

Reformed

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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Volume 41 Issue No. 2

# PERSPECTIVE

SPECIAL FILM EDITION



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... and what's really eerie, I turned it off half an hour ago.





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# A different priority

## WHAT MAKES THESE MOVIE RECOMMENDATIONS UNIQUE

Midway through the film *TimeChanger* there is a scene in which a Bible professor transported from 1890 to our present time goes to see a film. As might be expected, he finds the movie shocking. Less predictable is the reason why. As the religious time traveler runs from the theatre he shouts:

“Stop the movie! You must stop this movie! The man on the screen just blasphemed the name of the Lord! There must be some mistake – you must stop this movie, this is an abomination!”

While Christians usually avoid movies with smut and gore, few of us would react like this professor if we heard the Lord’s name taken in vain. It’s likely because the abuse of God’s name is so commonplace these days that most of us don’t notice it when it happens.

It might surprise you that Christian films also take God’s name in vain with some regularity... though you’ll *never* hear the F-word. Why the discrepancy? Again, it’s probably because God’s Name is abused so often – we hold it in such low regard – that no one notices its abuse, not even the scriptwriters! The 2003 *Luther* takes God’s name in vain but when the producer was contacted he was surprised to hear it. He explained that not only had it escaped his notice but the script had been sent to a number of theologians and ministers and none of them had noticed either. It escaped the notice of most of the movie’s Christian reviewers as well – *Plugged In*’s Matt Kaufman notes two

uses of d--- and one use of the “S-word” but missed entirely the abuse of God’s name.

### THE ONE

So when it came time to determine what criteria to use for this list, one was clear: no movie on the list could take God’s name in vain. That would certainly make the list unique, and was a good starting point for a number of reasons.

First, God has explicitly commanded us not to take his name in vain (Ex. 20:7; Deut 5:11). If the abuse of His name has gotten so commonplace we don’t even notice it anymore then it’s clear we need to pay more attention to this command.

Second, while it would be easy to just blame Hollywood, we share at least some of the responsibility for the constant cinematic abuse of God’s name. Hollywood produces lots of offensive content, but usually with reason – the smut and graphic violence on a show like *Games of Thrones* might turn us off, but there are others who watched the show for just those things. So, including that sort of horrible content might make business sense.

Blasphemy is different; no one goes to a movie just to hear God’s name abused.

Why then, does Hollywood continue to insert language that will anger some and attract none? The obvious explanation is that the offended some – and that means you and me – haven’t told producers and directors how offensive the misuse of God’s name is. At least, we haven’t told them in the sort of way that matters to them – at the

box office. We don’t hear the F-word in children’s films because parents won’t buy any movies that include it. That’s a message Hollywood understands. Now it’s up to us to let them know God’s Name deserves more reverence than a four-letter word

*Blasphemy is different; no one goes to a movie just to hear God’s name abused.*

Third, we should remember that when we see this sin portrayed on film we are watching something quite different from any other “movie sin.” In a heist film, moviegoers all know that no actual theft takes place. And when a murderer shoots someone on film, we know no actual murder has taken place – we would never watch a snuff film! However, when an actor on screen takes the Lord’s name in vain, he really is blaspheming. And if we’re buying a ticket, we’re paying him to do it.

### THE OTHERS

Other criteria included a film’s technical excellence – more than 30 movies on the list were nominated for, or won an Oscar (an Oscar doesn’t mean a film is worth watching, but does mean it is well produced). Significant too, was how highly a film was rated

by reviewers in general – a film I loved but no one else did wouldn't make the cut. Also important were a film's level of sexual and violent content, as well as the film's overall message or worldview.

While these other criteria were also employed, what makes this list different than most any other is that no film on it takes God's name in vain. A level of onscreen violence or sexual content can be a critical part to a plot, but there is simply no reason a film ever has to take God's name in vain.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?


There is some debate though, about what exactly it means to take God's name in vain. One Christian movie review website with professed Judeo-Christian ethics, thinks that it's fine to use God's name as an "exclamatory statement" just so long as "d—it" isn't used right afterwards. I've employed a different standard: if a character uses God's name and isn't talking about

God or talking to God then we should recognize him as using God's name in vain.

