

Christian Filmmaker Claims Persecution After Church Movie Gets 'R' Rating

When Rhett Baptist Church in Burleson, Tex., recently released a small-budget motion picture, church officials hoped it would make an impact on society. Little did they know the controversy it would cause.

The film, "My Son," produced by members of the church's congregation, received an R rating from the Motion Picture Association of America. The MPAA told church officials it was because of "violence and drug use portrayed in the film," a comment that surprised Pastor Chuck Kitchens.

"I was very shocked," Kitchens told *Fox News*. "It makes me sick to my stomach."

Kitchens said the film does include violence, but that it was neither gory nor gratuitous. The film doesn't include foul language, sex scenes or nudity.

In comparison, feature films such as "World War Z" and "Bully," with a great deal of violence in each, each received PG-13 ratings. The film "Jobs," which included scenes of LSD and marijuana usage, also got a PG-13 rating.

"When you look at the facts and see there are other movies that have been rated PG-13 that have more violence and more drug scenes, you have to say there's inconsistency there," Kitchen told *Fox News*.

Kitchens can draw only one conclusion. The R rating given to "My Son" has much more to do with the film's faith-based message than it does the violence.

"A group of people out there don't necessarily like strong

evangelical Christianity,” Kitchens told *Fox News*. “People don’t like to hear that it’s this one way (to heaven) and nothing else. But if you are a Christian, that’s the message. That’s what Jesus said. That’s what you have to proclaim. People call us bigoted and then they go on the attack.”

As a policy, the MPAA doesn’t typically comment on a film’s rating. A statement by the MPAA, however, reiterated the violence and drug-use angle and played down any other reasons for the rating. The R rating prevents children under 17 from viewing the film without the accompaniment of an adult.

“The rating is simply intended to inform parents of a film’s content so that they can make their own viewing decisions on behalf of their kids;” said MPAA spokesperson Kate Bedingfield. “It is never an indication of the quality of the film.”

Kitchens said many of his fellow pastors won’t recommend their film to their church members because of the R rating. The church has petitioned the MPAA as to what they needed to remove from the movie to bump it to a PG-13 rating, but the MPAA hasn’t been elusive with any answers along those lines.

“My Son” is scheduled to make its debut Friday, and Kitchens said church officials plan to move ahead with the film in spite of the rating.