movie Background**

In **National Treasure**, Benjamin Franklin Gates (**Nicolas Cage**) has spent his life searching for a treasure based on a story handed down from his great, great grandfather. For six generations, the Gates family has chased after clues left behind from the days of the American Revolution about the treasure of the legendary Knights Templar. And now, he's found the key to where the treasure is hidden – on the back of the Declaration of Independence.

There is a line in the Declaration of Independence which states: "But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and provide new guards for their future security."

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

In the movie, **National Treasure**, Ben Gates (**Nicholas Cage**) reads that phrase and then turns to his sidekick, Riley (**Justin Bartha**) and explains its meaning by saying: “If there's something wrong, those who have the ability to take action have the responsibility to take action.” To watch this scene, click here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcZK2CF3mZ8>

### **Digging Deeper**

The interpretation of this line from the Declaration of Independence echoes Christ's words in **Luke 12:48**, where He says:

**From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.**

People are looking for leadership. True leadership that has the interests of the people at heart. People can tell when their leaders aren't acting in their best interests. In Daniel Chapter 5, we read that as an old man, Daniel was brought before Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar. In speaking to the rash young king, Daniel retells the story of how Nebuchadnezzar recognized that (**Daniel 5:21-22**):

**The Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven.**

As Gates points out in the movie, **National Treasure**, true leaders have a responsibility to act when something's wrong. In **Philippians 1:27 and 2:4**, Paul lays out these two thoughts as to how we as citizens of both Heaven and earth should conduct ourselves.

**Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ... do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others.**

An interesting thing about the word “conduct” is that it's translated from the Greek word “**politeuesthe**”. It's from that Greek word we get the English word, “politics.” In the context as Paul uses it, it means “to live as a good citizen;

In your comings and goings where you exercise authority and leadership, what kind of person are you? Are you like Belshazzar, using “politics” to exalt yourself and take credit for the blessings in life God has bestowed upon you? Are you treating those around you as though their only purpose in life is to serve you?

Or, are you like the founders of this Republic? Men who willing gave their lives and their fortunes so that their fellow countrymen, and we their posterity, could know the blessings of liberty and freedom of religion? They conducted themselves “politically”, following as God led them **to do the right thing**, in order to stand against “politics as usual”. They risked everything

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

to provide the leadership needed by the people they served, and in so doing, preserved *the National Treasure of their liberty and freedoms as endowed by their Creator.*

**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2:5-7).**

Picture source: <http://images.starpulse.com/Photos/Previews/National-Treasure-mv17.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Some people think religion and politics shouldn't mix, yet Daniel mixed them both, seeking to honor God and to serve his fellow man. What are your thoughts about the role of religion and politics in our day?
2. In the movie National Treasure, the idea is put forward that "If there's something wrong, those who have the ability to take action have the responsibility to take action." As you read what Paul wrote in Philippians, what do you think Paul would say about Christians taking action?
3. "Doing the right thing" can mean different things to different people in different circumstances. In reading Philippians 2:5-7, what do you think Paul would advise Christians about doing "the right thing?"

## *The Poseidon Adventure*

Go Ahead, Follow that Other Pastor -  
Everybody Else is – to Their Own Doom!



But I'm Telling You, If you See It My Way,  
We'll See The Morning After this  
Perfect Storm We're In!

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### Movie Background

The 1972 movie, **The Poseidon Adventure**, is the story of a luxury cruise liner that is capsized by a tidal wave during on-board celebration of New Year's Eve. The movie featured a cast of characters, including **Shelly Winters**, **Ernest Borgnine**, and **Gene Hackman**. Hackman played Reverend Scott, a minister who is angry with God and challenges His authority. But, through the horrific events on the ship as it begins to sink into the ocean, he leads a group of ten survivors who help each other attempt to reach the bottom of the ship, which is upside down and is the only access to the surface. Along the way, they encounter the ship's Chaplain (**Arthur O'Connell**), who is mistakenly leading the majority of the ship's survivors in the wrong direction, to their inevitable doom. The movie memorialized the song, "**There's Got to Be a Morning After**," the first verse being:

**There's got to be a morning after, If we can hold on thru the night. We have a chance to find the sunshine, Let's keep on looking for the light.**

## **Digging Deeper**

Recently, I was having breakfast with some friends. I commented that to me, the Election of 2008 was like the Movie, **The Poseidon Adventure**. The country – indeed, the world – has been hit by a Financial Tsunami that is sweeping across the world's economic system. To rescue us, we can choose between two leaders preaching different economic solutions: One calling for more government control and regulation, the other for a reform of government and the way it impacts the economy, ultimately trusting in the free enterprise system.

The Poster Boy for the Election of 2008, [Joe the Plumber](#), is represented by Ernest Borgnine, who in the movie played a cop by the name of Mike Rogo. He's trying to decide which so-called savior is the one to follow.

But not only is **The Poseidon Adventure** a metaphor for the election and the economy. It's also a metaphor for the choice being made by many mainline Christian denominations here in America which face internal division over a fundamental disagreement over the authority of the Bible. I happen to be an elder of a Presbyterian Denomination, otherwise known as the PCUSA. Our congregation is in prayer over whether or not we should leave the denomination due to the fact that the PCUSA has moved away from the scriptural basis of the church.

Are you in a quandary over these or similar issues? As we contemplate how we would live in these times, two sets of scripture come to my mind, which I offer for your consideration. First is Colossians 2:6-8:

**As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.**

The second is found in Ephesians 5:15-16:

**Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.**

Now, everyone pull out your old '45 of Maureen McGovern Singing the end of the song:

### **There's Got to be a Morning After**

**It's not too late, we should be giving;  
Only with love can we climb.  
It's not too late, not while we're living,  
Let's put our hands out in time.**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**There's got to be a morning after  
We're moving closer to the shore.  
I know we'll be there by tomorrow  
And we'll escape the darkness,  
We won't be searching anymore.**

Picture source: <http://ia.media-imdb.com/images/M/MV5BMTkyMjk3NTI0M15BMl5BanBnXkFtZTYwMDExODI2.V1.SX420.SY276.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Many Christians struggle over the authority of Scripture. Is the Bible the inerrant word of God, or not? How have you struggled with this question?
2. Since 2008, America and much of the world has entered into tough economic times. What are your thoughts about the “morning after” the struggle we are facing today?
3. Have you found it difficult, at times, to walk by faith when the problems you face seem impossible to bear? How has Jesus helped you to continue to stay strong during such tough times?

## Robin Hood

Gentlemen of the Ruling Class: Let Me  
Introduce You to Some Lambs Who Have  
Risen to Become Lions



We the People have Decided to  
Return to God's Law,  
and Restore the Nation's Honor

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### Movie Background

In the movie, **Robin Hood**, Robin Longstride (**Russell Crowe**) plays the role of a reluctant archer who has been assigned the task of returning the crown of King Richard the Lionheart to London. King Richard has died in France, and his trusted knight, Robert Loxley, leaves to take Richard's crown to return it to London, but is ambushed and left for dead by the French. Fleeing the battle scene, Robin Lonstride and his friends happen upon the ambush and kill the French. Before he dies, Robert of Loxley swears Robin to an oath to return his father's sword, which bears this cryptic message: "Rise and Rise Again, Until Lambs Become Lions." Reluctantly, Robin agrees to do so, and returns to England amidst a brewing civil war, as the English barons, tired of Prince John's tyrannical rule, are ready to revolt. Robin gets Prince John to pledge to sign the Magna Carta, a pledge he breaks as soon as the threat of a French invasion has passed. **It is then that Robin learns that the saying on the sword was written by his own father, who called upon the "Country Class" to gain the courage of lions to rise and challenge the "Ruling Class", destroying tyranny and instituting the rule of law via adoption of the Magna Carta.** To see the trailer for the movie [click here](#).

## Digging Deeper

In Joshua, Chapter 8, an event takes place that marks a significant turning point in the history of Israel. To set the stage, Moses died and Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land. Ever since the crossing, God's people had been at war with the pagan Canaanites. Before Moses had died, we read in Deuteronomy 27:1-8 that he gave them a command from God – that when they entered into the Promised Land, they would gather in a valley between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. There, Joshua was to erect an altar with the Law of God written on it (verses 6 -7):

**You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly.**

When Joshua gathered the people on slopes of Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, they'd been fighting for several years. Realizing that the war is not over, Joshua chooses this moment to fulfill God's commandment as given by Moses. And so, in Joshua 8:32-33, we read the following:

**He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel.**

Imagine the scene – up to two million people, half on the side of one mountain, half on the other mountain, as Joshua reads from the Law of Moses. In this natural amphitheater, the priests repeated the words Joshua read so all could hear, reciting the blessings and the curses. But that's not all, for after the priests recited a portion of the law, we read in Deuteronomy 27:15-26 the following response the people were commanded to make:

**And all the people shall say, "Amen".**

Imagine, if you will, the Canaanites in the surrounding towns and villages as they heard God's law reverberate throughout the land. On August 28, 2010, a similar event took place in Washington, D.C., when radio and T.V. talk show host Glenn Beck lead a rally on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial called "Restoring Honor". At the beginning of the rally, a boy scout led them in the Pledge of Allegiance, which you can see by [clicking here](#). In watching that event, I was struck by what the crowd must have been like when Joshua gathered the people to recite the Law of Moses.

By leading the people to recite the Word of God in the midst of war, Joshua reminded the Israelites that God, not any one man, was in charge. In the movie Robin Hood, we are reminded that liberty and the rule of law is a gift from God, not from any king. On 8/28/2010,

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

America was reminded of her dependence on God Almighty, and that for honor to be restored in the United States, we must once again become One Nation, Under God.

Picture source: [http://www.matffind.com/12345673215-3-2-3\\_img/movie/r/j/l/robin\\_hood\\_2010\\_600x400\\_929161.jpg](http://www.matffind.com/12345673215-3-2-3_img/movie/r/j/l/robin_hood_2010_600x400_929161.jpg)

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. In the movie, the phrase “rise and rise again, until lambs become lions” is a central part of the story line. What do you think it means?
2. When Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, they didn’t automatically take possession of it. They had to persist in their efforts to possess the land. Do you persist in the achievement of your goals in life, or do you perhaps quit too easily?
3. Moses and Joshua had to remind the people of Israel from time to time that God was in charge. What are your thoughts about the need to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in the life of our nation?

## Underdog

Instead of Flying Around Saying: "It's a Bird! It's a Plane!" Underdog acts Like a Prophet Crying in the Wilderness:



There's No Need to Fear! Jesus Christ is Here!

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## Movie Background

After an accident in the lab of a mad scientist, Dr. Simon Barsinister (**Peter Dinklage**), a pet beagle is turned into the superhero of Cartoon fame, Underdog (voiced by **Jason Lee**). Vowing to protect the citizens of Capitol City, Underdog must face down Dr. Barsinister, his henchman Cad (**Patrick Warburton**), and two ferocious German Shepherds whom Dr. Barsinister commands by saying "Simon Says". To see a movie trailer, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGvjGp7o8fQ>

## Digging Deeper

In the Old Testament, we read of two kings. One was a man by the name of Hezekiah, who ruled Judah from 716 to 687 B.C., is recorded in the Bible as one who “Did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” (II Kings 18:3). At one point, when the King of Assyria was threatening to destroy Jerusalem, King Hezekiah offered this prayer.

O Lord, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. It is true, O Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men’s hands. Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God. (II Kings 19:15-19)

God heard Hezekiah’s prayer. The next morning, when the citizens of Jerusalem awoke, 185,000 Assyrians lay dead. Within a year, Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, was murdered by his own two sons.

When Hezekiah died, he was succeeded by his son, Manasseh, whom the bible says “did evil in the sight of the Lord” (II Kings 21:4-5, 7). Here is what Manasseh did:

He built altars in the temple of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, “In Jerusalem I will put my Name.” He took the carved Asherah pole he made and put it in the temple of which the Lord had said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever.” (II Kings 21:4-7)

Notice that the Asherah pole, an idol made “only of wood and stone, fashioned by men’s hands”, was placed in the very Holy of Holies where Hezekiah had said that God was “enthroned between the cherubim” of the Ark of the Covenant. One must wonder how the priests of God must have responded when Manasseh put up an idol in the same room where the Ark of the Covenant was housed. Some bible scholars believe it was during this time that the Ark was secretly removed from the Temple so that it would not be profaned. Legend has it that the prophet Isaiah was martyred when he stood up to King Manasseh and denounced him as an idolater.

As an American, one must ask this question: "*God, as we turn away from You and seek after the idols of our culture, how are You acting in the life of our nation?*" I think back to President Eisenhower, who as President attended church on February 7, 1954. He listened to Dr. George Docherty, A Scottish Presbyterian preacher speaking on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Birthday of Abraham Lincoln. In his sermon, Docherty said – and President Eisenhower heard – these words.

We face, today, a theological war. It is NOT basically a conflict between two political philosophies - Thomas Jefferson's political democracy over against

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Lenin's communistic state. NOR is it a conflict fundamentally between two economic systems between, shall we say, Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations and Karl Marx's Das Capital. IT IS a fight for freedom of the human personality. It is not simply man's inhumanity to man. It is Armageddon, a battle of the gods. *It is the view of man as it comes down to us from Judaio-Christian civilization in mortal combat against modern, secularized godless humanity.*

The pledge of Allegiance seems to me to omit this theological implication that is fundamental to the American way of life. It should be "One nation, under God." Once "under God," then we can define what we mean by "liberty and justice for all." To omit the words "under God" in the pledge of allegiance is to omit the definitive character of the American way of life.

Following the preaching of that sermon, which was appropriately titled "Under God," the United States Congress moved swiftly to add those two words to the Pledge of Allegiance. Those two words – Under God - have as their source the Gettysburg Address, first spoken by President Abraham Lincoln.

A President, a King, can have a tremendous impact on his nation and their relationship to God. Because of Manasseh's leadership – he was king for 45 years – a generation grew up believing that it was "politically correct" to not follow God. They grew up believing it was politically correct to cover up the symbols of worship to the God of Israel when the King showed up to give a speech. They grew up believing it was politically correct for the King to spill innocent blood, as we are told in II Kings 21:16 that Manasseh filled the streets of Jerusalem with the blood of sacrificed babies. Despite the fact that the majority of people followed a King who said "Simon Says evil is good, and good evil," in the end, Jerusalem was destroyed, and her people carried off into exile in a foreign land.

As an American, I can't help but ask: What of the United States? In ancient times, the people had little to do with electing their kings, but in America, We the People choose our Presidents. Therefore, while it is certainly true that the President of the United States has great ability to influence the faith of our nation, ultimately the decision to follow a President who honors God – or does not – is in the hands of We The People.

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:26)

**There's No Need To Fear. Jesus Christ Is Here!**

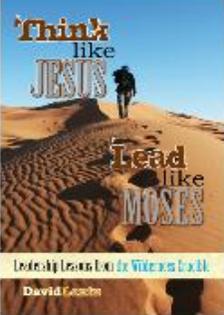
Picture source: <http://www.filmhobbit.com/images/reviews/2000/11847106597222.jpg>

## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Sooner or later, “We the People” become our own leaders. Why is it important to consider the moral character of those whom we elect to rule over us?
2. The Bible is very careful to list out which kings did evil. What do you think was the standard by which a king was said to have done good or evil?
3. There’s a movement afoot to remove “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance, and “In God we trust” from our money. Have these words lost their meaning, making it OK to get rid of them, or do they still mean something and inspire us today?

# Damaged Relationships and Forgiveness

How often Satan uses the broken relationships of families to divide people, causing the friends of the family members to choose sides. Building and maintaining relationships is tough work. Ignoring people with whom we'd rather not speak, or worse, speaking disparagingly of them, can quickly lead to destruction. Sometimes, we focus on external issues, problems and threats so much that we ignore the need to take counsel on how to keep our internal house in order. We need friends and advisors who will risk our wrath to set us straight when we engage in actions that can destroy the relationships we've worked so hard to build.

<p><b>Ten Principles of Being a Godly Leader</b> <b>a Free Video Lesson Series</b></p>																	
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Click on the image, or go to <http://www.wisejargon.com/courses/principles-of-godly-leadership>

## Sum of All Fears

Mary Said that Joe said that Ellen said  
Stan Did – Uh, I Can't Remember What.  
But it WAS MEAN!



