

When Bible Movies Aren't So Biblical, How Should Christians React?

I'm taking a risk here, since I received so much criticism for recommending Christians see the movie *Noah*. But as Hollywood attempts more movies based on the Bible, we need to do more than just complain when they miss the mark biblically. The truth is that some of these movies will be hit and others miss. Hollywood isn't a Christian institution, so for us to expect biblical fidelity in all their movies is simply not realistic. Just to complain about it doesn't help change the situation. Instead, here's what I'd recommend:

1. Absolutely let's preview films and tell Christians (especially families with kids) what's in these movies. I'm all for reviews and recommendations that let people know what's there so they can decide for themselves whether to see it or not.

2. We need to actually see the movie before we criticize. I'm a firm believer that to criticize a movie, book, TV program or other endeavor without actually seeing it is intellectually dishonest. Christian leaders do it all the time and I believe it really hurts our credibility outside the Christian bubble. If those leaders were honest, they'd admit they're mostly doing it to stir up the faithful to help fundraising, but when it comes to making an impact in the culture, it's not helping. If you hear negative things about a movie or TV program and want to avoid it personally, that's fine. But before you mount a public petition drive, boycott or campaign against it, you need to know what you're talking about.

3. Even when the movie isn't biblically accurate, think about using it as an evangelism tool. Does the God of the universe

shudder when a filmmaker gets it wrong? Doubtful. Millions of people are seeing these movies, so I'd rather seize the opportunity to use them for sharing the gospel. Take a non-believing friend and then have coffee and share the real story with them. In Acts 17, pagan philosophers at Mars Hill didn't scare Paul away. He ran right toward them and graciously made an impact for the gospel.

4. I'd like to see the Christian community criticize less and begin raising up our own filmmakers, writers and producers to go into the industry. Let's focus less on making explicitly "Christian" films and more on getting Christian thinking into mainstream movies. I'm thrilled with the success of a few movies like *God's Not Dead*, but they're largely seen by the choir, and I question whether that is influencing the culture. I'm talking about the same strategy the gay community used in Hollywood and it was brilliant. They helped find talented gay filmmakers, developed relationships with major studios and TV networks, mentored them and helped fund their projects. And just look at their results.

5. Finally (and here's a novel idea) let's pray for Hollywood. If we really believe that God answers prayer, what if we started encouraging Christians to pray for the most influential industry on the planet? For help, start with the Hollywood Prayer Network. What if we started praying for the thousands of dedicated believers working inside the industry everyday? (Especially those who are working with the studios to influence these filmmakers of Bible movies to be more accurate.) I think that would have far greater results than boycotts, petition drives and criticism.

If we're going to impact today's culture, we need to have a strategy, not a just an angry reaction. Stay tuned to The Influence Lab for more.

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