Some Christians regard words and expressions like "my goodness" and "gosh" as taking God's name in vain. I don't agree. These expressions are nonsensical – God's name is not "gosh" – and this substitute was created by people seeking ways *not* to take God's name in vain. These are substitutes, in much the same way that "shoot" is a substitute for the S-word. And if I always say, "shoot" instead of the S-word, I'm no longer spouting vulgarities – "shoot" is what I say instead of using a vulgarity. The same is true in this case – instead of taking God's name in vain, people make an effort not to blaspheme and substitute another word like "goodness" or even "Pete." More could be said but for those that disagree and regard these words as offensive, this is a warning that some of the movies on this list do use these expressions.

### WHY MOVIES?

It's been more fifteen years since *Reformed Perspective's* last movie issue, and that one only included 100 movies. This time around we have well over twice as many, which means there should really be something here for everyone.

But why invest so much time and effort in something as frivolous as film? The short answer is that even as YouTube and Tik Tok videos have cut into the time most used to spend watching movies, it still remains an influential medium. It also remains a controversial one in Christian circles because of how often it is used for evil. But rather than lament the bad, this is a list to help us appreciate and enjoy the good. My hope is that this list will help you glorify God in your movie watching. 

Jon Dykstra can be reached at [editor@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:editor@reformedperspective.ca).



"You must stop this movie!"





# BEYOND JUDGING A MOVIE BY ITS POSTER

Most “family friendly” films  
are precarious

by Michael Minkoff

Recent research indicates that our brains are more synaptically active while we sleep than they are while we watch television or movies. This is not just a physical reality, but a spiritual one. Most people, including an alarming number of Christians, watch movies strictly for enjoyment, with a passive and receptive mental stance. But Christians should not view movies this way, and if they can't watch movies any other way, they shouldn't watch movies at all.

The Proverbs tell us: “Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding” (Prov. 10:23). In other words, vanity, futility, and immorality are fun to a fool. These alone please him.

A wise man, on the other hand, finds pleasure and satisfaction in the exercise of wisdom and discernment. If a movie is little more than eye-candy – an exercise in superficiality and sensual experience

– it won't do very much to please a wise man. He wants something to chew on, some way to exercise and practice his discernment, some avenue to make a distinction between excellence and mediocrity, right and wrong. Mature Christians

given movie, or not watch it. Not watching a movie is the easiest way to avoid being affected by it. When a movie sells itself with sex, violence, and coarse language, it is almost always a good choice to skip it. Judging a movie by its poster, pre-

*Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather, it is telling the difference between right and almost right*

view, and rating is the easiest form of discernment, and for me at least, it shaves off about 90% of all contemporary movies right off the bat without any further inquiry.

“because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). A thoughtful, well-produced movie can be and should be another playground for the pleasurable practice of biblical discernment.

## BETWEEN RIGHT AND ALMOST RIGHT

As is apparent to most human beings, some family pets, and even some household appliances, one can either watch a

But, as Charles Spurgeon has said, “Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather, it is telling the difference between right and almost right.” It seems that most Christians, if they use discernment at the box office at all, discern only according to appearances. If a movie contains little coarse language, no nudity, and no exorbitant violence, they consider the movie harmless family entertainment. Well-dressed, sweet-smelling lies are



harder to detect than stinky, ugly ones. For this reason, Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, and we should not be surprised when his servants come to us in equally deceptive garb (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

We must learn to exercise a discernment which looks at the heart of a matter. God exercises this kind of discernment perfectly, and we also can “spiritually appraise” all things because we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). It is clear we must avoid supporting movies that display a penchant for sin and all that the flesh lusts after, but what about those “family-friendly” films that seem so harmless? How do we avoid the pitfalls of worldview deception when something seems “almost right”?

### “IMITATION VALUE EXTRACTS”

I think the most dangerous feature of mainstream family-friendly films is the ubiquitous inclusion of what I call “imitation value extracts.” These are virtues or convictions that have been extracted from their context. They are ready-made virtues.

It is easy to account (or should I say bank account) for their existence. Hollywood producers want to make as much money as possible from their films, naturally. In order to do this, they have to attract as many viewers as possible. This means it is important for them to neutralize any elements in their movies that might unduly offend any potential market. Thus, “value extracts” allow any number of viewers with vastly different substantive beliefs to pour their own definitions, sources, and foundations into the generalized, non-exclusive frameworks of any given film.