They Did? Sticks and Stones Can Break  
My Bones – But Those Words Mean WAR!

---

## Movie Background

In the movie **Sum of All Fears**, Jack Ryan (**Ben Affleck**) is an analyst with the CIA specializing in Soviet military and political policy. In particular, he is an expert on President Zorkin (**Richard Marner**), the new Soviet President. When the Soviet military launches a missile strike on a US ship, Ryan is convinced that President Zorkin was not responsible for giving the order. While he can't prove what he believes to his boss, William Cabot (**Morgan Freeman**), it turns out that he is exactly right. A small, well funded group of Nazis is behind the scenes, pulling strings to get the USSR and the USA to go to nuclear war. Their goal: To rule the world that will emerge from the ashes of such a holocaust. Can Jack Ryan get the American President to step back from DEF CON 4 and the total annihilation of the Human Race? Here's a video clip of the Nazi leader, Dressler (**Alan Bates**) explaining his plan to get the US and the USSR to destroy each other: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9C-M27BEyno>

## Digging Deeper

In the movie, **Sum of All Fears**, Dressler seeks to destroy the diplomatic relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States by playing on their worst fears. While both countries

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

want to trust each other, they have many fears and biases they both hold. Dressler plays on their fears, manipulating circumstances to cause the two sides to go to the edge of war believing the worst about each other.

### **Satan lives to do that very same thing to us.**

In the Old Testament, we find a story of how one man sought to do the same thing in order to take revenge on King David. A man by the name of Ahithophel was David's chief counselor. And yet, when David's son Absalom sought to rebel against his father, Ahithophel sided with the King's son. In 2nd Samuel 15:12 we read the following:

**Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city – from Giloh – while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.**

A key question was why the chief counselor of David would join in a rebellion against the King? To uncover the reason, we need to do a bit of detective work to reveal the web of family connections and broken relationships. Second Samuel 23 lists David's mighty men. Two names stand out in verses 34 and 39: Ahithophel's son Eliam, and Uriah the Hittite. In other words, Ahithophel's son was a close friend **and** father-in-law of the man who married Ahithophel's granddaughter, Bathsheba. Putting Second Samuel 23:34 and 39 together with 2nd Samuel 11:3, we read the following:

**... Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite ... Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all. ... So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"**

David had ordered the murder of Ahithophel's grandson by marriage, a man who had been a friend to his own son, in order to marry his granddaughter, Bathsheba. By siding with Absalom (who we are told in 2nd Samuel 14:27 had three sons), Ahithophel saw an opportunity to destroy both David and Absalom, clearing the way for his great grandson, Solomon, to become King. Like Dressler in the movie **Sum of All Fears**, Ahithophel played off the fears of both David and Absalom to destroy them. In the end, Absalom and his three sons all died, David was destroyed by grief, and Solomon became King.

## **Bitterness Does Not Make Us Better, It Only Makes Us Broken.**

How often Satan uses the broken relationships of families to divide people, causing the friends of the family members to choose sides. How easy it is to fall into the trap of destroying the other party because we hear that "Some one said that someone else said that so-and-so did something terrible." Recently, I was in Goshen visiting my mother, and had a chance to attend the church where I grew up. That Sunday, Pastor Ed gave a sermon, "The Man in the Mirror". As part of his sermon, he spoke of a set of circumstances that led to him and his brother not speaking to each other for over three years. As part of his sermon, he asked "How can I sit in

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my office, counseling people to forgive and restore broken relationships when I have this in my life?" *And then he said something I found profound: "**Bitterness does not make us better, it only makes us broken.**"* With that, he shared the circumstances surrounding the broken relationship with his brother, and how he reached out to ask forgiveness.

If more pastors in America would do what Pastor Ed did, people would truly see the power of God's word. By being willing to humble himself and share that story, Pastor Ed was taking to heart the words of our Lord in Matthew 7:4-5:

**Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.**

To conclude his sermon, Pastor Ed invited people to write down a broken relationship they were holding on to and come up to the front of the sanctuary and toss it into a wastebasket. Applying a concept called "Dying Moments" from an event known as the Great Banquet, this action symbolized each person standing up to Satan, telling him "You will NOT defeat the power of God's love."

Satan prompts lots of Dresslers and Ahithophels who want to play on the Sum of All our Fears in order to get us to destroy each other. When the Body of Christ encounters those like these two, we need to confront them and ask them to repent from their efforts to divide the body.

God has a better way. He calls us to confess our sins, to seek His forgiveness, and by being cleansed by His love, we are empowered to then forgive others. When we do, God takes our Dying Moments and does just as He promised through His Prophet, Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:34):

**They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."**

What about you? Are you harboring a grudge - or worse, trying to cause others to destroy themselves because of that grudge? If so, ask God for the courage to look at The Man- or Woman - in the Mirror, and face The Sum of All Fears.

Picture source:

<http://t0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRgvxvVKIL0Qdxe1kG8ITVAXHwzF0PmVukO9BqQMI aO ZBG14w>

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Sir Walter Scott once said: “Oh, what tangled webs we weave, when first we practice to deceive”. Have you ever sought to deceive someone for your own benefit?
2. Are you bitter about something? Is your bitterness helping you, or destroying you?
3. When we take action out of a sense of bitterness, we affect others. How has your bitterness, or that of someone you know, led to actions that have affected others?

## Class Action

So instead of Reading Your Report, They Covered it Up. They Said "We Need to Put This Behind Us"



They Said "It's OK to Just Blow People Up". So, The Ends DO Justify the Means. Isn't that right?

---

## Movie Background

In the movie **Class Action**, Jedediah Ward (**Gene Hackman**) is a legal services attorney who specializes in lawsuits against major corporations. His client has suffered the loss of a family member driving a car with an alleged defective gas tank that explodes under certain conditions. He is bringing a class action lawsuit against the car manufacturer, which is being represented by Ward's estranged daughter, Maggie Ward (**Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio**). Jedediah and his daughter discover an engineering study demonstrating the company knew about the defective gas tank, but calculated that the cost to recall and repair the car would cost more than the probable cost of any lawsuits the car manufacturer might be required to pay. When Maggie learns this, she must decide if she should defend the car company, using any means necessary to suppress any evidence that the study exists, or provide a copy of the study to her father as part of the legal practice known as "evidentiary discovery." To learn more about the movie, you can watch the trailer at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1\\_EqTja4Pk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1_EqTja4Pk)

## Digging Deeper

### **Maintaining Relationships Requires Justice, Compassion, and Attention to People**

In Second Samuel, chapters 13 - 14, we read of the tragic events involving King David's sons Amnon and Absalom. David's oldest son, Amnon, falls in love with his half sister, Tamar. When she rebuffs his advances, Amnon tricks David into ordering her to come visit him and fix him a meal. At the behest of the king, her father, Tamar does so, and Amnon rapes her. Tamar reported this event to her blood brother, Absalom, and, evidently, made the matter known to her father, David. We read David's reaction in II Samuel 13:21-23:

**Now when King David heard of all these matters, he was very angry. But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar. Now it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which is near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king's sons.**

The key thing to note here is that while David became angry, he did nothing - for two full years! Finally, Absalom, taking matters into his own hands, contrives a plot to murder Amnon. After badgering his father, we read in verse 27 of how Absalom is finally able to persuade David to send Amnon and all his other sons with him to the sheep shearing festival. Notice that David does this, even though the two brothers haven't spoken to each other for two full years. Absalom uses the occasion to take revenge for his sister Tamar and murder Amnon, and afterward flees to hide for three years with his mother's relatives in a town called Geshur.

This escalation of events created several camps within the kingdom. Some wanted to take blood revenge against Absalom. David, torn by the grief over the loss of Amnon and, perhaps, a recognition that he was partly to blame for never seeking to provide justice in the case of Tamar's rape, wanted to forgive Absalom. But, again, David could not bring himself to reach out and mend broken relationships. Into this vacuum stepped one of David's closest advisor, Joab, who contrived a set of circumstances whereby he brought Absalom back to Jerusalem. In Second Samuel 14:23-24 and 28 we read:

**So Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. However the king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face. Now Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face.**

Once again, David fails to take control of the situation. He does not seek to reach out and heal the broken relationship between himself and Absalom. Nor does he seek to follow a process to provide justice in the entanglement of family feuds, hatred, deceit, rape and murder. David simply abdicates his responsibility, as both the King and a father, to provide leadership **which seeks the good of the kingdom as its chief end**. By following a policy of "moving on" and not addressing the escalating series of offenses, David actually made the situation worse, not better. And so, as we saw in last month's Conversation With the Culture ([The Sum of All](#)

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**Fears**), Absalom eventually led a revolt that tore the kingdom apart. The movie *Class Action* provides a way to see how we can resolve conflict if we are willing to reconcile.

In the movie, **Class Action**, Jed Ward is a lawyer who has an eye for the ladies. His daughter, Maggie, will barely speak to him. In one scene they exchange these words:

**JEDEDIAH:** If your mother could hear you now.

**MAGGIE:** Well she can't, can she? She finally got out of here and wherever she is, she's gotta be much happier than she was with you.

Late in life, Jed Ward realizes that his goal in life was to do whatever he wanted to do, without concern for the consequences. To make things right, he must reach out to Maggie at a time when reconciliation is the furthest thing from her mind. For her part, Maggie's goal had been that of a good family relationship. But, because of her anger at her father, she had entered her father's profession, become a good lawyer, and NOW discovers that she represents a client who possesses no scruples. She realized that she has become what she hated - and in the movie, realizes that to make things right, she must work with her father to make things right. At the end of the movie, they reconcile and all is well, but then, that's Hollywood.

Recently, Pastor Kevin Bausman of Southport Presbyterian Church preached on goal setting in a sermon titled "The Bottom Line". In that sermon, he said the following:

**How we reach a goal is just as important as the goal itself. ... In God's economy and His way of doing things, the end never justifies the means, no matter how noble a goal may be. ... Many will reach a goal by hurting, manipulating, or destroying people along the way. They'll do this to reach a goal, without looking at the ramifications and the honesty of those changes, and how they impact people and truth. (Pastor Kevin Bausman, The Bottom Line, preached April 25, 2010. Access at <http://www.southportpc.org/services/sermons/> .)**

### **Where There Is No Guidance, The People Fall.**

Whether it's a king, a CEO, a pastor or a father, those in leadership must look out for the good of those whom they are called to shepherd. Proverbs 11:14 says:

**Where there is no guidance, the people fall. But in abundance of counselors there is victory.**

Building and maintaining relationships is tough work. Ignoring people with whom we'd rather not speak, or worse, speaking disparagingly of them, can quickly lead to destruction. Sometimes, we focus on external issues, problems and threats so much that we ignore the need to take counsel on how to keep our internal house in order. We need friends and advisors who will risk our wrath to set us straight when we engage in actions that can destroy the relationships we've worked so hard to build. In his book, **David: A Story of Passion and**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**Destiny**, Pastor and Teacher Chuck Swindoll begins Chapter 18 on David and Absalom with these words:

**A family in trouble is a common occurrence, but it's never a pretty picture. There are two kinds of trouble a family can experience; trouble that comes from without and trouble that comes from within. Though both can be devastating for a family, the more difficult of the two is trouble from within.**

What about you? This Father's Day, as you work to make a living, to advance a career, to make a name for yourself, are you minding the home front? Are you nurturing, or destroying, relationships? Without guidance, the people who depend on us will fail. Without the Lord, we will fail.

Picture source: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1\\_EqTja4Pk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1_EqTja4Pk) at 1:17

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### Questions for Further Reflection

1. Thinking about the relationship between David and his children, how is it similar to that of people you know? How is it different?
2. How have you balanced your career and your family life?
3. Think of a time when you pursued a course of action in which you justified the means you used by saying to yourself the ends were worth it. Looking back, how did it turn out? Would you do it all over again?

## Galaxy Quest

What, You Do Not Know What the  
Omega 13 Does? How can The  
Commander NOT KNOW Something  
about His Ship?



Because I'm Not the Commander, I'm an Actor!  
I Just Play "The Commander" On TV. By the  
Way, How Does my Hair Look?

---

### Movie Background

In the movie, **Galaxy Quest**, Jason Nesmith (**Tim Allen**) is an actor who played Commander Peter Quincy Taggart, commanding officer of the PROTECTOR, on the Star Trek-like TV show **Galaxy Quest**. Now in syndicated re-runs, the **Galaxy Quest** cast make a living rehashing their stale old TV episodes. Nesmith lives only for himself, content to use others to get what he wants. One day, Nesmith unwittingly agrees to make an appearance for real aliens, the Thermians, who have come to earth to recruit them to face an alien race seeking to destroy them. Getting the rest of his Galaxy Quest cast members to pilot a spaceship the Thermians have built based on the "historical documents" (past TV shows), they must fight a real intergalactic space battle. Towards the end of the movie, Jason Nesmith (**Tim Allen**) is confronted by the alien commander, Sarris, regarding the function of something called the Omega 13 device. Nesmith tells Sarris he doesn't know what it does, but Sarris doesn't believe him, saying "**You think that I am a fool, that the Commander does not know ever bolt, every weld, of his ship?**" Nesmith is forced to admit that he's not really the "Commander", just an actor pretending to be something he's not. To see a video clip of the scene, click on [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c\\_tm38l26Gg&feature=related#t=3m18s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_tm38l26Gg&feature=related#t=3m18s)

## Digging Deeper

In I Samuel 15, the prophet Samuel confronts King Saul over the sin in his life. Saul has chosen to follow his own instincts, instead of obeying God. In verse 11, God says “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.” In reality, Saul was never interested in following God – he was only pretending! Here is how Saul responded to Samuel when confronted about his sin (15:24-25):

**Saul answered Samuel, "I have sinned. I have transgressed the LORD's command and your words. Because I was afraid of the people, I obeyed them. Now therefore, please forgive my sin and return with me so I can worship the LORD."**

While Saul admits his sin, he shifts the blame to others. It's not his fault – he was afraid of the people. They wanted him to do what he did – so he obeyed them. And, he wants Samuel to go with him, to put on a show, so that the people will believe that Saul is back in the Lord's good graces. To the very end, Saul simply pretends to be “the commander”. But in reality, he's just an actor. When Samuel won't do as he asks, Saul sets out to destroy David, the man Samuel has been led by God to find as Saul's replacement.

Compare this to David and how he responds when confronted with his sin of having Uriah killed and taking his wife, Bathsheba, as his own. In II Samuel 12, his friend Nathan confronts him with the truth of his sin, telling him a story of a situation similar to the sin of David and asking him what the King felt should be done. In anger at the circumstances, David says (II Samuel 12:5-7)

**"As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion." Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!"**

Unlike Saul, David takes full responsibility for his act. After listening to Nathan enumerate his sins and the punishment he deserves to receive, David responds “I have sinned against the Lord.” (II Samuel 12:13). No excuses. No attempts to shift the blame or to have Nathan killed for accusing him. David simply accepts the judgment, along with the punishment he is due because of his sin. Why did David make this choice? Because, as “a man after God's own heart,” David understood that he had violated the Golden Rule, which says (Matthew 7:12):

**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

David realized that he could either destroy Nathan, the man who called him out and exposed him as a fraud, or face the fact that he was not who he said he was, the “valiant warrior” God had called him to be.

Ultimately, this lesson from David's life is about how we live the Golden Rule. If we run around demanding that others apologize for this or that, if we criticize others for being too controlling, if we hold others to account for broken relationships – **but destroy the Nathans among us who**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**might hold us to our own standards** – we are nothing but a modern day Saul. In the end, we become merely pretenders who play to the crowd – and blame others for our failings, saying “they made me do it”.

It’s not easy. In the movie, **Galaxy Quest**, Jason Nesmith (**Tim Allen**) has to admit his failings in front of everyone who believed that he was the Commander. David, too, had to admit he had sinned.

**What about you and me? Are we the “real deal”, or just an actor hired to play the part?**

Picture source:

[http://t3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSbJbb4f\\_cyPDbU0vB\\_q4imn5RmZle0gMaAeyDShSWQcNaM3VohUSyAef7G](http://t3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSbJbb4f_cyPDbU0vB_q4imn5RmZle0gMaAeyDShSWQcNaM3VohUSyAef7G)

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Christians tend to either perform so they look good, or pretend that they are righteous. Would you say that you’re more of a performer, or a pretender?
2. The word “hypocrite” comes from the Greek word *hypocrite*, which means “play acting.” It is the idea that one is an actor, playing for the applause of the crowd. Often, we criticize others when they act as hypocrites. When have you been a hypocrite, acting for the applause of the crowd?
3. In the movie, *Galaxy Quest*, Tim Allen, playing the part of Jason Nesmith, demonstrates that he’s just an actor – that he’s really not a Commander. What are the qualities of a “true” Commander, and how might you aspire to become one? . .

