

Why Bad Christian Movies Might Be a Good Thing

There's a natural evolution when it comes to innovation. The first prototypes of a product, media project or any creative endeavor are rarely perfect, and usually fatally flawed. But part of the development process is working through the bad stuff in order to get to what actually works.

The airplane, the mobile phone, the personal computer—nearly all products we love and value went through a maddeningly convoluted process on their way to what we experience today. Which brings me to the deluge of recent “Christian” movies—which, for the most part, I admit are pretty awful.

In the '70s and '80s, movies with Christian themes were occasionally done by Hollywood studios, and the rest were produced by big organizations like the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Later, the Jesus Film Project jumped in, and eventually, some independent producers. But today, it appears every church in America is in the movie business. At the National Religious Broadcasters Convention—which focuses mostly on broadcast radio and TV—you can't miss the booths, brochures and trailers for a rash of new, low-budget Christian movies.

But the truth is, although I applaud any effort to actually mount a feature film, the vast majority are still pretty amateurish. However, there may be light at the end of the tunnel. As I sit here looking over the promotional material for a number of these films, I'm hoping we're in the same place the cellphone was 20 years ago—rough, but on a direct route to what we see today.

So I'm suggesting we offer these young producers a little grace, and give them some time to work through the bugs and

develop their talent. After all, most of them are dealing with minuscule budgets. Certainly, any less-than-excellent movie, TV program or other creative content doesn't help us influence the culture. But at the same time, the secular media business has its share of clunkers.

We can only hope that after a few years of suffering through so many duds, we'll eventually set a higher bar, where the vast majority of movies made by Christians are worth sharing.

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