Allow me a detour for a moment to talk about an interesting Biblical backdrop for this discussion. The word translated “medium” in the Old Testament (meaning necromancer or sorcerer) is the Hebrew word “ob” which means “empty wine skin.” This means that the mediums emptied themselves out so that they could be filled with any passing spirit.

In the same way, Hollywood has embraced a stance of tolerant pluralism, emptying itself of any divisive or exclusive convictions so as to be open to the

opinions (and especially, the money) of any passing viewer. Let’s look at a few examples of objectless, foundationless “value extracts” in some “classic” family films.

### PRINCE OF EGYPT

Consider the movie *Prince of Egypt*, Dreamworks Animation’s first film, which is loosely based on the Biblical account of Moses. The theme song for the film is entitled “When You Believe.” The chorus to this song is:

*There can be miracles, when you believe  
Though hope is frail, it’s hard to kill  
Who knows what miracles you can achieve  
When you believe, somehow you will  
You will when you believe...*

This is a great example of extracted values. Here, the faith and hope have no object. Their value is intrinsic. The focus is on the individual’s act of belief, not on the object of his belief. You can achieve miracles if you believe, even if what you believe in doesn’t exist, there is power in the act of belief. Belief is its own reward. It doesn’t matter what or who you believe in, just that you believe. The belief itself is what is valuable about religion because it gives you the strength to carry on through difficult times.

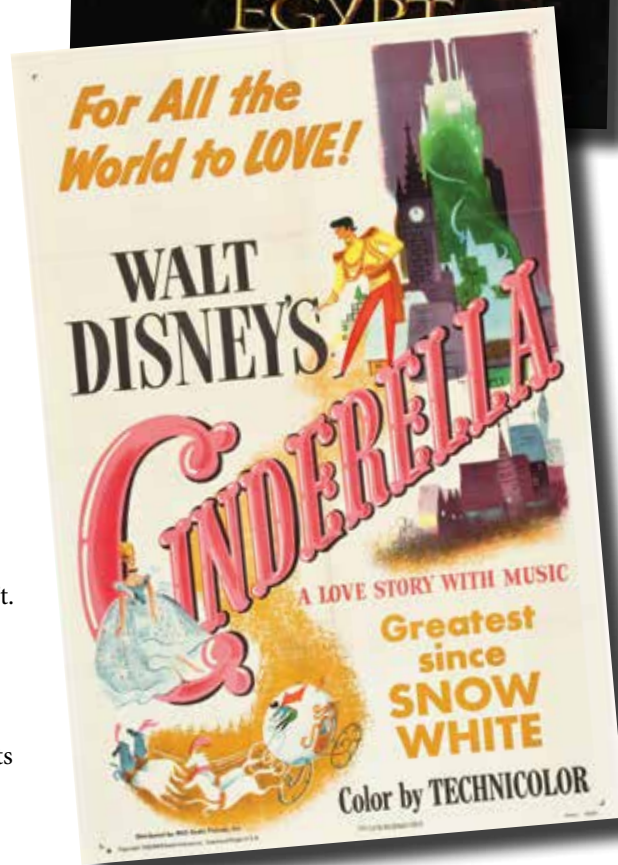
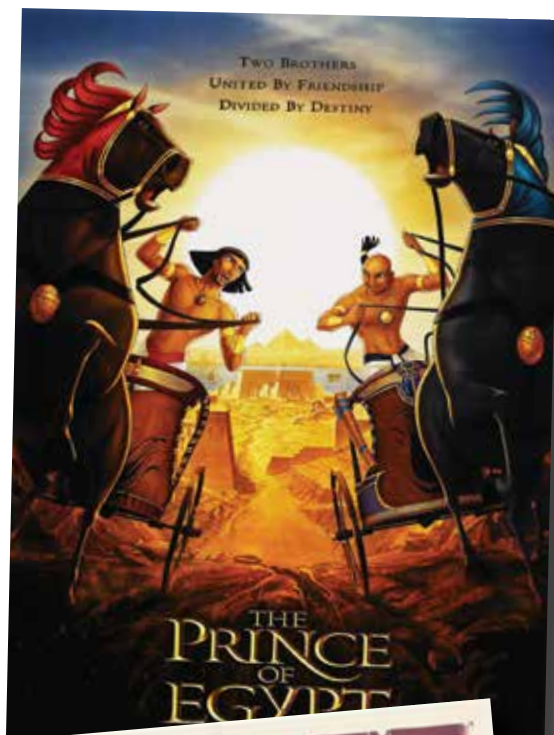
I wish this were the only example of “imitation faith extract.” But it isn’t. Here are a few more examples.

### THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER

The first song for the ending credits of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* contains these lines:

*We can be the kings and queens of  
anything if we believe.  
It’s written in the stars that shine above,  
A world where you and I belong,  
where faith and love will keep us strong,  
Exactly who we are is just enough.*

In these lines, we see both faith and love operating as value extracts – totally



separated from any object. This would be bad enough, but consider this testimony from Liam Neeson, who has played Aslan in all the Narnia movies so far:

Aslan symbolizes a Christ-like figure but he also symbolizes for me Mohamed, Buddha, and all the great spiritual

leaders and prophets over the centuries. That's who Aslan stands for as well as a mentor figure for kids – that's what he means for me.

Hmmm. So the movie has been designed so that any religious belief can fit into its framework. It has been stripped of political incorrectness by removing or

## *Value extracts are dangerous deceptions – barely even half-truths. Virtue does not exist without Christ.*

primarily neutralizing Christian truths that would exclude other beliefs. Notice again the emphasis on self. In fact, if mainstream “family” movies give any object for faith, it is always the self. How many times have you heard the platitude: “You’ve just gotta believe in yourself.” Something in me thinks that C.S. Lewis would not be terribly happy about the marketizing neutralization of his specifically and obviously Christian stories, but I guess there is no way to know until we get to “somewhere in the stars where you and I belong” and then, we can ask him.

### THE POLAR EXPRESS

Another example is *The Polar Express*. In it, the train conductor says, “The thing about trains... it doesn’t matter where they’re going. What matters is deciding to get on.” Later, the protagonist chants, “I believe. I believe. I believe.” According to the conductor, the direction, destination, source, or foundation of belief – I mean

trains – is not important. So the boy just has to “believe.” Whatever he believes in is unimportant. As long as he decides to believe, that is what is important.

Or how about *Cinderella*: “If you keep believing, the dreams you wish will come true.”

Or even *Kung Fu Panda*: “Promise me, XiFu! Promise me you will believe!”

Once you start to notice this sort of thing, the examples are really endless. “Value Extracts” are the moral backbone of almost all family films. Love very commonly operates as a value extract – without boundaries, without object, without foundation. The “power of love.” Courage, loyalty, and honesty also appear regularly, and without a foundation. Whatever the value, it must be presented in a nebulous enough way to receive any viewer’s particular definitions. Hollywood provides the empty wineskin, you provide the passing spirit.

### BARELY EVEN HALF-TRUTHS

Value extracts are dangerous deceptions – barely even half-truths. Virtue does not exist without Christ. Nothing has intrinsic value apart from Him. Faith without an object is useless. Love without definition is as good as hate. Courage, loyalty, honesty, etc. are arbitrary without biblical boundaries. Good and evil do not exist without an absolute standard to distinguish them. To ascribe intrinsic or independent value to anything is to say, in effect, that things can have existence


and goodness independent of God.

Non-Christians wish this were the case because they want the fruit of Christianity without having to bow the knee to Christ. But Ecclesiastes makes it very clear: under the sun (i.e., excluding the heavens where God is), everything is intrinsically meaningless and vain.

So, these seemingly safe family movies may appear to be harmless family fun, but they are actually denying the root of all meaningful existence – God and His Word.

As such, most “family friendly” films are precarious, and should not be viewed passively.

It is profitable to watch these movies, even with your children, only if you couch the movie-watching experience as an active sparring session... a module of worldview conflict training. Without this self-conscious predisposition to “guarding our hearts,” we will leave ourselves vulnerable to the onslaughts of vain speculation and worldly philosophy. Watching movies and engaging with the philosophy of our culture must never be a passive experience, for to allow it to be such would be to sit under the tutelage and in the friendly company of scoffers. We cannot be deceived, such an approach has corrupted and will continue to corrupt Christian morals. The enjoyment we receive from movies must be the sport of exercising our Biblical discernment, not the passive and passing pleasure of folly (thinking again like Prov. 10:23).