## Gran Torino

Father, You Know Nothing About Life and  
Death



Maybe So, Walt. But I Do Know  
Something About Forgiveness

---

### Movie Background

In the movie **Gran Torino**, Walt Kowalski (**Clint Eastwood**) is a crusty old Korean War veteran. He's angry at the world - his wife has just died, he's discovered he's got lung cancer, and the neighborhood he's lived in all his life is changing, as an Asian ethnic group called the Hmong are moving in. But in spite of his bitterness, Walt gets to know a Hmong teenage boy named Thao (**Bee Vang**) and his sister Vu (**Brooke Chia Thao**) when Thao attempts to steal his prized Gran Torino as part of a gang initiation. Walt grudgingly takes Thao under his wing, teaching him how to be a man. It is through this process that Walt comes to realize that Thao, Vu and the other Hmong people know and understand him better than his own family.

In **Gran Torino**, the conversation of what living and dying are all about threads its way throughout the dialogue. Father Janovich (**Christopher Carley**), a young 27 year-old Priest, promised Walt's late wife that he'd check in on Walt, but the old veteran will have nothing to do with him. One day, they talk about living and dying, and Walt tells the young priest that he saw plenty of that in Korea. Father Janovich admits Walt knows much more about dying than he does, but that Walt could learn a thing or two from him about forgiveness. When the Hmong Shawman "reads" Walt, and tells him that he has a dark hidden pain for which he can't find forgiveness, Walt says "A bunch of gooks know me better than my own family." At his funeral, the Hmong community turns out to show their love and pay their respects to a man that only

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

wanted people to "stay off my lawn." Walt's family shed fake tears at his death, as they were simply waiting for him to die so they could inherit his possessions, including the Gran Torino. The Hmong, however, wept silently at his passing, knowing they had lost a friend and a protector. To get a better idea of the theme of the movie, watch the trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQvS1L8C4iU>).

### **Why Does Jesus Cry for You?**

Before going to Jerusalem to die on a cross, Jesus took his disciples through the Galilee on the way to the city of Capernaum. Stopping along the way, he tells them in Mark 9:31:

The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and when He has been killed, He will rise again three days later.

After making this statement, Jesus prepares the Disciples for the crucifixion. On the way to Jerusalem, to celebrate the Passover, they get word that Jesus' friend, Lazarus, is very sick. But, Jesus does not rush to Bethany where he is, but takes his time going to see Lazarus. When he does arrive, Jesus is taken to where his friend was buried some four days before His arrival. In John 11:33-36, we read:

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

The comment in verse 36, when the Jews say "see how much He loved him," is revealing of the burial practices of the time - the use of a tear jar to store tears shed for the dead. The more full the cup, the more proof that the deceased had been loved in life. (For more information, [click here](#).)

The second time Jesus weeps is recorded in Luke 19 when he rides the colt of a donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. As the people laid down palm fronds before Jesus, the people shouted "Hosanna, Save us!" For the Jews, the waving of palm fronds was similar to us waving the American Flag as the Veterans march buy on the Fourth of July. They saw Jesus as a military conqueror who would save them from the Roman oppressors ([click here](#) for more information). With this as background, read Luke 19:39-44:

Some of the Pharisees from the crowd told Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples." He answered, "I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out!" As He approached and saw the city, He wept over it, saying, "If you knew this day what would bring peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. For the days will come on you when your enemies will build an embankment against you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave one stone on another in you, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

In John 11:35, Jesus weeps softly. But here, in Luke 19:40, Jesus weeps bitterly. Lazarus was a close friend; Jesus wept at his passing because he felt the pain of losing such a friend. In Luke, Jesus weeps because they did not recognize who He was. They wanted Him to be something He was not. They wanted him to be a military conqueror.

But he wasn't. He was a lamb who was there, offering himself as a sacrifice. The day Jesus rode into the Jerusalem was a very special day. It was the 10th day of the month of Nissan. Moses had declared this day a special day. In Exodus 12:3, 6 we read:

Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday – lamb selection day. He rode into offer himself as a lamb to sacrifice as an atonement for sin. But the Jews really didn't know Him. They wanted Him to make war against the Romans. Rather than accept him as the lamb sacrificed to take away the sins of the world, they wanted him to be a general who would kill their enemies.

At the end of **Gran Torino**, Walt confesses to young Father Janovich. His biggest sin is that he'd never really gotten to know his two sons. To them, he was a stranger. Yet, the Hmong boy, Thao, had become like a true son to him. Walt and Thao had really come to know each other. While Walt's family hoped he'd leave his Gran Torino to one of them in his will, Walt left it to Thao instead. He then goes and sacrifices his life, so that Thao might survive the gangs that threatened him.

As we prepare to celebrate Easter, the question for you and me is this: Do we know Jesus? Jesus cries for us. Either He weeps the soft, silent tears of a close friend who shares our pain. Or, He weeps the loud, lamenting wail of one struck by the grief of knowing we've rejected Him.

### **What kind of tears does Jesus weep for you?**

Picture source: [http://thumbs.filmstarts.de/image/Hook\\_scene\\_01.jpg](http://thumbs.filmstarts.de/image/Hook_scene_01.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. How well would you say you know people with whom you are close; how well do you know your family?
2. Do you allow others to get to know you, or do you hide who you really are? If you keep people "out" of your life, why is that?

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

3. In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus commands us to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” In your experience, what does it mean to have a healthy self love?

## Hoosiers



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### Movie Background

Set in 1951, **Hoosiers** uses the story of the 1954 Milan Indiana State Basketball champion team to tell an inspirational story about the power of a second chance. A discredited, unemployed former college basketball coach, Norman Dale (**Gene Hackman**), gets a chance to coach a small-town Indiana high-school basketball team. In spite of the initial resentment he is shown by the town's people, Coach Dale leads his team to the state championship. To help him, he recruits the town's local basketball legend and now recovering alcoholic, "Shooter" (**Dennis Hopper**), to be his assistant coach. Near the end of the movie, when the team faces seemingly insurmountable odds, Coach Dale says to his team: "If you put your effort and concentration into playing to your potential, to be the best that you can be, I don't care what the scoreboard says at the end of the game, in my book we're gonna be winners."

Early in the movie, Coach Dale tries to impress upon his players the importance of playing as a team. He says to them:

**"I need five players on the floor functioning as one single unit, one no more important than another. Pass four times, THEN you can shoot the ball."**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

At one point, one of his players mouths off for the last time. Coach Dale walks up to the young man, tells him to leave the gym, and says “*And don’t come back till you learn to keep your mouth shut and listen.*”

### **Digging Deeper**

In the book of Acts, we see a similar situation occur. Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were traveling on a mission trip, and were preparing to go to the next city when John Mark decided to leave and go to Jerusalem. This revolt on John Mark’s part would later get him “kicked off the team.” In Acts 15, Paul was preparing to leave on another mission trip. As he discussed the upcoming trip with his partner, Barnabas, we read in Acts 15:37-38.

**“Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.**

We don’t know the details of why Mark left, and we don’t know exactly how Mark became reconciled to Paul. What we do know is that they did patch up their differences. About 12 years later, we read this comment in Colossians 4:10:

**Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas’s cousin, Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).**

Clearly, Paul is giving Mark a second chance. Notice that Paul isn’t sure Mark will come, for Paul writes “*if he comes to you*”. Like Coach Dale in the movie Hoosiers, it’s been a long time since that incident that caused his career to spiral downward. Has he learned anything from it?

Evidently, Mark did, and was rewarded with being fully restored. In II Timothy 4:11, Paul writes these words to Timothy regarding Mark’s full restoration:

**Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark, and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.**

Like Coach Dale and John Mark, all of us at some point have **revolted** against authority and been **rejected** because of it. However, not all of us have become **reconciled** with those whom we’ve offended. We suffer because we long to be **restored** like Coach Dale and John Mark were.

**Jesus is in the habit of affording people a second chance. Are you?**

Picture source: [http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/2088/2881/320/hos\\_Image30.jpg](http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/2088/2881/320/hos_Image30.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Have you ever needed a second chance? Talk about that experience with a friend.
2. Coach Dale went on to lead his team to the State Finals. What did John Mark go on to do?
3. In the movie, Coach Dale is rejected by many of the town's people before he ever steps inside the gym. Why do we sometimes reject new people whom God places in our lives?

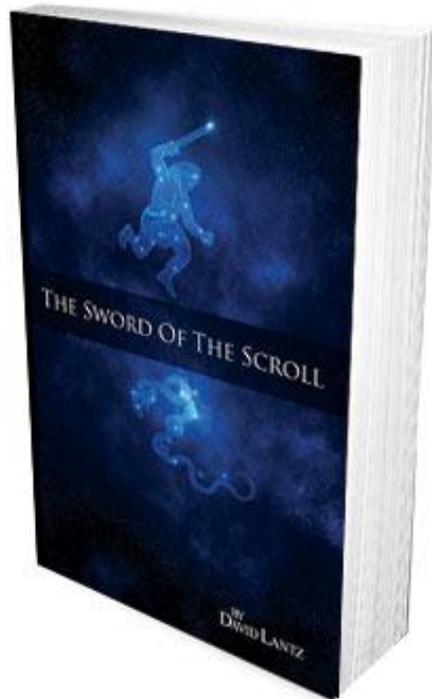
# Rearing Young Men and Women

Untitled, Anonymous Poem

There are little eyes upon you, and they're watching night and day. There are little ears that quickly take in every word you say. There are little hands all eager to do everything you do. And a little boy who's waiting for the day he'll be like you.

You're the little fellow's idol; you're the wisest of the wise. In his mind, about you, no suspicions ever rise. He believes in you, devoutly, hopes that all you say and do He will say and do in your way, when he grows up just like you.

There's a wide eyed little fellow who believes you're always right, Yet his ears always open, and he's watching day and night. You are setting an example, in all you say and do, for the little boy (and yes, the little girl) who's waiting to grow up to be just like you.



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To order the Kindle Version of the book, [Click on the image](#) above.

*Finding Forrester*

You don't know what to do right now,  
do you?



All I want to do is find myself. If you  
help me do that, I'll help you find the  
courage to leave your apartment.

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## Movie Background

The movie, **Finding Forrester**, is about two people, Jamal Wallace (**Rob Brown**) and William Forrester (**Sean Connery**), who are afraid to come out of the shadows. Jamal looks up to his older brother, who taught him how to play basketball, and how to be a man in a fatherless household. This mentoring, combined with his God-given talents, allows him to surpass not only his own brother, but also his peers through his command of the English language and his love of literature. Forrester too looked up to an older brother who died many years ago. Forrester wrote a novel about their relationship, but is angry with the literary world which totally missed the point of his story. Rather than celebrate the notoriety his one award winning novel has given him, he has hidden from the world, sequestered in a high rise apartment in the Bronx. From his perch above the city, Forrester can look down on the neighborhood basketball court where Jamal and his friends play ball. As fate would have it, the two meet, and help each other find themselves as they support each other to come out of the shadows of life. To see a scene from the movie, in which Jamal confronts his nemesis, Professor Crawford, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSnraJOeOyM>

## Digging Deeper

Soon after the birth of Christianity, a man by the name of Saul was a zealous Jew focused on persecuting members of the new religion. Many Christians are familiar with the story of Saul, and how Christ met him on the road to Damascus, and changed his name to Paul. However, many know little of how God prepared Paul for ministry after his life changing experience.

After Paul's eyes were closed, God sent a man named Ananias to him so that he could regain his sight. Ananias and some others were able to help Paul go to Arabia where, for three years, he learned the Gospel from Jesus and studying the Scriptures. At the end of that study time, Paul went to Jerusalem where he was introduced to a man named Barnabas. In Acts 9:26-27, we read:

**When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.**

The two ministered together until a time came when they learned of a plot to kill Paul. And so, to protect him, they sent Paul away to his home town of Tarsus, where he would be safe. During that time, Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the church leaders in Jerusalem. Not long after that, he went to Tarsus to bring Paul back with him to minister in Antioch. In Acts 11:25-26, we read:

**And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.**

Paul stayed in Antioch under Barnabas' care for a year. During that time, the two saw many come to Christ. When their ministry there had ended, they returned to Jerusalem. Not long after that, the two went in separate directions, and Paul rose to the status he holds as the author of many books in the New Testament.

In **Finding Forrester**, Jamal spent time in the shadows learning from William Forrester, just as Paul spent time in the shadows learning from Barnabas. In his book, **Paul: A Man of Grit and Grace**, Chuck Swindoll draws the following three lessons from this experience:

1. When preparing us for ministry, God includes what we'd rather omit
2. While we wait in the shadows, God shows us we're not indispensable
3. When God hides us away, He reveals new insights about our ministry.

As you consider these lessons, are you in a time of waiting? If so, do you have any idea what you're waiting for? With whom can you partner so that you can emerge from the shadows?

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

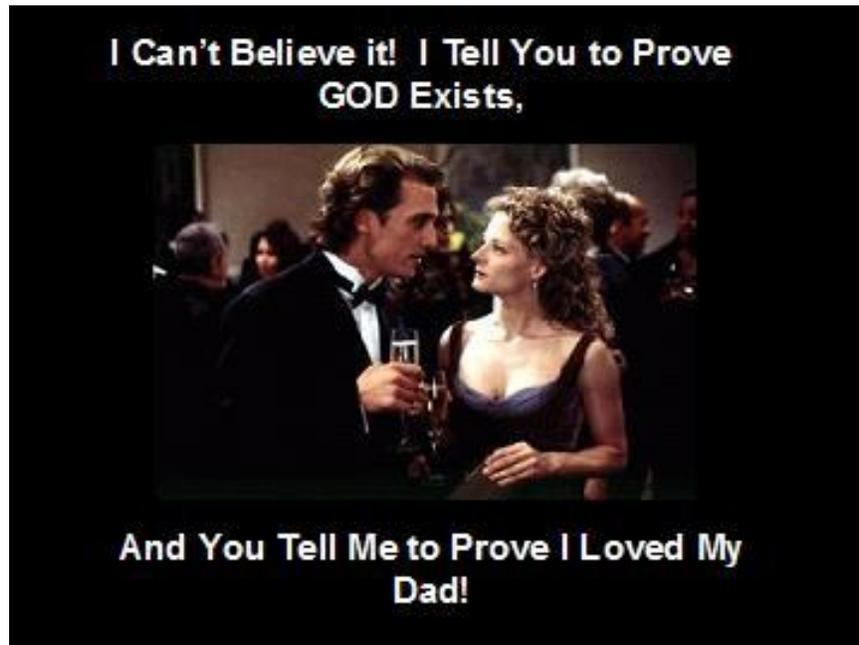
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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. What steps can you take to encourage those around you who are not sure how to move forward?
2. In what ways does the condition of our relationships reflect the condition of our hearts?
3. What positive results and benefits do you reap as a result of your relationships with others?

## Contact



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### Movie Background

In the movie, **Contact**, Dr. Eleanor Arrowway (Jodie Foster) is a smart, highly competent, driven scientist. She's also very bitter. She has had two great loves in her life. One is her work. Her entire identity revolves around astronomy, but not just any type of stargazing. She's into radio astronomy – and she's listening for a signal from alien races in far-away star systems.

The other love of her life was her father, who died when she was a girl. That part of her life is shut up and locked away in her heart. She cannot, she will not, let anyone else "in" to her life – not even a handsome religious guru named Palmer Joss (Matthew McConaughey).

He believes in God, while she doesn't. In one scene, she challenges Palmer Joss to prove God exists. In answer to her challenge, Joss says: "Did you love your father?" to which she replies, "Yes, very much." Joss, looking deeply into her eyes, answers: "Prove it."

**The point is that she cannot prove she loved her father – he'll have to take it on faith. And she'll have to take it on faith that God does in fact exist.**

### Digging Deeper

In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Judges, the Lord appears to a young Israelite named Gideon. Gideon is hiding in a pit used for making wine. He's in the pit because he's threshing the wheat he's

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

harvested and doesn't want the Midianites who ruled Israel to see him and come take it away. The Lord says to Gideon: "Hail, valiant warrior." He then commands Gideon to go and "deliver Israel from the hand of Mideon."

