

Why I'm Recommending Christians See the Film 'Noah'

You've probably heard the controversy about the upcoming [Paramount Pictures](#) movie *Noah*. In the last few weeks, I've seen numerous blogs, social media posts and commentaries on the movie—usually criticizing it and detailing how far it strays from an accurate biblical portrayal.

But I'm one of only a handful of people who've actually seen the movie, which is probably why I'm a bit bothered at the condemnations and protests from *Christians who have never actually watched it*.

That's why I felt compelled to write this. Is the story an exact biblical representation? No. For one thing, the Noah story in the Bible is remarkably short. We don't know what happened inside the ark during the voyage. We don't know what Noah was thinking. We don't know the family dynamic. So the filmmakers added to the story. And honestly, there are “extra-biblical” elements in the film. These are things that don't line up with the biblical account at all. If I had directed the film, I wouldn't have added them, but this isn't my film.

Last week, at the [National Religious Broadcasters Convention](#) in Nashville, three people who have seen it—NRB President Dr. Jerry Johnson; John Snowden, who was the biblical adviser on the film; and myself, an NRB board member—showed never-before-seen clips from the movie and led a discussion with hundreds of NRB members. This is Dr. Johnson's response, and here's John's take.

And from my perspective, in spite of nonbiblical elements in the film and obvious reasons of concern for Christians, in a capsule form, here's why I think Christians need to see the

movie:

1. I've been on the set. I've talked to the chairman of the studio, as well as the producer, director, set designer and even the star—Russell Crowe. Not once did I ever get the feeling they were anything but serious. They didn't mock the story, went to great lengths to get the ark built to exact biblical measurements, and did an amazing amount of research. In fact, writer [Ari Handel](#) and director [Darren Aronofsky](#) have been working on this script for 16 years.

2. This week, Dr. Jerry Johnson, president of the National Religious Broadcasters, made an appeal to Paramount Studios to use a disclaimer on the film. He suggested that—like DreamWorks did in [Prince of Egypt](#)—they add a disclaimer to say this was *inspired* by the Bible story rather than a film of the story itself. Paramount agreed with the idea without hesitation (I was on the phone calls), and here is their joint announcement. While it was too late to add it to the film, they readily agreed to add the disclaimer to the movie posters, website and digital promotions, as well as all radio and TV commercials that haven't already been distributed. This tells me that Paramount values the Christian audience and wants to work with us.

3. It's an epic film. I've always wondered about the places where the biblical account of Noah was silent. In this version, the filmmakers made Noah a complex character and helped me see possibilities I'd never considered for how details in the story could have happened. This isn't the Sunday school, sanitized version of the story, and for that I'm grateful. After the screening, I thought of novelist Flannery O'Connor—one of my favorite writers. Although she died in 1964, the movie's unabashed look at sinful, grotesque humanity and the extraordinary saving grace of God reminded me of how she might have looked at the story.

4. For at least a decade, we've been asking Hollywood to

produce movies based on the Bible. Now that they're doing it, let's be more encouraging. So far, they've proven to be serious in the effort, whether they miss the target or not. So let's support it, not stifle it.

5. Our expectations may be unrealistic. Paramount Pictures is a business—a secular film studio. Should we really expect every Bible based film to be 100 percent accurate? I'm thrilled that Mark Burnett's *Son of God* is much closer to the text. But to assume every movie out of the chute will be as accurate is simply not realistic.

6. Whatever extrabiblical elements there are in the film, that doesn't overcome the fact that Paramount Studios is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to produce and promote a Bible story. This will be a national conversation that millions will participate in, and *Noah* will be water-cooler conversation for the next six months. What an opportunity for the Christian community! Instead of condemning it outright, let's join the conversation. Rarely does an event come along that begs us to present our side of the story. But if we don't see the movie, we'll be wasting the opportunity.

7. This is a powerful opportunity to share our faith. If you've felt awkward witnessing to a friend or co-worker, then what could be easier than taking them to a movie? Then go out and discuss what the Bible really says about the story.

8. It's only a movie. As pollster George Barna remarked after Mel Gibson's blockbuster *Passion of the Christ*, "Less than one-tenth of one percent of those who saw the film stated that they made a profession of faith or accepted Jesus Christ as their savior in reaction to the film's content." That was the biggest religious film of all time, and yet it didn't spark a revival. Likewise, chances are a movie about Noah that deviates from the Scripture won't drive Christians away from the faith.

9. Do we as a Christian community really need to “protect” ourselves from a movie that isn’t 100-percent biblically accurate? Would the apostle Paul have run from the challenge? Rather than withdrawing from the discussion, I suggest that we seize the moment, turn the tables and use this to our advantage. Pastors should be preaching messages on the Noah story. Let’s use the film to share our faith with friends and co-workers. Like the Old Testament’s Joseph, who rose to remarkable heights in an alien and hostile culture, let’s not shy away from these opportunities. Rather, let’s use them to demonstrate the power of God’s Word.

10. Finally, remember that there are hundreds of serious, dedicated Christians working in the entertainment industry every day. These are professionals who—like Joseph—are working from the inside. When we launch attacks, petition drives or boycotts, we’re damaging their ability to make change happen. As the Hollywood Prayer Network recommends, instead of making Hollywood the enemy, let’s consider Hollywood a mission field.

Perhaps we need to ask ourselves: When was the last time we prayed for a Christian professional (a “media missionary”) trying to make difference in Hollywood—the most influential place on earth?

Maybe it’s time to start.

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