So, next time you go to the movies, don’t leave your mind at the box office or your heart unguarded. Prepare yourself for the invigorating exercise of your discernment. Then, take the strength and understanding you gain from that exercise and use it to engage your culture for the kingdom of Christ! 

*This article is reprinted with permission from the author, and was first posted to Movieology.tv a now defunct website that offered movie reviews, from a biblical, Reformed worldview. Michael Minkoff Jr. is the cofounder of The Nehemiah Foundation for Cultural Renewal and Renew the Arts (RenewTheArts.org).*





by Cap Stewart



# HERE'S THE PROBLEM WITH JUST CLOSING YOUR EYES DURING THE SEX SCENES

Several years ago, Kate Beckinsale was conned into signing a movie contract that required nudity—something she didn't want to do. With her acting career in jeopardy, she found herself browbeaten by the director. At long last, she gave in to intimidation and performed the nude scene, which made her feel, as she put it, “violated and horrible.” Afterwards, she secretly urinated in the director's thermos in revenge.<sup>1</sup>

In more recent history, Jennifer Law-

rence wrestled with inner turmoil while filming her first sex scene (for the sci-fi movie *Passengers*). During an actress roundtable for *The Hollywood Reporter*, Lawrence described the experience:

I got really, really drunk. But then that led to more anxiety when I got home because I was like, “What have I done? I don't know.” And he was married. And it was going to be my first time kissing a married man, and guilt is the

worst feeling in your stomach. And I knew it was my job, but I couldn't tell my stomach that. So I called my mom, and I was like, “Will you just tell me it's OK?”<sup>2</sup>

Notice three sobering facts about Lawrence's experience. First, she battled anxiety before and after filming the scene. Second, she felt intense guilt for sexually acting out with a married man. Third, she tried several coping mechanisms to



To get ready for her sex scene in *Passenger* Jennifer Lawrence “got really, really drunk.” And that still didn’t ease her anxiety.

the pervert side of the audience, okay? Everybody else is the serious drama side – I represent the perv side of the audience, and I’m saying I want full frontal nudity in this scene. So you go ahead and do it.”<sup>4</sup>

Notice the implicit acknowledgment that the nudity had nothing to do with art – that it was designed solely for the satisfaction of a perverted audience base. The producer pushed his weight around, and the director (and everyone else) acquiesced. All of this to appeal to the lowest common denominator.

#### FOLLOW THE MONEY

What gives entertainment executives the authority to force others into such compromising situations? What gives a producer the power to manipulate a director into catering to

But if we then turn around and financially support that culture, something is askew.

It doesn’t matter if you avert your eyes during sex scenes – at the end of the day, studios care about profit margins. That being the case, prudes and perverts give equal support for a film when they buy a movie ticket or purchase a DVD. The truth is, if people stopped financially supporting the abuse of actors, the industry would change. But producers follow the money, and there’s money to be made through the objectification of entertainers. As one acquaintance of mine with ties to Hollywood once put it in a Facebook discussion:

I know how many of the women in these scenes (and probably men too, you just don’t hear from them) have talked about throwing up in the bathroom between scenes, crying, stressing

eliminate her distress: alcohol (which only made things worse), telling herself everything was okay, and asking for consolation.<sup>3</sup>

Would you believe me if I told you that stories like these are numerous? Sadly, it’s true. The amount of pressure and intimidation Hollywood places on actors – especially women – to undress and sexually act out for the camera is commonplace. When asked about sex scenes, celebrities often reply with something like, “We’re actors; it’s a part of the job.” Indeed, those who want to make it as an actor won’t be taken seriously if they have qualms about nudity and bed scenes.

The movers and shakers in Hollywood have acquired what seems to be an almost limitless amount of power to enforce the sexualization of actors. To cite one more example (this time from the world of television): director Neil Marshall once commented on how he was pressured by an HBO executive to put more sex and nudity in an episode of *Game of Thrones*:

...one of the exec producers...took me to one side and said, “Look, I represent

*They do not subscribe to a Christian sexual ethic. Still, their consciences bother them when it comes to nudity and sex scenes.*

perverse fantasies? What gives a director the right to coerce an actress into agreeing to do more than she meant to?