Gideon doesn't know what to say. He makes all sorts of excuses as to why he's the wrong guy for the job. The Lord's response is simply, "Don't worry, I'll be there with you. Now, go get 'em, tiger." So, what does Gideon do?

He says "Prove it. Prove you are who you say you are – Prove you're God."

God does, and Gideon goes off and tears down an idol God wanted him to get rid of. After he successfully does that, God tells him he's ready to go after the Midianites. So what does Gideon do? He asks God to prove it's really him – **two more times**. Each time, God passes the test.

You and I are just like Gideon. Remember that time you said: "God, if you get me out of this jam, whatever you want, I'll do it!" And then, you forgot about God once the crisis passed – and then said, "that really wasn't God – I just got lucky." Even when God proves to us that He exists and that he loves us, we quickly forget.

And the next time He tries to get our attention, we simply say "Prove it – prove You exist. Again." In the mean time, we keep running on the treadmill of life, fooling ourselves into thinking we're making progress when in fact we're just standing still.

At some point, God tells us to have faith and stop asking for proof. In John 8:24, Jesus says:

**For unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.**

When we have faith and trust in Him, God molds us into the valiant warrior he sees us becoming. But until we quit asking, "prove it," and simply trust Him, God will just look at us and ask, "So, you say you want to get off the treadmill? Prove it."

Picture source: <http://kspark.kaist.ac.kr/Movies/Contact.files/matthew1.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. How do you put God to the test, asking Him to prove to you that He exists?
2. In the Book of Judges, the Angel of the Lord calls Gideon a "Valiant Warrior," even though Gideon really wasn't very valiant – at least not yet. How does a growing faith in God allow us to grow into the person God sees us as?
3. Can you think of a time when you acted just on faith and trusted God with the outcome? Have you tried sharing that experience with someone? If not, think about talking with someone about your experience.

## Second Hand Lions

We're fix'n to die anytime, so if we kick off  
in the middle of the night, you're on your  
own.



There'll be no "Kicking Off" until you tell me  
the "What Every Boy Needs to Know  
About Becoming a Man Speech"

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### Movie Background

Walter (**Haley Joel Osment**) is left with his two great-uncles on their Texas farm by his gold-digger mother. The two rich, cranky old uncles (**Robert Duvall** and **Michael Caine**) entertain Walter with colorful stories from their past when they were young and fighting for the French Foreign Legion. The uncles purchase an old lion to hunt, but Walter makes the lion his pet instead. While they pretend not to like him much, the two crusty old men share the challenge and joy of helping Walter grow up to be a man. A key scene occurs when Walter confronts Uncle Hub about giving him the "What every boy needs to know about being a man" speech. To see that clip, click this You Tube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLhp6COMQ0Q>

### Digging Deeper

In a world where we all want to do our own thing, who is raising our kids? In the movie, **Second Hand Lions**, Walter wants an adult in his life he can depend on. He longs for someone who will have his best interests at heart; someone who will stand up for him, rather than use him to further their own petty interests.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

His mother abandons him with his uncles as she seeks love in a stranger's arms, wanting him to spy on the old men to find out where their money is hidden. Along the way, he discovers these two crotchety old men love him, care for him, fight for him, and teach him what it means to be a man.

In the Old Testament book of I Samuel, we read of a Priest named Eli. The bible tells us that his sons were terrible men: **“Now the sons of Eli were worthless men, they did not know the Lord.”** (I Sam. 2:12). Because Eli paid his sons no attention, they grew up to bully the people and take advantage of their positions as priests. As a result, the people despised the offerings they were to give to God. The Lord said to Samuel:

**I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.” ... and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. (I Samuel 3:13-14, 4:11).**

God calls us as parents – He calls us as fathers – to raise our children well. None of us are perfect parents, certainly not I. But, it is a subject that I have thought much about over the years. Recently I was speaking with a young mother in our church about a technique I used years ago to teach our children about the bible when they were little. We simply had them act out stories of the bible. Each child got a turn at being the main character. It helped them learn the bible stories, and it was a great way of teaching the Scripture to them,

Years ago, I used to give a speech called “The Making of Straight Arrows” based on Psalm 127:3-4. That passage reads.

**Behold, children are a blessing of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the quiver of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth.**

The whole point of that speech was that we as parents have the opportunity to help shape our children into straight arrows, or bend them into crooked ones. In 1987, I heard Pastor Chuck Swindoll read a poem on his daily radio program, Insight for Living. I committed that poem to memory, and have referred to it ever since (with a very small change at the end of it). Here is that poem, which Pastor Swindoll attributed to “anonymous” so I am unable to cite its actual author:

### **Untitled, Anonymous Poem**

There are little eyes upon you, and they're watching night and day. There are little ears that quickly take in every word you say. There are little hands all eager to do everything you do. And a little boy who's waiting for the day he'll be like you.

You're the little fellow's idol; you're the wisest of the wise. In his mind, about you, no suspicions ever rise. He believes in you, devoutly, hopes that all you say and do He will say and do in your way, when he grows up just like you.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

There's a wide eyed little fellow who believes you're always right, Yet his ears always open, and he's watching day and night. You are setting an example, in all you say and do, for the little boy (and yes, the little girl) who's waiting to grow up to be just like you.

Picture source:

[http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/1125633/photo\\_04\\_hires.jpg](http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/1125633/photo_04_hires.jpg)

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Think about your kids, grandkids, or niece/nephews. What will be the “What every boy/girl needs to know about becoming an adult” speech you will give them?
2. Proverbs 22:6 says “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he shall not depart from it”. With others in your group, talk about what you believe this passage means.
3. Think about the children God has entrusted into your care. For each of them, think of three things you can specifically pray about as you seek God’s help in shaping them into the straight arrows He intends for them to be.

Up

Remember that While You're Pursuing  
Adventure, Take Time to Notice the....



Squirrels!

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## Movie Background

In the movie, **UP**, Carl Fredricksen (**Ed Asner**) is a 78-year-old balloon salesman. Ever since meeting his childhood sweetheart, Ellie, he's wanted to be an explorer because he knows "Adventure is Out There!" But, as he and Ellie built a life together, they never went to seek out that great adventure. When Ellie dies, the city wants to bulldoze his house to make room for a high rise building. Carl, however, won't sell. In an act of defiance, he decides to go on a journey to find Paradise Falls, the last place the famed explorer, Charles Muntz (**Christopher Plummer**) was said to have gone. Carl has the equipment on hand to suspend the house from countless helium-filled balloons, and so comes up with a plan. On the day he's decided to inflate thousands of balloons to fly his home to pursue adventure, an eight year old Wilderness Explorer Scout named Russell (**Jordan Nagai**) shows up and wants to do a good deed for a senior citizen, offering to help Carl cross the street.

Carl tells the kid to scram, slams the door, and launches his house by inflating the balloons. Unknown to Carl, Russell is still on the front porch as the house soars into the sky. Together with his stowaway, Russell, the widower Carl and the fatherless boy trek through forests in search of Muntz and Paradise Falls. In their journey, they make friends with a giant bird that Russell names Kevin and a talking dog named Dug (**Bob Peterson**). They must face the threat of Muntz's talking dogs, who are easily distracted by the mere mention of SQUIRRELS.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

At the end of the movie, Carl becomes Russell's surrogate grandfather, and realizes that the REAL adventure of his life wasn't going in search of Paradise Falls. It was in allowing himself to be distracted by the "squirrels" he encountered - Russell, Dug and Kevin - who came into his life and enriched it, providing the experience of adventure he had denied himself. To see that clip, click this You Tube link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxoWHeoYU3g>

### **Digging Deeper**

In Genesis 12:1-2, we read how God called Abram to leave his home in Haran after his father, Terra, died, and go to a place called Canaan. In commanding him to go, God promised Abram three things:

1. That he would guide Abram to the land where he was to go
2. That he would bless Abram and make him and his descendants into a great nation, and
3. That through Abram and his descendants, all families on earth would be blessed.

Talk about going in search of an adventure! What young, adventurous man wouldn't want to leave on a journey like that to find fame and fortune? There was just one other thing, though. We read in Genesis 12:4 that:

**So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.**

I'm 55 years old and in good health, but I'm not sure I would want to take off on a journey like that. Yet, like Carl in UP, Abram sets out to follow a path he's never traveled *in his seventies*. Why? Because he trusted God to protect him and his family, and to fulfill the promises He had made.

Along the way, Abram and his nephew, Lot, split up. Lot went to a place called Sodom, and Abram settled in Canaan near a place called Mamre. While living there, Abram received word that Lot had been taken hostage by the King of Elam and his allies. Abram arose from his new home and went out and rescued Lot

It was in the aftermath of the ensuing battle, as he journeyed home, that Abram met a king named Melchizedek of Salem. We read of this encounter in Genesis 14:18-20:

**And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all.**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

In his battle with the King of Elam who had kidnapped his nephew, Abram had confiscated a great deal of booty. He didn't owe anything to Melchizedek, yet willingly gave him one tenth of the spoil. Why? Notice that Melchizedek blessed Abram - not the other way around. Hebrews 7:7 says: "But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater."

Now, Abram didn't have to stop and meet with Melchizedek. Yet, instead of bypassing someone who may at first appeared to be a distraction, Abram stopped to speak with the King of Salem, and received a very important blessing which he had not expected. How often is it that God, in one form or another, offers to extend grace to us. How often is it that we see such opportunities as nothing but distractions - squirrels, if you will - that divert us from our plans and our accomplishments.

Has God sent a squirrel across your path today as you journey to find the adventure that eludes you "out there?" Take a moment to see where that squirrel might be leading you. Maybe, just maybe, God has sent that squirrel to divert you from a misadventure that will only lead to your destruction.

Picture source: [http://ia.media-imdb.com/images/M/MV5BMTM4NDAwMTc1NF5BMTI5BanBnXkFtZTcwMDc5OTIzMw@@\\_V1.jpg](http://ia.media-imdb.com/images/M/MV5BMTM4NDAwMTc1NF5BMTI5BanBnXkFtZTcwMDc5OTIzMw@@_V1.jpg)

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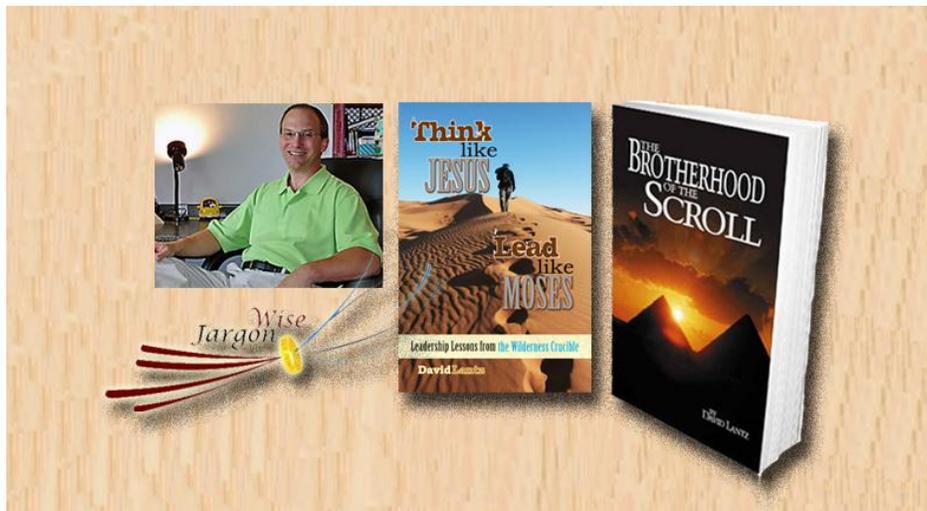
### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Russell comes from a family where his father is absent. Carl and Ellie always wanted to have children, but never did. Both Carl and Russell discover they need each other. Who in your extended family needs YOU?
2. Doug, the dog, is easily distracted by SQUIRRELS. Carl doesn't have time for distractions, yet in the end he is blessed by the "distraction" of his new friends, Russell and Doug. Have you allowed yourself to be blessed by any "distractions" recently?
3. Jesus said "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." (Revelation 3:20). Have you ever seen God's invitation to spend time with Him as a distraction from your pursuit of adventure "out there"? Like Abraham, did you turn aside to learn more, or did you try to "keep on trucking?"

## Discipleship and Service

How often it is that a young person patterns his life after someone, only to find that that person's personal integrity has been compromised. It doesn't matter whether it involves a pastor who has fallen to sexual temptation, a politician who has taken a bribe, or a sports figure who has been involved in gambling. In such instances, the impact on those who looked up to such leaders can be devastating.

What is another description of the mentoring process? Discipleship. Who are godly leaders ultimately disciples of? Jesus Christ. Though we never cease growing, how do we know when we have graduated from the introductory course in the discipleship of Jesus Christ? When we recognize that salvation does not come from our own efforts, but from the Lord.



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## *The Mask of Zorro*



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### Movie Background

The movie, **The Mask of Zorro**, is set in early 19th century California, where Don de la Vega, otherwise known as the masked swordsman Zorro (**Anthony Hopkins**), was a “Gray Champion” of the people standing against the tyranny of Spanish rule. Captured and imprisoned by his nemesis, Governor Montero (**Stuart Wilson**), he spends the next twenty years in a dungeon before finally escaping. Walking into a bar, he encounters a man named Alejandro Murrieta (**Antonio Banderas**), a drunk who wishes to sell a special medallion for a drink of whiskey. Made of pure silver, the aged Zorro recognizes the medallion as the one he gave to Alejandro and his brother for assisting him on the day of his last battle. Alejandro, now distraught and eager for revenge against the man who murdered his brother, agrees to take on the mask once worn by Zorro. Don de la Vega promises to teach him the art of fighting with honor and grace, and most importantly, to take a stand for the people who once again need a leader to arise and defend them against tyranny. To see a video clip from the movie, click here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfjDXMM-yzI>

### Digging Deeper

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

During the time of the Judges, Israel repeatedly did evil, worshiping the gods of the Canaanites and forsaking the Lord. As a result, God allowed them to be conquered. They would cry out to God, and He would send a Judge, a champion, who would lead them to victory over their oppressors. Then, the Judge would die, and the people would again fall into sin, leading to subjugation by their enemies. This pattern of Sin, Subjugation, Supplication and Salvation was repeated every four generations, as God would call forth a “Gray Champion” to arise and deliver His people. In Judges 6:2-3, and 6, we read:

For whenever the Israelites put in seed the Mid'ianites and the Amal'ekites and the people of the East would come up and attack them; they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the land, as far as the neighborhood of Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or ass. ... And Israel was brought very low because of Midian; and the people of Israel cried for help to the LORD.

And then, one day, God approached a man whom He had called to arise and take a stand for the Israelites. Appearing to the man, Gideon, the Angel of the Lord approached him while he was down in the hole of a wine press, threshing wheat so that the Midionites wouldn't see him and come take it from him. In Judges 6:12, 15-16, we read.

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor." And he said to him, "Pray, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manas'seh, and I am the least in my family." And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall smite the Midianites as one man."

While Gideon was busily beating out wheat in a winepress so that the Midianites wouldn't see him and come take it from him, the angel of the Lord appeared, saying: “The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior!” (Judges 6:12). Gideon was incredulous – he could hardly believe this was happening to him. We can easily identify with his response: “Who are you talking to? I'm not a valiant warrior – in fact, I'm a nobody. You've got the wrong man.”

