

New Film Explores Intersection of Faith and Culture

Pentecostal filmmaker Dan Merchant sets out to discover why the gospel of love is dividing the U.S. His project, Lord Save Us From Your Followers, opens in select theaters Friday.



[] Dan Merchant has spent the last year directing, editing and seeking distribution for his documentary about the culture wars. But he says his project, *Lord Save Us From Your Followers*, which opens in select theaters Friday, is much more than a film. “We don’t have a movie, we have a movement on our hands,” said Merchant, a writer, director and producer who attends Beaverton Foursquare Church in Oregon.

The film () is a sometimes irreverent, often sobering look at how those outside the church community view Christians. The perception, Merchant says, is that Jesus’ followers are judgmental and hypocritical, concerned more about vying for political power than loving their neighbors. “It’s a balanced movie,” Merchant says. “We’re not kicking the church, we’re begging the church—begging the church to imitate Jesus a little more. We’ve got to be sure the gospel of love isn’t the gospel of being right.”

The film delves into hot-botton issues from homosexuality to abortion to politics, and features exclusive interviews with comedian and politician Al Franken, former Sen. Rick Santorum, author Tony Campolo and conservative radio host Michael Reagan.

Merchant, 43, has been screening the film at churches and colleges, including Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Ore., which the Princeton Review ranked one of the least religious schools in the U.S. Merchant says 285 students attended and after the screening, 60 students mimicked a scene at the end

of the movie and joined Christians in feeding homeless men and women who lived under a bridge in Portland. "Part of my argument is that the gospel of love, demonstrated by works, is a language everybody understands," he says.