If this page was a mirror, you would be looking at the answer.

You see, when average folks like you and me support films and TV shows like these, we are perpetuating the sexualized culture we say we deplore. My guess is that, because it’s often hard to see how “A” eventually leads to “X,” we think little of doing “A,” even if we abhor “X.” We may complain about the objectification of women (and men) in our culture. We may complain about how movies are ruined by sex scenes and gratuitous nudity.

out constantly, etc. So basically, I’m paying for that person to do that for me? .... There are perhaps no handcuffs involved with these performers, but social constraints/expectations/demands/culture can be equally, if not more, powerful. And that’s the problem. I’ve lived in Hollywood. I’ve worked with prostitutes one on one. The line between the two worlds is thin. I know no other culture more willing to use people and throw them away.

Consider also that plenty of actors in the entertainment industry are not professing believers. They do not subscribe



to a Christian sexual ethic. Still, their consciences bother them when it comes to nudity and sex scenes. Yet most moviegoers, including many professing believers, say their consciences are clear when they watch the consciences of others be violated – for entertainment, no less. They pay for actors to be abused or debased and experience no qualms about it.

In contrast, Paul calls Christians to give up their rights if it means hurting the conscience of others (see 1 Corinthians 9 and Romans 14). We have it backwards: we participate in the violation of others' dignity so we can benefit from their moral and emotional compromises.

Granted, the context of Paul's teaching on this matter is the relationship between members of the church, but I don't think that gives us an excuse to disregard the wellbeing of unbelievers.

As patrons of Hollywood, our pursuit of personal freedom has hijacked our ability to consider the needs of others. We have adopted a consumeristic mindset that disregards most every other factor in favor of us having a positive, cathartic experience. If the story is interesting enough, and if it "demands" the objectification and dehumanization of actors, then the needs of the story win out.

Brothers and sisters, this should not be!

## WHAT ABOUT ACTORS WHO UNDRESS WILLINGLY

Now, it is true that some actors do sex and/or nude scenes willingly, with little or no manipulation involved. Even so, that shouldn't be of supreme importance to people of faith. Not if we take seriously God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

With this command in mind, whether or not actors agree with the nudity and sex acts required of them is actually beside the point. Why? Because it doesn't negate the fact that they are being objectified and degraded as human beings in what is essentially a pornographic act.<sup>5</sup> It is unloving of us as Christians to support such actions, even when they are free from coercion.

We see this principle at work in Romans 13, which says loving your neighbor includes avoiding adultery. The point

is not that all adultery is rape. Some adultery – much of it, in fact – takes place by mutual consent. Does that suddenly make the adultery excusable? Not according to Scripture. By its nature, sexual perversion is sin, even if it takes place between consenting adults.

All forms of immorality are inherently unloving. That's the Bible's stance. That *should* be the Christian's stance. In contrast to this, the film industry has created a socially acceptable ménage à trois: two actors commit sexually intimate acts, and audiences sit in on the proceedings with complete approval.

## THE LAW OF LOVE

What finally opened my eyes to this culture of sexual abuse was Wayne A. Wilson's book *Worldly Amusements*. Wilson himself became aware of the issue after watching a movie in which the director had his own daughter perform sex acts on screen.

The fact that a director would sacrifice his child's dignity for the sake of a movie changed Wilson's perspective. He now implements what he calls the "law of love" in his movie watching habits: he refuses to support films that sexually objectify or degrade actors. He now asks himself, "Would I approve if my sister [or wife or daughter] were asked to behave or expose herself in any way that undermined her purity?"


It is a question we would do well to ask ourselves. This law of love exhorts us to consider the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of men and women in front of the camera. Is that restricting for a movie-going audience? I suppose so. It has definitely kept me from visiting the theater on several occasions where I otherwise would have willingly and excitedly done so.

## NOT A RESTRICTION

But this law of love is not "restricting" in a lastingly negative sense any more than monogamy is a negative restriction for married couples. It's a law that protects, not harms. It's a law that governs for good, not evil. It's a law that helps one cultivate the greatest motive known to humankind. In the end, what is truly

more freeing: living a self-centered or an others-centered life? The Bible's answer is the latter.

