

7 Incredible Science Fiction Films That Uphold the Value of Every Life

This past weekend, San Diego Comic Con once again allowed Hollywood to show off its “geek cred” to legions of comic book, superhero, science fiction and fantasy fans.

Yet amid all the trailers and announcements of new stories to come, individuals who value a culture of life should take heart: sci-fi films have proven to be a vehicle for some of the most pro-life messages ever seen on-screen.

This shouldn't come as a surprise. No less a theological luminary than C.S. Lewis plunged into the world of science fiction with his Space Trilogy, just as he did fantasy with his well-known children's series *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Lewis understood, as did his friend J.R.R. Tolkien—of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* fame—that some truths are best encountered via imagination, or “fairy stories,” as these scholars called the genre. Myths communicate something fundamental, something of a deeper structure.

Both Lewis and Tolkien sought to craft tales that capture echoes of truth. Though film is frequently an escape from everyday life, truth emerges within the worlds crafted as part of science fiction epics.

Understand that these films sometimes tread into darker places as they deal with life-or-death issues. Viewer discretion is advised, especially for films rated PG-13 or R. Note that Bound4LIFE recently published a list of seven family-friendly pro-life films and seven life-affirming movies available on Netflix Instant.

1. **Gattaca** (1997, 106 minutes, Rated PG-13)

Set in “the not too distant future,” *Gattaca* serves as a portent for what lies ahead – as today’s scientific community considers the bioethical issues of the ever-nearing reality of designer offspring.

The film is the tale of a natural-born young man named Vincent who longs to journey into space against all odds ... and his younger brother, genetically modified in a laboratory. As a “natural born,” Vincent is considered inferior and unworthy to undertake such a journey. *Gattaca* celebrates one man’s attempt to overcome a dangerous system that extols *designer* genetic life.

Themes: Biology vs. science, the triumph and will of a single life, cautionary tale of science advancing for the sake of “perfect children,” dangers of eugenics

2 & 3. **Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan / Star Trek III: The Search for Spock** (1982, 112 minutes, Rated PG / 1984, 105 minutes, Rated PG)

Lauded as the finest *Star Trek* film ever made, one of the best science fiction movies of all time and even “Moby Dick in Space,” *Khan* continues the story started in the classic *Star Trek: The Original Series* episode “Space Seed.”

The film deals poignantly with the emotions and motivations of hero James Kirk (William Shatner) and villain Khan Noonian Singh (the late Ricardo Montalban), but displays sacrifice on a fantastic canvas with the haunting words: “The needs of the many, outweigh the needs of the few or the one.”

On the heels of the previous film’s success, *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* picks up where *Wrath of Kahn* ends ... with the crew of the . Enterprise risking everything to seek out a beloved crew member. Captain Kirk’s remark late in the

film—"The needs of the one outweigh the needs of the few, or the many"—serves as its thesis and the inverse of the film before it.

Themes: Loyalty, friendship, family, the importance of fatherhood (and the effect of its absence), the value of one life, consequences of the past

4. **Soylent Green** (1973, 97 minutes, Rated PG-13)

Charlton Heston plays Rupert Thorne, a detective faced with overpopulation in the year 2022. Asked to solve the murder of a top executive at the Soylent Corporation, the producer of vegetable and fruit wafers called "soylent yellow" and "soylent red" used to feed Earth's vagrant masses, the detective learns the disturbing origin of a third product—called "soylent green."

A poignant subplot emerges when the detective's elderly friend Sol (Edward G. Robinson) decides to visit a local medical center and—in the words of Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol*—"decrease the surplus population."

Themes: Value of every life, dangers of euthanasia and population control

5. **Blade Runner: The Final Cut** (2007, 117 minutes, Rated R)

The definitive cut of the 1982 film by director Ridley Scott—of *Alien* and *Gladiator* fame—*Blade Runner* tells the story of Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), a burnt-out and retired law enforcement officer in 2019 Los Angeles. Deckard, once part of a special "Blade Runner" unit tasked with hunting down and "retiring" Replicants (manufactured nonhuman duplicates with a shortened lifespan of four years), is called in for one final job: to hunt a group of rogue Replicants loose in the city.

Along the way he comes across Rachel, assistant to the Replicants creator—who is not all she appears to be. As Deckard pursues the replicants, he encounters humanity in unlikely places ... ultimately causing his view of the world around him, and the life within it, to change forever.

Themes: Value of every life, capacity for change and redemption, living life instead of just muddling through, answering the larger questions of origin and purpose

6. *The 6th Day* (2000, 124 minutes, Rated PG-13)

Set in a future where laws have been passed that ban outright human cloning—but allow for the cloning of pets and human organs—the owner of a cloning technology firm hires a helicopter pilot (Arnold Schwarzenegger) to navigate a skiing trip, pending a positive aptitude test requiring blood and vision checks.

Unbeknownst to him, that genetic material is used to create an exact genetic copy of the pilot in violation of the 6th Day laws. As the pilot, Adam Gibson, discovers that someone else has taken over his life, he uncovers an attempt to move humanity closer to immortality through rogue science.

Themes: Biology vs. science, cautionary tale of science advancing for the sake of immortality, cloning, treating life as a disposable commodity, the danger of “good intentions” and unintended consequences

7. *The Island* (2005, 136 minutes, Rated PG-13)

In the year 2019, two adults with childlike temperaments live in controlled conditions with regimented lives. Both long to visit the Island, which requires winning the lottery—yet, in the words of Inigo Montoya from *The Princess Bride*, that “does not mean what you think it means.”

Reminiscent of the sci-fi classic *Logan's Run*, the two escape and are hunted. A startling revelation exposes how their lives are tied to affluent "patrons" who desire immortality. Soon their journey becomes to free others still in captivity.

Themes: Cautionary tale of science advancing for the sake of immortality, organ harvesting, cloning, dangers of treating life as a disposable commodity, stem cell research, surrogate pregnancy.

As one can see from this sampling of classic and recent films, science fiction allows us to see humanity from an outsider's viewpoint (think Spock in *Star Trek*) or imagine today's ideas taken to their ultimate conclusion—as seen in another sci-fi blockbuster, *The Giver*. (In reviewing that film, I couldn't help but share my own story.)

In the process, these high-tech, mind-bending films give us new insights on the unique value of every life.

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