There must have been someone else in Israel who was not only an accomplished warrior, but would have jumped at the chance to lead Israel against the Midianites. However, instead of this unknown warrior, God chose Gideon, a man who would have preferred not to get involved. Why? Because God sees us not simply for who we are, but also for what we can become. By choosing Gideon, God wanted a man who knew that in order to be a successful leader, he would have to rely on God, not himself, for victory. Recognizing our reliance on God is the most important quality a leader must possess

## **The Gray Champion**

In the 1830s and 1840s, the author Nathaniel Hawthorne published a series of short stories titled Twice Told Tales. One of those short stories was called The Gray Champion. I first became aware of this short story in a book titled Generations: The History of America's Future.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Published in 1991 by William Strauss and Neil Howe, they share a synopsis of the tale of The Gray Champion. In their book, Strauss and Howe provide this quote from Hawthorne's story:

I have heard that, whenever the descendants of the Puritans are to show the spirit of their sires, the old man appears again. When eighty years had passed, he walked once more in King-street. Five years later, in the twilight of an April morning, he stood on the green, beside the meeting-house, at Lexington, where now the obelisk of granite, with a slab of slate inlaid, commemorates the first fallen of the Revolution. And when our fathers were toiling at the breast-work on Bunker's Hill, all through that night, the old warrior walked his rounds. Long, long may it be, ere he comes again! His hour is one of darkness, and adversity, and peril. ***But should domestic tyranny oppress us, or the invader's step pollute our soil, still may the Gray Champion come. (emphasis added)***

As in the time of the Judges, so in our day. God is calling those who trust in Him to rise up and become the Gray Champions in their communities. I've written a book, ***Think Like Jesus, Lead Like Moses: Leadership Lessons from the Wilderness Crucible*** in which I present ten principles of a Godly leader. The last chapter deals with this topic of the Gray Champion, and how God is calling forth men in women in our day who, like Gideon, arise from the grassroots of their communities to become the "valiant warriors" God has called them to be.

Is He calling you?

Picture source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfjDXMM-yzI> at 1:03

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### Questions for Further Reflection

1. Gideon saw himself as a no body, yet by the end of his life, the Israelites wanted to make him king. Who in your life do you know who started out a no body, got involved in their local community to make a difference, and became a "somebody"?
2. In the movie, The Mask of Zorro, Alejandro would never have become the new Zorro without his mentor, Don de la Vega. Are you serving as a mentor for someone?
3. Is there some area of ministry in which God is calling you to become, in His strength, more than you are?

## *The Karate Kid*

Karate Means "Way of the Empty Hand."  
When You Can Wax the Car, Paint the  
Fence and Sand the Floor With an Empty  
Hand, then You've Really Learned  
Something!



Oh, and Don't forget to Breathe. Very Important!!!

---

### Movie Background

In the 1984 movie, **The Karate Kid**, when Daniel (**Ralph Macchio**) and his mother move from New Jersey to California, he quickly discovers that he doesn't fit into the blond surfer crowd. The apartment complex janitor, Miyagi (**Noriyuki "Pat" Morita**), befriends Daniel and agrees to teach him Karate, but only if Daniel enters a Karate tournament where he will face the town bully. When his training begins, Daniel can't understand why Miyagi seems more interested in having Daniel paint fences and wax cars than teaching him Karate. *Daniel learns that he must "empty his cup" of what he THINKS Karate is all about so that his teacher can refill that same cup with his expert instruction.* Through this process of "Wax on, Wax Off," the audience comes to see that the journey of a disciple requires that he submit to seemingly irrelevant tasks which, in the end, will serve to sharpen him into the image of his Master. To see this scene, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWMtUDJQfYs>

## Digging Deeper

How often it is that a young person patterns his life after someone, only to find that that person's personal integrity has been compromised. It doesn't matter whether it involves a pastor who has fallen to sexual temptation, a politician who has taken a bribe, or a sports figure who has been involved in gambling. In such instances, the impact on those who looked up to such leaders can be devastating. In Moses, Joshua had a mentor who practiced what he preached. We see this most clearly in Exodus 33:11, where we read:

“Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.”

Joshua “hung out” with Moses, and saw the authenticity of his life. Because of the force of Moses' character and his willingness to invest his life in his protégé, Joshua's life was impacted in a dramatic way. Originally, his name was Hoshea, which means “salvation” (Numbers 13:8). As he prepared to go with the eleven spies into Canaan, Moses changed his name to Joshua, which means “the Lord is salvation.” By his name change, we have evidence of how Joshua came to realize that it was not through his own strength that he would succeed, but through God's strength.

By choosing as his future successor a person who was open to spiritual guidance and was willing to learn; by living a consistent life, practicing what he preached; by investing himself in the life of his protégé, Moses bequeathed to Israel a leader who was capable of taking that nation into the promised land. Through Joshua, God completed the exodus began under Moses. But here is a crucial point: Had Moses himself not gone through a direct one-on-one mentoring process with God, which first began when he fled Egypt after killing the Egyptian, Moses would not have been able to successfully mentor Joshua!

What is another description of the mentoring process? Discipleship. Who are godly leaders ultimately disciples of? Jesus Christ. Though we never cease growing, how do we know when we have graduated from the introductory course in the discipleship of Jesus Christ? When we recognize that salvation does not come from our own efforts, but from the Lord.

Picture source:

[http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/2088/2881/320/karatekid1\\_42.jpg](http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/2088/2881/320/karatekid1_42.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Each of us has been molded by our experiences and the people with whom we've come in contact. In your life, who has been a significant person who has helped shape you into the person you've become?
2. Even at the end of a long day, Moses would spend time with Joshua. Do you spend time with the young people in your life, or do you operate on the principle that "children should be seen but not heard?"
3. To change us, God must help us empty our cup of self reliance and self knowledge, replacing it with God reliance and God knowledge. How has God disciplined you?

## *Evan Almighty*

When I Said I wanted to Change the  
World, I Didn't Think I'd be Calling God at  
1 – 800 – Go – 4 – Wood



I also didn't plan on a change in my appearance.  
Do I have any birds living in my beard?

---

### Movie Background

In the movie, **Evan Almighty**, Evan Baxter (**Steve Carell**) runs for Congress on the slogan “Let’s Change the World”. After winning his election, he moves his family into a large new house and becomes the darling of the Washington insiders. Put on the “fast track” for political advancement, Evan has soon changed his tune from “Let’s Change the World” to “Let’s Change My Life by becoming rich, famous and powerful.” Mysteriously, Evan starts to see “Gen. 6:14” popping up everywhere. Then, one day, God (Morgan Freeman) shows up. If you’ve not seen the movie, see the movie trailer at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYGF8cf6QP8>

### Digging Deeper

In Genesis, during the time of Noah, mankind had become exceedingly wicked. No one honored God. Everyone was out for themselves. Today, we joke about “pulling the plug on Grandma.” In Noah’s day, they would have sold Grandma – and anyone else – to a traveling salesman in a heartbeat. But God had a plan for how Noah could help change the world, and so He gave Noah a message. We read that message in Genesis, 6:14-15:

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

300 Cubits. That's about 450 feet, or one and a half football fields, meaning that Noah's Ark could have been as big as some of today's oil tankers. (For more information on ancient boats of this size, [click here](#)). Can you imagine dropping EVERYTHING ELSE in your life to respond to such a command from God? As with Evan Baxter in the movie, we'd say "That's ridiculous. That's too big. God, you've got to be kidding!"

I think one of the points about the Bible's account of Noah and the Ark isn't that God's call on our lives is too big: It's that we have the mistaken idea that God's work in this world – and our role in that work – is too small. A pastor friend of mine recently gave a sermon on this topic. In that [sermon](#), Pastor Steve Matthies said:

When we make the gospel primarily about our salvation rather than primarily about the reign of God, we typically reduce it to being only about individuals rather than also about God's entire creation.

In the movie *Evan Almighty*, Evan Baxter starts out wanting to change the world. He quickly loses perspective, however, as the trappings of power, appearance and money become the most important things in his life. He becomes the type of person Jesus describes in His parable of the sower in Luke 8:7, 14 where we read:

Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

This is our problem today. We are so preoccupied with money, success, popularity, and our own interests that we put God's Kingdom Building Plans in a container that says "Too big to handle." We say to ourselves, "Doing God's work will mess up my plans to change my world." God gets Evan to change his clothes, grow a beard and stop worrying about how he looks – and instead worry about the kind of person he is. This is what Paul meant in Romans 12:2:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

God has written a book He wants us to read on the subject of "World Changing for Dummies." It's called The Bible. Is your copy, like Evan Baxter's, stowed away in some moving box? If so, maybe it's time to pull it out and see what God's trying to say to you.

Picture source:

[http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/1166813/photo\\_01\\_hires.jpg](http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/1166813/photo_01_hires.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. In the movie, God asks Evan about learning patience. Do you see yourself and your circumstances reflected in Evan Almighty?
2. In the movie, Evan knows he needs to spend more time with his family, but he gets so caught up in his work that he pushes his family out into the margins of his life. Now, change the focus from Evan Baxter to YOU. How does this “movie” look to you and your family?
3. How does this movie help you see God’s “Big Picture of Creation”? How does what we do fit into that Big Picture?

## Braveheart

**You Have Been Called, You Have  
Been Chosen. Arise, Serve God,  
and Set the Captives Free**



**Don't Waste Your Talents on  
Serving Yourself**

---

## **Movie Background**

In the movie, **Braveheart**, William Wallace (**Mel Gibson**) is a commoner who unites the 13th Century Scots in their battle to overthrow English rule. Wallace and his men have just led the Scots to victory at the Battle of Sterling. The rest of the Scottish lords then make him a knight. Immediately, they start to argue among themselves about who should be made king. Disgusted with their bickering and squabbling, Wallace turns to leave. When asked where he is going, he lectures them about using their titles of nobility and their wealth to serve the people – instead of serving themselves. To see this scene from the movie, go to [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=vBxBtORI7pE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=vBxBtORI7pE)

## **Digging Deeper**

In Mark chapter 10, Jesus' disciples James and John ask Him to grant them special privileges in His kingdom. Here's how He responds in Mark 10:42-43:

**You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Jesus saw clearly the temptation we also suffer from. We want someone to serve us. We want to be special, pampered. We go to church expecting to be “fed” – instead of becoming equipped to do the Lord’s will. We want to be made to feel comfortable in our sin – not convicted to turn our life over to Christ.

Those who lead us in worship are sometimes just as guilty – maybe even more so. Of such priests, the Prophet Jeremiah wrote:

**Those who handle the law did not know Me. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority (Jeremiah 2:8 and 5:31).**

In the movie Braveheart, a man known as Robert the Bruce struggles with whether to advance himself or serve Scotland. Initially, he gives in to selfish motives and betrays Wallace. But in the end, after Wallace has been tortured and killed, he sees that sacrifice and service to others is his true calling. And so, shouting the name of William Wallace as a rallying cry, he leads Scotland to freedom.

Jesus showed us how to set the captives free from sin. In Mark 10:45, He said:

**For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.**

Picture source: <http://www.roxanegay.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/braveheart-battle-2.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Christians are called to be servants. When is the last time you stopped what you were doing to help clean up / pick up at a church or community event – instead of talking with friends as others picked up?
2. In recent years, there’s been a lot of talk about servant leadership. Is the world’s idea of servant leadership different from that taught by Christ?
3. Christ came to give his life as a ransom for many. What does it mean to “take up one’s cross daily” (Luke 9:23) and follow Christ?

*Mr. Holland's Opus*



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## Movie Background

In the movie, **Mr. Holland's Opus**, Glenn Holland (**Richard Dreyfuss**) takes a job as a music teacher when what he really wants to do is write symphonies. While he teaches by day, he composes by night – but no one ever sees the music he's written. He comes to believe that his life has been a waste of his talents – that it's been spent with kids who don't appreciate him. After 31 years teaching in the same school, budget cuts force the school administrators to get rid of the music program – and Mr. Holland's job. However, his loving wife, played by Glenna Headly, organizes a farewell party for her husband, attended by his former students. The capstone of the movie is when they perform his unpublished symphony – and he gets to direct it.

One of his students has become the governor of their state – and as she invites him to conduct his composition, the "American Symphony," she says to him: "We are your opus – we are the music of your life." To view this scene, click [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jM9MC7t-8g&feature=results\\_main&playnext=1&list=PL129B936A04B76624](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jM9MC7t-8g&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PL129B936A04B76624)

## Digging Deeper

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul was conscious of the fact that there were those who claimed to speak the truth of the Gospel, but were instead counterfeits – wolves in sheep’s clothing. Twice he addresses this. First, in I Corinthians 9:2, Paul writes;

**For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

And again, in Second Corinthians 3:2-3, he writes:

**You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.**

Paul’s point is that Christ is the author of the letter – and that he, Paul, is merely the stylus with which the letter is written. This is in stark contrast to false teachers of Paul’s day who needed a letter of recommendation to get people to listen to them. These false teachers wished only to fleece the flock for their own personal gain – and used their own personal powers of charisma and persuasion to get people to do their bidding.

Today in America, we have too many who seek to preach their own wisdom instead of God’s wisdom. To whom are you listening? On what do you spend your time, your talent and your thoughts? Proverbs 23:7 says: **As a man thinks within himself, so he is.**

**You’ll either produce symphonies, or sausage.**

Picture source: [http://cps-static.rovicorp.com/2/Open/Starz/Mr.%20Holland's%20Opus/derived\\_jpg\\_q90\\_250x250\\_m0/MrHollandsOpus-Still1.jpg?partner=allrovi.com](http://cps-static.rovicorp.com/2/Open/Starz/Mr.%20Holland's%20Opus/derived_jpg_q90_250x250_m0/MrHollandsOpus-Still1.jpg?partner=allrovi.com)

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## Questions for Further Reflection

1. All of us touch the lives of those around us – and are touched by the lives of others. Who has touched your life? Whose life have you touched?
2. In John 15:5, it says we are to abide in Jesus. How does one do that?
3. In the movie, Mr. Holland quotes a line from a Beatles song, “Life is what happens while we’re making other plans.” What “life happens” opportunities has God presented you when you were making other plans?

## The Movies & *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis

More than at any time in our history, people question whether or not Jesus Christ is really the Son of God. People may agree that there is a “higher spiritual power,” but they can’t see Jesus as being the only way to come to Him – or “IT.” Take the **Star Wars** series, particularly **The Return of the Jedi**. Based on a 2001 census in England, “Jedi” has nearly 400,000 adherents in that country.

How can a religion based on a make believe movie character even exist? Perhaps it’s because, in our day, we hear that all religions are the same. That somehow, some sort of circle of life connects us all – that all things are connected to “mother earth.” This idea says there’s no such thing as sin – and hence, no sense of guilt is needed.

In his book, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis dealt with all sorts of questions about God and Jesus. In this last section of **Discovering Truth at the Movies**, I’ve compiled a series of newsletters I did back in 2007 using some of C.S. Lewis’ arguments from that book. **Mere Christianity** is a book that has had a profound effect on my life, and I encourage you to buy a copy and read it yourself.

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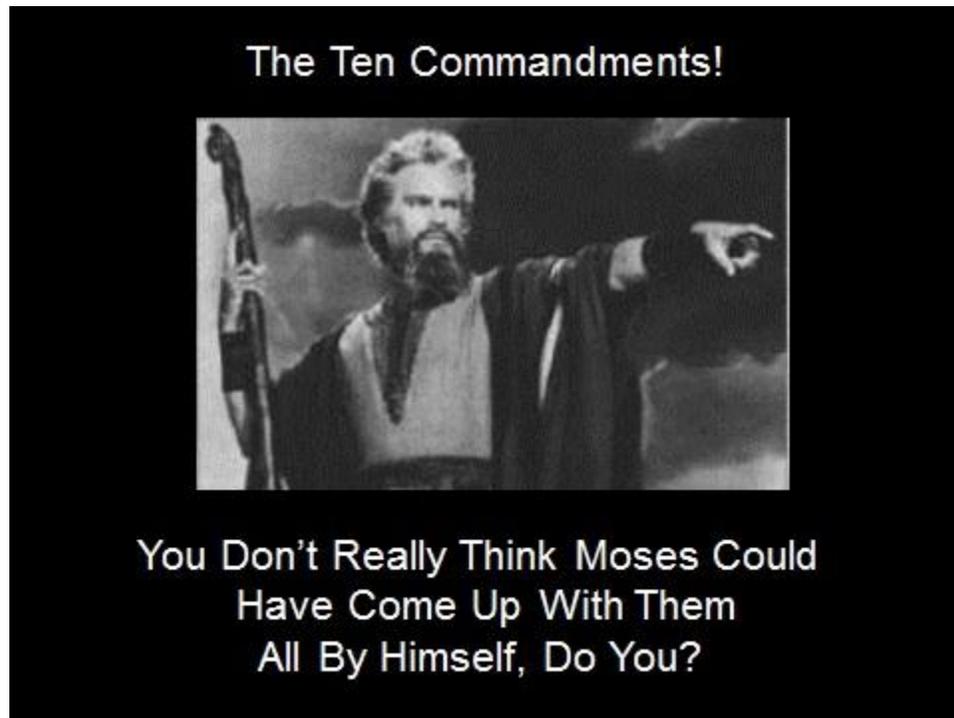
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*The Ten Commandments*



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## Movie Background

In the epic movie, **The Ten Commandments**, Moses (**Charlton Heston**) meets God at the burning bush and is commanded to lead the Children of Israel out of bondage. Having run away from Egypt 40 years previously, he has been transformed from a brash, I-can-do-anything leader into a shepherd who is fit only for leading sheep. After facing down Pharaoh (**Yul Brynner**) as God sends the ten plagues against Egypt, and leading the Hebrews through the Red Sea, Moses meets God on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. Throughout the movie, he must struggle against taking action in his own strength, and learning to rely on God to redeem His people. To see a montage of scenes from the movie, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d12uOLx5CI0&feature=related>

## Digging Deeper

Have you ever noticed how, when you drop something – say, a rock – it falls to the ground. Every time. No exceptions.