Think about the implications here. How would it affect you if you put the law of love into practice? What if you refused to financially support movies that objectified actors because you wanted to treat them with the humanity they deserve? Would you not start viewing the actors you encounter in the movies as real people and not just potential sources of eye candy or gratification? Would the law of love not help you fight sexual lust even more effectively with gospel power? Would it not help you keep from focusing on yourself (which is what lust does) and instead focus on the needs of others (which is what a healthy, Biblically-informed sexuality is all about)? Would that not be a gloriously countercultural way to demonstrate God's love to your fellow human beings?

I think it would. In fact, my personal experience has been that it does. I dare you (in the most positive sense possible) to prove me wrong. 

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Amy Reiter's "It's rough on the outside" posted to *Salon.com* Mar 28, 2001

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Galloway's "Jennifer Lawrence, Cate Blanchett and Six More Top Actresses on Pay Gap, Sex Scenes and the Price of Speaking Frankly: 'There Is Always a Backlash'" posted to *HollywoodReporter.com* on Nov 18, 2015

<sup>3</sup> For a more in-depth treatment, see "A Tale of Two Sexual Assaults on Jennifer Lawrence" at *CapStewart.com*

<sup>4</sup> "Blackwater" Director Neil Marshall on Nudity and Creating the Battle" posted to *WinterIsComing.net* on June 1, 2012

<sup>5</sup> This argument is fleshed out in my article "Promoting Porn for the Glory of God?" at *CovenantEyes.com*, and in the "Sex Scenes = Porn" blog series at *CapStewart.com*

*Cap Stewart is the author of the online curriculum "Personal Purity Isn't Enough: The Long-Forgotten Secret to Making Scriptural Entertainment Choices." He blogs at CapStewart.com.*



# The pitch meeting for by Cap Stewart **Redeeming Love**

**Producer:** Do you have a new movie for me?

**Screenwriter:** Yes, sir. This is gonna be gold, trust me. It's an adaptation of a steamy romance novel set on the western frontier.

**PR:** What? You do know our company is called *Pure Flix*, right? Not *Impure Flix*.

**SW:** No, it's a *Christian* novel.

**PR:** A "steamy" Christian novel?

**SW:** Yeah.

**PR:** . . .

**SW:** What is it?

**PR:** I'm trying to find a multiverse where "steamy" and "Christian" belong together. Those terms aren't exactly bedfellows.

**SW:** But our main characters are, if you know what I mean. [winks]

**PR:** What?

**SW:** Well, the female protagonist is a

prostitute.

**PR:** Okay, this is not your best movie pitch, I gotta tell you.

**SW:** It's a *redemptive* story, though.

**PR:** How so?

**SW:** Well, it's called *Redeeming Love*. So...

**PR:** Oh, I see. It's right there in the title: "Redeeming."

**SW:** Yeah, and it's sold over three million copies since its publication in 1991. It's really popular with the Christian ladies. It could make us a ton of money!

**PR:** In that case, I guess I can take a look at the script.

**SW:** Yeah, it's a love story inspired by the book of Hosea.

**PR:** You mean, from the Bible? About the prophet named Hosea who was commanded by God to marry a sexually promiscuous woman named Gomer?

**SW:** That's the one—only in the movie, her name is Angel, and she is forced into prostitution at a young age.

**PR:** Oh no!

**SW:** Yeah, life's basically thrown everything but a feral prairie dog at her, so the audience will feel *super* empathetic—what with her poor, miserable, wretched life.