Why do you suppose the rock does that, without fail? Simple – it's called the Law of Gravity.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

That is so elementary; we all know it. But now, take something like the Moral Law – embodied in the Ten Commandments. Do people always tell the truth, always honor their parents, never murder or covet? Of course not. We humans break the Moral Law all the time. Everyone does. No exceptions.

A theologian by the name of C. S. Lewis said that the Law of Nature, of which the Law of Gravity is just one, is about what things always do. In contrast, the Moral Law is about what people should do, but don't. In his book, **Mere Christianity**, Lewis writes:

**I do not succeed in keeping the Law of Nature very well, and the moment anyone tells me I am not keeping it, there starts up in my mind a string of excuses as long as your arm. The question at the moment is not whether they are good excuses. The point is that they are one more proof of how deeply, whether we like it or not, we believe in the Law of Nature. If we do not believe in decent behaviour, why should we be so anxious to make excuses for not having behaved decently? The truth is, we believe in decency so much – we feel the Rule of Law pressing on us so – that we cannot bear to face the fact that we are breaking it, and consequently we try to shift the responsibility.**

This is the evidence that God exists. We all know that He does exist, because He's written each of us our own personal letter, letting us know He's there, inviting us to let Him into our hearts. It's called a conscience. It is for this reason that Paul writes in Acts 17:27:

**His purpose in all of this is that they should seek after God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him – though he is not far from any one of us.**

More than at any time in our history, people question whether or not Jesus Christ is really the Son of God. People may agree that there is a "higher spiritual power," but they can't see Jesus as being the only way to come to Him.

When you watch the Ten Commandments this Christmas season, watch the scene when they make the Golden Calf. You'll find the story in Exodus, Chapter 32. It occurs about 50 days after Passover, when the left Egypt. In verse 28 we read that about 3,000 who had worshipped the golden calf were slain.

Now turn to Acts Chapter 2. This is the story of Pentecost. It is the time when the Spirit of God was poured out on the people. In verse 41 we read that there were about 3,000 souls who were baptized.

Pentecost is celebrated about 50 days after Easter – which is also the same date for when Moses led the Jews out of Egypt. That's right, when the Law of Moses was given, 3,000 died. But when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the people, about 3,000 people who were dead in their sins were redeemed. Both events happen at the same time on the calendar. Who but God could have planned it that way?

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

In addition to the personal letter of our Conscience, God has sent us a more general letter. It is His Word, the Bible. He beckons you to read it, and thereby understand just how near He is to you. Paul writes in Acts 17:30:

**Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent.**

This November, I invite you to open your Bible and study God's word to see what the Holy Spirit will reveal to you in your heart. When you do, you'll truly have something about which to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Picture source:

[http://www.reelclassics.com/Actors/Heston/images9/heston\\_10c\\_staffstretch.jpg](http://www.reelclassics.com/Actors/Heston/images9/heston_10c_staffstretch.jpg)

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Lots of people are searching for spiritual truth. Some resist turning to Christianity to find it. Is that true of you, or someone you know?
2. A key to understanding the Bible is the importance of dates and places. Often, Jesus' teaching in the New Testament has a connection to the Old Testament. Does the story of 3,000 dying at the time of the Exodus and 3,000 being saved at the time of Pentecost help you to see how the Bible uses dates and places?
3. Have you looked inside the "personal letter" God has sent you, your conscience? What has He been telling you lately?

## Star Wars



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### Movie Background

In the movie, **Star Wars**, there is a clear distinction between what is right and what is wrong. Even the bad guys don't try to disguise the fact that they are allied with "the dark side." Darth Vader is quite at home being evil. Obi-Wan Kenobi, played by the late **Sir Alex Guinness**, can do nothing but what is good.

And then, there's Hans Solo (**Harrison Ford**). He's in it for himself. Near the end of the movie, when his friend Luke Skywalker (**Mark Hamill**) is about to join the rebels and make a suicide attack against the Death Star, Hans takes his money and flies off into space. But then, just when Luke is out of options, Hans Solo comes to the rescue. Suffering from a guilty conscious, he's returned to do the right thing and come to the aide of his friend. To see this scene, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXIqfHI0hOY>

## **Digging Deeper**

In his book, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis talks about a consequence of the Moral Law. This consequence is that there truly is a difference between right and wrong. Lewis writes:

**The laws of nature, as applied to stones or trees, may only mean “what Nature, in fact, does.” But if you turn to the Law of Human Nature, the Law of Decent Behaviour, it is a different matter. That law certainly does not mean “what human beings, in fact, do”; for as I said before, many of them do not obey this law at all, and none of them obey it completely. The law of gravity tells you what stones do if you drop them; but the Law of Human Nature tells you what human beings ought to do and do not.**

Consider the idea of selfishness. We know that we should not be selfish. Why? Someone might answer “Because it’s not good for society,” but if I only care about me, this isn’t a very good reason.

For the selfish person, this should be the end of it; they need not think of it again, but just go right on being selfish. Yet, even a selfish person knows he shouldn’t be selfish. Certainly, in the story, *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge knew that. Even Darth Vader knows that he fights for the Dark Side. He doesn’t pretend it’s something else.

Darth Vader knows that the Moral Law – the law of Right and Wrong – is real. Something beyond us – above us – has written it in our hearts. But Darth Vader no longer listens. His heart has become darkened.

That is why Paul writes in Romans 1:19-21:

**For that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.**

Are you listening to God’s Law? It’s been written on your heart. Listen. Obey. Don’t turn to the Dark Side.

**P.S. Both Darth Vader and Scrooge got it right in the end. What about you?**

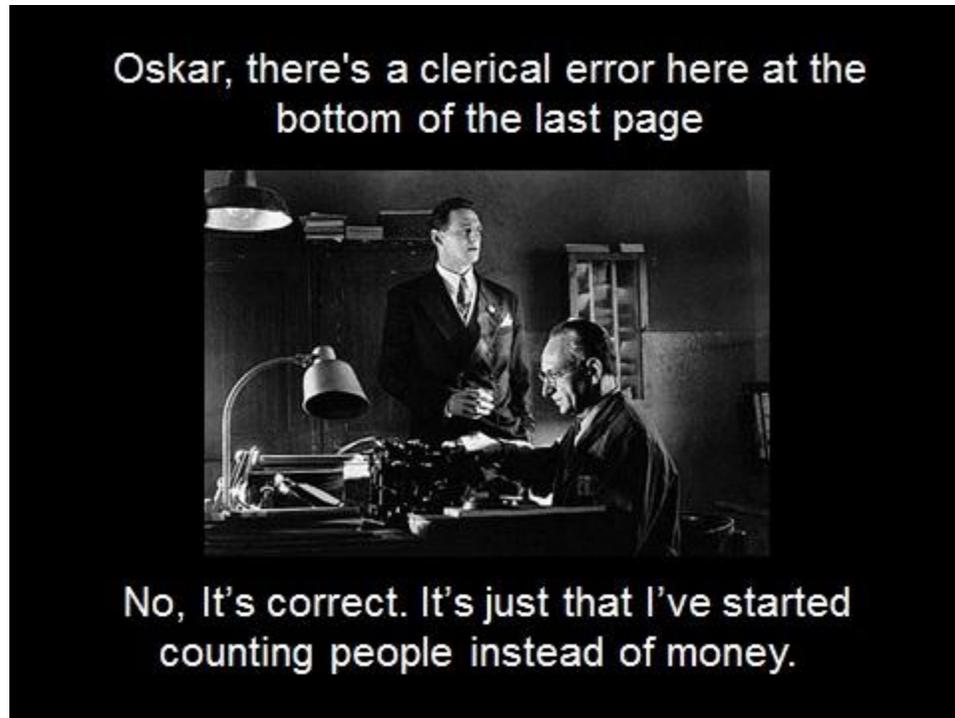
Picture source: <http://www.moviemarket.co.uk/library/framed/680031.jpg>

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## Questions for Further Reflection

1. Romans 16:20 says “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet The grace of our Lord Jesus be with.” In the night sky, the constellations Hercules (Son of God) has his foot resting on the head of Draco, the snake (Satan). Could Paul have literally been talking about the constellations and how they told the story of Christ?
2. How do we know in our guts that what Hitler did to the Jews was wrong? If there is no God, where do we get the idea of “fairness” and a standard by which to judge if something is fair, or not?
3. Edmond Burk once said “All it takes for evil to triumph in the world is for good men to do nothing.” This assumes three things: 1. Good and evil really do exist in the world. 2. There is an ongoing battle between the power of darkness and the force of good. 3. You and I, either by our actions or our inactions, are pulling for one side or the other. Which side in this “tug of war” are you pulling for?

## Schindler's List



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### Movie Background

**Schindler's List** is a movie based on the true story of Oskar Schindler, a vain, greedy German businessman who tried to make his fortune during the Second World War by exploiting cheap Jewish labor. In the process, however, he became a humanitarian amidst the barbaric Nazi reign as his conscience convicted him of the need to turn his factory into a refuge for the Jews. Oskar Schindler (**Liam Neeson**) managed to save 1,100 Jews from being gassed at the Auschwitz concentration camp. By the end of the war, Schindler, though penniless, amassed an untold wealth through the lives he saved. To see a video clip from the movie, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DyOc1q-ggQ>

### Digging Deeper

When you watch the movie, you are left with the stark realization of how evil man can be. The movie is all shot in black and white, with one exception. A young girl, perhaps six years old, is seen running through the Jewish ghettos in a red coat. We see Oskar Schindler observing her from a roof top. Then, later, as soot comes down from the sky, Schindler visits the place where the Jews are being burned - and sees the girl being taken in a wheel barrel to be burned with

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

over 10,000 exhumed Jews. The movie audience knows it's her because he sees the charred red coat left in the pile of bodies.

From one perspective, we can look at something like the Holocaust and ask; "How could a good God allow this to happen?" The implication of the question is that NO god, good or otherwise, exists. But on the other hand, if no god exists, then why does Schindler risk his life and all that he has to save 1,100 Jews? How does a "moral law" – a conscience - convict him of the need to take action unless there is a god who has planted this concept inside him?

In his book, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis writes this about what he calls "The Moral Law":

**Another way of seeing the Moral Law is not simply one of our instincts is this. If two instincts are in conflict, and there is nothing in a creature's mind except those two instincts, obviously the stronger of the two must win. But at those moments when we are most conscious of the Moral Law, it usually seems to be telling us to side with the weaker of the two impulses. You probably want to be safe much more than you want to help the man who is drowning; but the Moral Law tells you to help him all the same.**

Schindler is not the only person who senses the power of this moral law. At the end of the movie, when it has been announced that Germany has surrendered, with all the Jews in his factory and the Nazi soldiers present, he turns to the soldiers and says:

**I know you have received orders from our commandant, which he has received from his superiors, to dispose of the population of this camp. Now would be the time to do it. Here they are; they're all here. This is your opportunity. Or, you could leave, and return to your families as men instead of murderers.**

Upon hearing this, the soldiers are seen to slowly leave the building, not one of them willing to fire a shot. You see, others had also heard the call of this inward tug of the moral law, but Schindler was one of the few who responded. Schindler's whole mindset has been transformed. In Romans 12:2-3, the Apostle Paul writes.

**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.**

*In the quiet of your heart, has God been trying to get your attention, pricking your conscience about doing the right thing?*

Picture source: [http://content6.flixster.com/photo/36/36/75/3636752\\_gal.jpg](http://content6.flixster.com/photo/36/36/75/3636752_gal.jpg)

## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Think about a time when you ignored someone who needed help because it wasn't convenient for you to help them. Maybe it was that homeless person you passed on the street the other day. What will it take for God to get you to pay attention to the needs of other people?
2. Can you think of a time when you responded to God's pricking of your conscience when it wasn't convenient for you? Write a journal article about that time and share it with a friend.
3. At the end of the movie, the descendants of the people Schindler saved are shown leaving a stone on his burial marker. It is their way of remembering what he did, and thanking him. If you were to die today, who would leave a memorial stone for you?

## *Planet of the Apes*

Someone Once Said: "It's a Madhouse!"



What Do You Expect in a World Where No One Obeys the Teachings of the Law Giver?

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### **Movie Background**

In the movie **Planet of the Apes**, an astronaut lands on a planet ruled by apes. There are people on this planet, but they are hunted and enslaved by the apes. At first, he thinks he's on a different planet. But, finally, through a series of events, he comes to realize that this is earth sometime in his far-distant future. In the original 1968 version of the movie, the astronaut, played by Charlton Heston, says; "It's a madhouse, a madhouse!" To see a clip of that seen, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFCM6TZgTMI>

### **Digging Deeper**

Have you ever felt that way about life? Have you ever said to yourself; "Life is so unfair! It's a cruel world!" Why shouldn't we say that when we see hurricanes, suicide bombers, gangs, drugs, etc.? Why shouldn't we think that we live in a madhouse?

Now, stop and think. Where do we get this idea that life is "a madhouse?" After all, animals, when faced with danger, fight or flee. People also fight or flee – but then when the danger is past, we talk about how unfair the circumstances were. Where do we get this idea that life is unfair? C.S. Lewis once wrote:

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**“It begins to look as if we shall have to admit that there is more than one kind of reality; that, in this particular case, there is something above and beyond the ordinary facts of men’s behaviour, and yet quite definitely real – a real law, which none of us made, but which we find pressing on us.”**

(From *Mere Christianity*)

In our day, we hear that all religions are the same. That somehow, some sort of circle of life connects us all – that all things are connected to “mother earth.” This idea says there’s no such thing as sin – and hence, no sense of guilt is needed. But if that’s the case, where do we get this idea that life is a madhouse? If this life force thing is god, if there is no such thing as good and evil – then this is all we’re left with: A madhouse.

Jesus says otherwise. He is, as part of a triune God that created the universe, The Law Giver. Jesus is from above. (John 3:31-32):

**He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.**

There is a new spirituality that says Jesus is nothing more than a myth. There is even a [lawsuit](#) in Italy denying that Jesus ever walked on earth. If that’s true, we are trapped in a madhouse with no way out. To this, Jesus says (Luke 19:10):

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**For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**

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Picture source:

[http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/1108704/photo\\_06.jpg](http://images.rottentomatoes.com/images/movie/gallery/1108704/photo_06.jpg)

### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and that He came to save us from our sins. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is who He says He is? What is the logical implication of your answer?
2. Why do you think some people, such as the man who filed the lawsuit saying Jesus was nothing more than a myth believe they way they do?
3. When Jesus said “No one receives His testimony,” it implies that people generally don’t receive it – but that some do. Why do you think some receive Jesus’ testimony about who He is, but many do not?

## Captain Planet



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### Movie Background

In our day, paganism has again resurfaced. It has a new face on it. The entire planet has this cosmic essence. It's like that old cartoon series, **Captain Planet**, where the Mother Earth Goddess, Gaia, gave five teenagers special power rings. She would tell them where bad things were about to happen to the planet, and just in time, the teens would put their rings together to call forth a Superhero named Captain Planet. What was Captain Planet's job? Why, to save the planet, of course. To see a video that summarizes the series and the idea of Gaia worship, click on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJKCQvZ69xI>

### Digging Deeper

In religious philosophy, there are two major categories of how we think about God. One idea says that God isn't interested in the distinction between good and evil. It is sometimes called pantheism. In his book, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis draws describes pantheism this way:

**Pantheists usually believe that God, so to speak, animates the universe as you animate your body: that the universe almost *is* God, so that if it did not exist He would not exist either, and anything you find in the universe is a**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**part of God. The Christian idea is quite different. They think God invented and made the universe – like a man making a picture or composing a tune.**

This idea says that the planet is God. And if the entire planet is God, then the only thing God cares about is whether or not we're hurting it/her/him. As long as the planet's OK, Gaia, Mother Earth – doesn't really care about us people. As long as the planet's ok, then Gaia and Captain Planet are happy.

You see, they just don't have time to worry about us people – we're not important. In fact, the Planetees never use their powers to call on Captain Planet to help people who are hurting. Just the planet.

Take cancer as a case in point. To Mother Earth, cancer is just one of those things – it's part of earth and the cycle of life. Nothing wrong with it, really. Oh, yes, it might kill you, but you shouldn't complain. It's not affecting the planet, so all is well. Besides, when you die, you'll just go back to being dirt – all part of one big, happy planet.

The second major category of religious philosophy says that God does care about right and wrong, good and evil. Again, quoting from Mere Christianity, we read the following:

**If you do not take the distinction between good and bad seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in the world is a part of God. But, of course, if you think some things really bad, and God really good, then you cannot talk like that. You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some of the things we see in it are contrary to His will.**

Christianity says that God made the earth and the universe, and that God made man in His own image. God put man in charge of the planet. Ultimately, God is more concerned about man than He is about the planet. To be sure, He doesn't like everything he sees going on here on planet earth. but God's message to us is that He cares about us and what happens to us – more than He cares about the planet. In Psalm 8:4, the Psalmist says.

**What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the Son of Man, that You care for him? Yet You made him a little lower than the angels, and You crown him with glory and majesty.**

When God sent His son to the earth, he paid a great price. God saw us as lost sheep whom he wanted to redeem. But not just lost sheep. He saw us as a treasure of great value – one which He was willing to pay the ultimate price to rescue – the price being His Son. In Matthew 13:44 we read:

**The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again, and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

God is the man in the story; we are the treasure hidden in the field. God redeems us at great cost – and He does this out of joy – not out of greed or selfishness. The price that God pays is the life of His Son, Jesus Christ. That’s why the Apostle John writes in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he sent His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

So what kind of God would you rather worship? One that values dirt more than you – or one that says you’re far more important than dirt?

Picture source:

<http://static5.businessinsider.com/image/4cae2f787f8b9a6437110100/captain-planet.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Have you ever thought about how people seem to turn the protection of the environment into the worship of the planet?
2. When the word “world” is used in John 3:16, to what do you believe it is referring? The planet, or the people on the planet?
3. Think about the story of the man who finds a treasure in the field and sells all that he has to buy it. What does it mean for you to learn that this is about God paying a price to free you from being a slave to sin?

## *Return of the Jedi*



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### **Movie Background**

In the movie, **The Return of the Jedi**, Luke Skywalker has spent time with the Jedi master, Yoda, and is now adept at bending the power of the force to do his bidding. The young Jedi master has returned to free his friends from the clutches of that evil smuggler, Jabba the Hut. Since the movie was made nearly a quarter century ago, a new religion called “Jedi” has arisen. Based on a 2001 census in England, “Jedi” has nearly 400,000 adherents in that country. To see a video clip of this scene, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdOqbj-2S6o>

### **Digging Deeper**

The religion of Jedi would deny that there is a Master of the Universe that puts inside each of us a sense of right and wrong. It would deny the existence of a “moral law” as well as the truth that the Apostle Paul writes of in Romans 1:19-20:

**That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

Indeed, to this, the followers of Jedi might respond, saying: “But if there is a Master of the Universe, then why is life so cruel? Surely a good god wouldn’t allow such pain and suffering to occur.” The premise of this question is simple: A good god **WOULD NOT** allow suffering; hence there is no good god in which to believe.

Christianity teaches that God made the world good in the beginning, but that one of his creations – Satan – went bad and corrupted it. Have you ever noticed that all that is evil has simply taken something that is good and twisted it – spoiled it? Evil cannot create – it can only mimic and distort. Our world has become corrupted and is now territory occupied and controlled by Satan. In other words, you and I live in enemy occupied territory.

Jesus Christ has come into our world on a rescue mission. That three-fold mission is:

1. **To do the will of My father, (John 6:38)**
2. **To save that which was lost (Matt. 18:11)**
3. **To destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8)**

Why is there suffering in the world? Because for now, the evil one is in control. He keeps his control by creating slick substitutes. Once, some people placed their faith in things made from wood and stone. Today, some people will base their faith and hope for salvation in a movie character. Both in ancient times and now, there are those who promote this kind of thinking because they want people to believe in anything but what will truly bring them peace.

**In what will you place your faith? The return of a mystical movie action figure - or the Return of the Rabbi?**

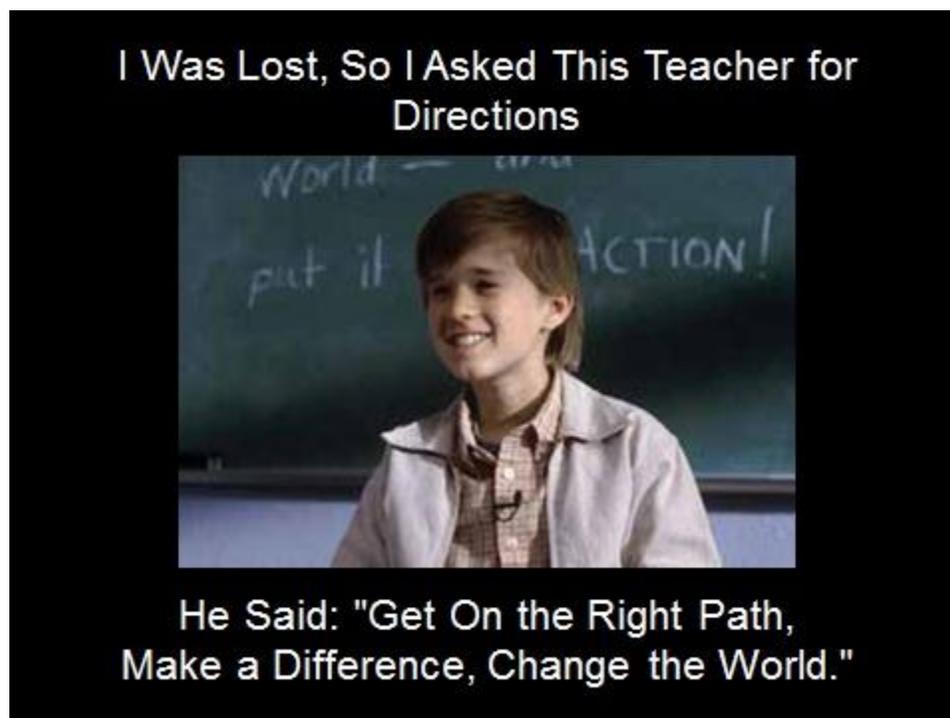
Picture Source: [http://img2-3.timeinc.net/ew/dynamic/imgs/081002/jedi-luke-sail-barge\\_1.jpg](http://img2-3.timeinc.net/ew/dynamic/imgs/081002/jedi-luke-sail-barge_1.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Have you experienced something that caused you to question whether or not God truly exists? If so, share it with a friend.
2. Job was a man who suffered for no good reason, but after he prayed for his friends in Job 42:10, things got better for him. Why do you think that was?
3. When we experience tragedy in our lives, we can become more tuned into tragedy in other people’s lives. Have you ever considered that maybe God allows tragedy in our lives so that in the future we can encourage and help others facing similar problems?

## *Pay It Forward*



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### Movie Background

In the movie, **Pay It Forward**, a social studies teacher by the name of Mr. Simonet (**Kevin Spacey**) assigns a project to change the world in his 7<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies class. In response, young Trevor McKinney (**Haley Joel Osment**) develops a plan called "pay it forward." **Pay It Forward** is the story of repentance, forgiveness and restoration as a young boy sets out to change the world. Through Trevor's efforts to teach three people to do a good deed for a total stranger, lives are changed. The movie focuses on the lives of six people and how they respond to an act of kindness and affirmation.

One of these six people is the teacher, Mr. Simonet. He's a demanding teacher who expects his students to show up, on time, and learn. He requires them to look up any new words they hear – and makes sure that several new vocabulary words are introduced in each class.

**In other words, Mr. Simonet has standards – and he expects his students to live up to them.** To see a video clip of this, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TghkityJ4u8>

## **Digging Deeper**

God is the same way. He has standards, and He expects us to live up to them. Because of this, C.S. Lewis says we have cause to be uneasy. In his book, Mere Christianity, Lewis writes:

**“If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless. But if it is, then we are making ourselves enemies to that goodness every day, and are not in the least likely to do any better tomorrow, and so our case is hopeless again. ... God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror: The thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from. He is our only possible ally, and we have made ourselves His enemies.”**

There you have it. God will not affirm our sin. He loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to leave us the way we are. In the movie, Trevor’s mom knows she’s not living up to the standard of a good mom. But, she’s learned one thing – to forgive. At a key point in the movie, she forgives her own mother for having raised her in a house filled with alcohol and sexual abuse. This act of forgiveness changes the life of her mother – and begins a sequence where the concept of “Pay It Forward” travels across the country.

**God is like that too.** He has a standard. He expects us to live up to it, but He knows we won’t. So, He’s provided us a “get out of free card.” But, we must do one thing in order to receive it. First John 1:9 tells us what that one thing is:

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all.**

One last thought. In Isaiah 30:18, we read that **“The Lord longs to be gracious to you.”** But first, we must repent of our sin. We must decide that we no longer wish to be an enemy of God. When we do that, and ask for forgiveness, God provides us with this one other promise in Jeremiah 31:34:

**I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**

So, while some people in the world preach death if people fail to convert to their religion, the power of forgiveness is truly the power to change the world.

Picture

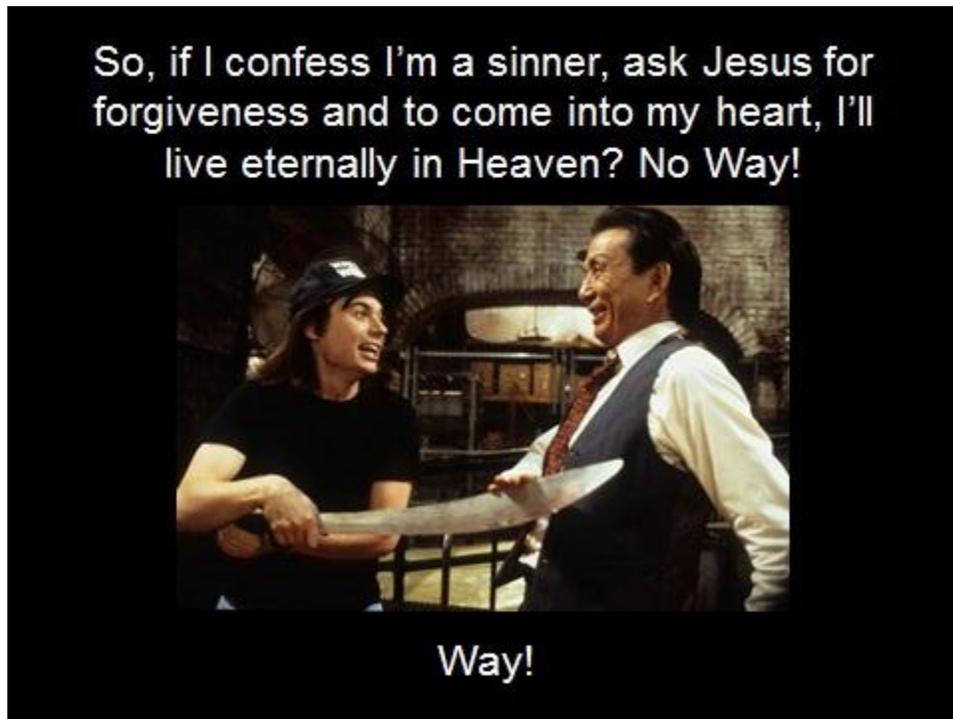
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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. If you're a parent, have you set standards for your children and communicated your desire for them to live up to those standards? If you don't have children, think back to when you were a child – did your parents have standards they expected you to live up to?
2. When your children don't live up to the standards you've set/when you failed to live up to your parents' standards, how have you/did your parents balance discipline with forgiveness?
3. Just as parents want to see their children repent and turn away from bad behavior, God wants to see us repent and turn away from bad behavior. How would it feel to know God has not only forgiven you, but has completely forgotten about your sins?

## Wayne's World II



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### Movie Background

In **Wayne's World II**, Wayne Campbell (**Mike Myers**) strives to win the hand of the woman he loves, Cassandra (**Tia Carrere**). To do so, he even challenges her father to a martial arts fight. Endearingly hilarious, Wayne and his sidekick Garth (**Dana Carvey**) remind us that: "We Are Not Worthy!" To see a clip of this scene, click

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev0Dm5qX0bU>

### Digging Deeper

We've talked about how, if a good god made the world, why has it gone wrong? We saw that in order to have an understanding that the world has gone wrong, we must have some concept of what a "good" world would be – and we could only get that concept from a good god.

Next, we talked about how Christianity teaches that God made the world good in the beginning, but that one of his creations – Satan – went bad and corrupted it. How could Satan have corrupted a good world? Because God gave us free will. God wants us to love him – voluntarily. True love is only worth having if it is given freely – which also means that it can be withheld. Thus, evil is made possible, along with good.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

So how does God take what is evil and make it right? Think of it this way. We've gone wrong – we're corrupted. We need to repent and be forgiven of our sins. Our problem is that because we're flawed, we can't earn it, and we can't repent in a way that is acceptable to a perfect god. Now, a perfect person wouldn't need forgiveness – but if he did, he'd know how to repent perfectly. So, the people who need forgiveness are incapable of earning it, and the one who's perfect doesn't need to repent.

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis puts it this way:

**Among the Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God; there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips.**

Christ comes into the world to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. Christianity's central belief is that somehow, Christ's death has put us right with God so that we get a "do over." Not only that, but when we accept Jesus into our lives, His spirit somehow comes inside us, to dwell in us, and teach us how to live right. Jesus said in John 14:6:

**I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.**

Why do we have to go through Jesus – why not go straight to God? Well, here's another mystery. Somehow, we can't acquire God's spirit unless He dies. And God can't die unless he first becomes a man. So, he became one of us so that He could experience life as we experience it. But, because He is sinless, He has the ability to save us by dying in our place. Revelation 5:9, 12 says:

**"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."**

Truly, to quote Wayne and Garth: "We are not Worthy! We are not Worthy!"

Picture source:

[http://www.moviegoods.com/Assets/Product\\_images/1020/296156.1020.A.jpg](http://www.moviegoods.com/Assets/Product_images/1020/296156.1020.A.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Why do we find it so hard to ask forgiveness of others, let alone God?
2. Have you ever tried to say you're sorry to someone, but when the opportunity presented itself, the situation took a turn for the worse? At that point, how might one try to mend the relationship?
3. Sometimes, we need to go through a third party to restore a relationship. For whatever reason, we just can't bring ourselves to face the person we're at odds with. That go between for us and God is Jesus. How does Jesus serve as a mediator between us and God the Father?

## *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Here's the plan. You say you're sorry and promise not to do it again. I get the witch to kill me, not you.



I can't wait to see the look on her face when I rise from the dead - Can you?

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### **Movie Background**

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, four children visit the mysterious country of Narnia and find themselves in enemy controlled territory. Edward, one of the children, commits a crime for which the punishment is death. Aslan, the Lion King, negotiates his release by offering to die in his place. To see a video clip from the movie, click on this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0u90NYqTck>

### **Digging Deeper**

This story of dying in the place of another – atoning for their sins – is the message of Easter. Jesus comes and willingly lays down His life to pay the death penalty for us. This act assumes three things:

1. That sin exists in the world, and that all of us are guilty of sin.
2. That death and eternal damnation is the penalty for sin in a place called Hell.
3. That if we confess our sins, He will faithfully cleanse us of our sins, forgiving us so that we may have eternal life with God in Heaven.

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

How does this process of cleansing us of our sins work? Nobody is really sure. The “truth” of salvation is like a formula, like  $E=mc^2$ . Now, very few of us really know what the formula means. But, if you say “It’s like when the Starship Enterprise goes into warp drive, the ship blurs and then disappears into hyper space,” then anyone who has ever seen *Star Trek* “gets it.” The picture in your mind helps explain the formula. It’s not a perfect explanation, but it helps us grasp the meaning of the formula.

What we do know is that God pays the penalty of sin for us. To do that, He must surrender, submit, and suffer. He has to die – but these are things God never does! So how does God pay the price of sin on our behalf, when this is something God never does. C.S. Lewis in his book, **Mere Christianity**, puts it this way:

**So that the one road for which we now need God’s leadership most of all is a road God, in His own nature, has never walked. God can share only what He has; this thing, in His own nature, He has not. ... we cannot share God’s dying unless God dies; and He cannot die except by being a man. That is the sense in which He pays our debt, and suffers for us what He Himself need not suffer at all.**

As wondrous as this gift of grace is, there are two ways we might be tempted to belittle Christ’s sacrifice for us. First, we might be tempted to say: “Jesus was God – it was easy for him to do that.” If you’ve ever taken an advanced math class, you might say to the teacher: “Well, of course it’s easy for you, you’re the teacher!” We forget that the teacher had to first spend many years of learning the subject long before he could teach. Christ came to earth and experienced dealing with temptation just as we humans do – and even sweated blood as He asked the Father if there was another way other than dying on a cross.

God is like that – He wants us to swallow our pride, to cease trying to do it our way, and instead accept His way for our lives.

**“Therefore, the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you, for the Lord is a God of justice. How blessed are all those who long for Him. (Isaiah 30:18)”**

**This Easter, accept God's gift of forgiveness.**

Picture source: [https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRq6wIARH4WNWsBpzIEcM1gZE9pXSAoeCWfM9NS\\_CqRslp-0mV-](https://encrypted-tbn3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRq6wIARH4WNWsBpzIEcM1gZE9pXSAoeCWfM9NS_CqRslp-0mV-)

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## Questions for Further Reflection

1. Have you ever willingly taken the punishment intended for someone else? Would you be willing to do that for a child who has been kidnapped? A stranger who was kidnapped?
2. Many people don't read the Bible because they think it's all just a bunch of rules we have to keep. What does the verse from Isaiah 30:18 quoted above mean to you? Does it fit that image of the Bible (especially the Old Testament!) being nothing but a bunch of rules?
3. Isaiah 30:15 says "**In repentance and rest you will be saved; in quietness and trust is your strength. But, you were not willing.**" What does it take to be willing to stop doing things our way, and start doing things God's way?

## Forrest Gump

**The Quality of Your Character is  
Measured in the Story of Your Life**



**Don't Get Stuck on Stupid**

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### **Movie Background**

**Forrest Gump**, starring **Tom Hanks** in the title role, is the story of a man of low-intelligence who tells the story of his life to people waiting at a small town bus stop. Because of a friendship with a fellow soldier, Bubba, he founded the Bubba Gump Shrimp Company after returning from Viet Nam. His business became very successful, making Forrest a wealthy man. He hires his former commanding officer, Lieutenant Dan (**Gary Sinise**), in his shrimping business. To see the movie trailer, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7x4QwzLRal>

### **Digging Deeper**

While he is “not a smart man,” Forrest is blessed with four key virtues – what C. S. Lewis called the “Cardinal Virtues” in his book, Mere Christianity.

1. He is prudent. Forrest has a healthy measure of practical common sense. He pursues the application of prudence in all his activities. Based on his motto, “Stupid is as stupid does,” Forrest Gump, while not a smart man, is far from stupid. Proverbs 23:7 states:

**For as a man thinks within himself, so he is.**

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

2. He is a temperate man. He does not go overboard, indulging to excess in things that might consume him. Furthermore, though his friend, Lieutenant Dan, over indulges in wine and women, Forrest does not condemn or ridicule him for doing so. In Timothy 3:2-3, we see the description of a temperate man, which Forrest exemplifies:

**An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.**

3. He is a just man. Forrest Gump doesn't just follow rules - he understands that justice requires compassion. Though Jeannie, the woman of his dreams, has wronged him time after time, he has judged her heart, not her actions. Because of this, he is compassionate to her. In his willingness to accept her as the person she is, he exemplifies the qualities of a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ as stated in Micah 6:8:

**And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.**

4. He demonstrates fortitude. Not only does Forrest act courageously during times of danger, he risks his own life. In the movie, there is a scene where, during a fire-fight in Viet Nam, he returns time after time to rescue his fellow platoon members, including Lieutenant Dan. This reminds us of Isaiah 40:31, which says:

**They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; They shall run and not grow weary, they shall walk and not faint.**

In discussing these, the "Four Cardinal Virtues," C. S. Lewis writes:

**"We might think God wanted simply obedience to a set of rules, whereas He really wants people of a particular sort."**

God has given you a box of chocolates. As you unwrap and savor each of them, so shall your life unfold. So, don't get stuck on stupid - but take the yoke of Christ and let His word direct your paths. I Samuel 16:7 says:

**God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**

Picture source: <http://i.imdb.com/Photos/Ss/0109830/1-2.jpg>

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Think of your life as a box of chocolates. As you have savored each stage of life – each chocolate – what have you learned about yourself?
2. Lewis says that God wants “people of a particular sort.” What kind of person is He molding you into?
3. For most of the movie, Lieutenant Dan is stuck on bitterness, while Forrest Gump is stuck on helping his friends. What are you stuck on?

*The Legend of Tarzan*

Welcome to My World,  
Where She Took My Hand



And I Showed Her Beauty Beyond Belief

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## Movie Background

I love the sound track to the movie **The Legend of Tarzan**. This animated version of Tarzan takes the well known story line of savage meets girl and sets it to music. In the scene where Jane is teaching Tarzan how to speak, there is a song, “Strangers Like Me,” in which we find these wonderful lines:

**Come with me now to see my world  
Where there's beauty beyond your dreams  
Can you feel the things I feel  
Right now, with you  
Take my hand, There's a world I need to know**

These lines are expressed as though they are being sung by Tarzan to Jane. Tarzan’s world is beautiful – he wants to show it to her. He wants to welcome her into his family – the family of the Great Apes. But in return, he wants to take her hand and learn more about her world. Tarzan is willing to be a servant to Jane, and if need be, lay down his life for hers. To see the scene from the movie where this song is sung, click <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc3MnoSS5Hw>

## Digging Deeper

That is the model Christ provides for His church, and ultimately, for all families. Christ goes to “His father’s house” where He will “prepare a place for you” (John 14:2-3). Here's another aspect of the model that Christ establishes for the household in Ephesians 5:33:

**Let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.**

This verse holds the key to understanding the difference between loving someone and “being in love”. Young couples often speak of this because they sense that the intense feelings they have won’t always last. In his book, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis expounds on this point when he writes:

**Love in this second sense – love as distinct from “being in love” – is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by (in Christian marriages) the grace which both partners ask, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other; as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself. They can retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves, be “in love” with someone else. “Being in love” first moved them to promise fidelity: This quieter love enables them to keep the promise.**

God has created a beautiful world that He wants to share with us. Our spouses want to share their part of that world with us – but – *they are afraid they will be rejected*. So, take his hand, let him show you a world where there’s beauty beyond belief. Then, in turn, say to him: “Welcome to my world” with a smile in the anticipation of sharing yours with him.

**Welcome to my morning, Welcome to my Day. Yes I’m the one responsible; I made it just this way. To make myself some pictures, and see what they might bring – I think I made it perfectly, I wouldn’t change a thing.**

John Denver – “Welcome To My Morning”

Picture source: [http://img.filmous.com/static/photos/77167/3\\_midi.jpg](http://img.filmous.com/static/photos/77167/3_midi.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. When people get married, they sometimes have it in their minds that they will “improve” their spouse by changing him/her. Do you set out to change the people in your life, or simply say “I don’t want to change a thing?”
2. Think of someone to whom you are close. What is there about you that you fear they will discover, and having discovered your secret, fear they will reject you?
3. In Revelation 3:20 it says “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” Christ wants us, warts and all. He wants to come into our lives and clean up our inner houses, even our secret closets that we never let anyone look in. Have you been willing to invite Him in?

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

Mr. President, We Seem to Be Alone



I Can't Find One Other Honest Man in the Room!

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## Movie Background

In the movie, **Mr. Smith Goes to Washington**, Jefferson Smith (**Jimmy Stewart**) is appointed to complete the term of the late Senator Foley. Smith, leader of the state's Boy Rangers group, is an innocent, wide-eyed idealist who quotes Jefferson and Lincoln. He idolizes the senior senator of the state, Joseph Paine (**Claude Rains**), who has introduced a pork barrel bill to finance an unneeded dam at Willet Creek. When Smith prepares to introduce his boy's camp bill to the Senate, Senator Paine and his business partners try to force him to drop the measure. Smith discovers Senator Paine wants the unneeded damn at Willets Creek site for graft, and attempts to expose the scam, but is accused by Paine of stealing money from the boy rangers. Nearly ready to quit, Smith is encouraged by his secretary to stay and fight. Smith returns to the Senate chamber and, despite slander and lies, takes to the floor of the Senate in a climactic filibuster to speak his piece. To see this scene from the movie, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Yd3ouQsPFY>

## Digging Deeper

In his book, **Mere Christianity**, C. S. Lewis talks about what it might take to create a truly Christian society. He writes:

"A Christian society is not going to arrive until most of us really want it: and we are not going to want it until we become fully Christian. I may repeat 'Do as you would be done by' till I am black in the face, but I cannot really carry it out till I love my neighbour as myself: and I cannot learn to love my neighbour as myself till I learn to love God: and I cannot learn to love God except by learning to obey Him."

In the movie, Jefferson Smith wants only what is best for the people of his state, especially the boys who live in poverty. When confronted by the graft and cynicism in Washington, he is ready to quit and go home. But just when he is ready to give up, his secretary, Miss Saunders (Jean Arthur) finds him and talks to him about how all the great men of the nation's past – Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and others – didn't quit when the going got tough. By sacrificing so that the nation could be built, sometimes at great cost to themselves, the history of America is one of sacrifice on the part of others. Encouraged by this, Smith returns to the Senate to face down his opponents and set the record straight.

In the parable of the land owner found in Mathew 20:1 -16, Jesus tells the story of a man who spends the entire day looking for people he can hire to come work for him. He's generous with his money, paying those who come to work at 4:00 in the afternoon the same as he pays those who came to work at 8:00 a.m. One of those who came early complains, saying he should get paid more, since he's worked longer. Jesus says (Math. 20:15-16):

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous? Thus, the last shall be first and the first last."

In this Christmas season, God tells us that the way to have a "Wonderful Life" is to serve others, rather than live for ourselves. In the final analysis, that is the only way to create a Christian society.

Picture

source: [http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_RW0mroCesfk/TUxgFOgNLvI/AAAAAAAAAwk/MULwB81mMG4/s1600/Mr+Smith+Goes+To+Washington+5.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_RW0mroCesfk/TUxgFOgNLvI/AAAAAAAAAwk/MULwB81mMG4/s1600/Mr+Smith+Goes+To+Washington+5.jpg)

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## **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Either in your personal or professional life, have you ever had a “crisis of confidence” – a point where you wanted to quit? How did you get through it? Did someone help you at your lowest point?
2. Looking back on that experience, can you see how God used that situation to teach you things that have helped you since then?
3. God often gives us experiences that test us, but in the end strengthen us so that we can help someone else. Who have you been able to help/could you help, by sharing your experience with them?

## *The Patriot*

Kids, if we Go to War, They'll Burn the House Down. What Should We Do?



Let's Flip For It: Heads We Do What the British Say and Keep the House. Tails We Stand for Our Principles

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### Movie Background

**The Patriot**, starring **Mel Gibson** as Benjamin Martin, is the story of a man with a violent past who has renounced war in order to raise his seven children. In one scene, Martin is challenged to behave according to his principles. The Colonial Commander, played by **Chris Cooper**, says: "If your principles dictate independence, then war is the only way. It has come to that." To this, Captain Martin replies: *"I have seven children. My wife is dead. Who's to care for them if I go to war? I'm a parent. I haven't the luxury of principles."*

Martin's oldest son Gabriel joins the Continental army against his father's wishes. Wounded, he returns one night to his father's home. After a fierce battle, Martin and his family treats wounded British and American soldiers from the battle. The British commander comes, and shoots one of Martin's other sons in cold blood.

In the end, even though he attempts to have peace with the British, his family is at risk. When the war becomes personal, and his son Thomas is killed, then and only then does he go to war. To see a video clip of this scene, click here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnGpwNmF430>

## Digging Deeper

There are a few people who read this newsletter in other countries, where to live for Christ means that they put their very lives at risk. For the Christian living in Postmodern America, the battle is no less real, but the costs are much more difficult to assess, because – for now at least – no one seeks to take our lives for holding our beliefs. Watching the movie, **The Patriot**, I am reminded that the costs, nevertheless, are great. There will be casualties no matter what our choice.

What are those costs? C.S. Lewis, in his book **Mere Christianity** argues that our choices change us into heavenly or hellish beings. Lewis writes:

**And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: Either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself.**

A practical application of this need to choose faces many conservative congregations that are in otherwise theologically liberal denominations. The recent debate over ordination of practicing homosexuals to become pastors has impacted the Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations. Conservative congregations who wish to leave their respective denominations are threatened with the loss of their church property. Thus, a weighty question is raised:

**Do we leave the denomination, and risk the loss of property that facilitates all sorts of ministries (and, let's face it, disrupt our otherwise comfortable lives), or do we stay and suffer a conflicted conscience, but continue these fine, worthwhile ministries (and, let's face it, retain our sense of comfort)?**

It's a hard question; one similar to the one Captain Benjamin Martin had to face in the movie, **The Patriot**. And he was not the only one to face that choice. In one scene, when Gabriel, Martin's son, has come to their home town to ask for volunteers to fight the British, the men at first resist volunteering.

But then, the girl Gabriel will marry, Ann, gets up and urges them to volunteer, saying: *"I ask only that you act upon the words you have so strongly spoken, and which you so strongly believe."*

What of you? What is the question God has placed before you – what question of faith has He posed for you to answer? Will you – will I – respond as one of God's Valiant Warriors once responded?

## Discovering Truth at the Movies

**And Joshua said unto all the people [of Israel], . . . choose this day whom you will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:2, 15).**

Picture source: <http://images.starpulse.com/Photos/Previews/Patriot-movie-08.jpg>

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### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Do you think Christians in America recognize there is a cost to be paid to follow Christ?
2. In his book, *Real Homeland Security*, Reverend Richard Land said "What happened in America happened in the last half century because there was a failure of faith and failure of nerve in the pulpit." Do you agree with Reverend Land that the pastors of America have had a failure of nerve?
3. One pastor friend of mine said that most congregations would fire a pastor who truly preached God's word. What do you think of my pastor friend's assessment?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David Lantz was the State Director of the Indiana Christian Coalition from 1992 to 1995, and has served as a political consultant to several political campaigns for statewide office. From 1989 to 1993, he wrote and published a statewide public policy newsletter, *Indiana Issues*. Since 2009, Mr. Lantz has been providing leadership training to various pro-family, pro-limited government groups and organizations.

Mr. Lantz is an Adjunct Professor of Business Management and Economics for the University of Phoenix, and teaches for several other Indiana colleges, including Ivy Tech and Indiana Institute of Technology. He was named the 2005 Faculty of the Year by the first graduating class of the Indianapolis Campus of the University of Phoenix. He has worked for such organizations as the Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute and as a Budget Analyst for the Indiana Legislature.

He prepared a socio-economic analysis of Central Indiana for Dr. Billy Graham's 1999 Indianapolis Crusade.

An adult Sunday school teacher at his church for the last twenty years, he has had several articles published in Christian magazines such as *The Lookout* and *Sunday Digest*. He is the author of two Christian historical novels, **The Brotherhood of the Scroll** and **The Sword of the Scroll**, and **Think Like Jesus, Lead Like Moses: Leadership Lessons from the Wilderness Crucible**.

David lives in Indianapolis, Indiana, with his wife, Sally. They are the proud parents of three children and 1 grandchild – so far!

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