**PR:** But that's fairly incongruous with the story of Hosea, where Gomer is kinda playing the part of the antagonist.

**SW:** Sure, but this isn't the literal book of Hosea. I mean, it's a *fictional* story.

**PR:** I'm confused.

**SW:** That's because you haven't heard the story yet.

**PR:** Okay, fine. Tell me the story.

**SW:** Like I said, Angel's been mistreated her whole life, and she ends up as a prostitute. Then this man named Hosea—



**PR:** Hey, that's the name of the prophet!

**SW:** Exactly, sir. Remember, this is an allegory.

**PR:** But you just said...

**SW:** Anyway, this guy named Hosea—he goes into town one day, sees Angel, and immediately wants to marry her.

**PR:** Oh, love at first sight?

**SW:** I mean, kinda. God basically tells him he's gonna marry Angel.

**PR:** Oh, really?

**SW:** Yeah. So he pays double price to spend time with Angel.

**PR:** Whoa, whoa, whoa. We can't have that in a Christian movie.

**SW:** No, he just wants to *talk* with Angel. To, you know, get to know her as a person.

**PR:** Oh, okay.

**SW:** So he goes to see Angel, and she's just standing there fully naked—

**PR:** Whoa, whoa, whoa! Why is she stark naked? We can't have that in a Christian movie.

**SW:** What can I say? I mean, it's a brothel. It's basically like a nudist colony, right?

**PR:** I'm pretty sure prostitutes aren't naked all the time.

**SW:** Well, we'll just...frame the shot so certain parts of her body are blocked from view. How's that?

**PR:** Fair enough.

**SW:** So Hosea tells Angel she's going to be his wife because God says so.

**PR:** Really? He just out and says it?

**SW:** Sure. I mean, haven't high school kids been doing that to their crushes for, like, forever?

**PR:** Oh, good point.

**SW:** Exactly. So Hosea spends a ton of money to spend time talking with Angel. He woos her with his prophecies about their upcoming marriage, and after he badgers her for a long time—

**PR:** He badgers her? So she's not interested at all?

**SW:** Not a lick.

**PR:** I'm sorry, this doesn't really sound like the book of Hosea.

**SW:** No, this is a work of fiction.

**PR:** But you said—

**SW:** Anyway, after a lot of convincing, Angel finally agrees to be his wife and he takes her to his farm.

**PR:** Well, shucks. That sounds like a fairly short movie to me.

**SW:** No, it's not over yet. The best part's coming.

**PR:** Oh, really?

**SW:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. After Hosea finally gains Angel's confidence, the two start getting...intimate.

**PR:** Intimate? How so?

**SW:** [nods mischievously]

**PR:** You mean...like they finally have an open and honest discussion by a warm fire or something?

**SW:** No, I mean...*intimate*.

**PR:** You mean...like *snuggling* next to a warm fire?

**SW:** No.

**PR:** Oh, you mean like a romantic...

**SW:** Yes!

**PR:** ...candle-lit dinner?

**SW:** No! There is no fire and no candle!

**PR:** So, they...eat a romantic dinner in the *dark*?

**SW:** No, I'm not talking about "dinner table" intimacy, I'm talking about "bedroom" intimacy.

**PR:** But why would they take their dinner to bed?

**SW:** There's no dinner! Forget dinner. There's no food whatsoever!

**PR:** You're going to have them go to bed without any dinner? How is that intimate?

**SW:** [takes a deep breath] As a husband and wife, they enjoy what husbands and wives enjoy...you know, when they're...husband and wife. Alone. With no one else around to watch (except for the audience, in this case).

**PR:** ...

**SW:** ...

**PR:** Oh! Now I understand.

**SW:** Yes...

**PR:** They start kissing, and then we cut to them covered and snuggling afterwards. That's sweet. And props to you for giving a positive portrayal of marriage and all.

**SW:** No, they start kissing, but that's only the beginning.

**PR:** The beginning of what?

**SW:** We'll spend, like, a couple whole minutes watching them kiss and take each other's clothes off and fondle and copulate and—

**PR:** What the cuss?!

**SW:** Uh, did you just say "what the cuss"?

**PR:** This is poo on a stick!

**SW:** What is?

**PR:** This whole load of hooley you're trying to sell me! There's no way in Sheol we're going to actually show two characters getting intimate onscreen.

**SW:** But they're married. It's totally legit.

**PR:** Who would even agree to do that?! It's not like Christian actors are standing in line waiting to shoot nude or sex scenes. You won't get Kirk Cameron or Neil McDonough—

**SW:** Okay, so we'll...get an intimacy coordinator. That's all the rage these days, right?

**PR:** That doesn't change the fact that you're pitching a Christian film with onscreen sex. What's gotten into that hip, edgy brain of yours?

**SW:** Look, consider this: all the film's sex scenes—

**PR:** All of them? You're planning on *multiple* sex scenes?!

**SW:** No, no, no. Only, like, two. And they'll both involve just the main characters—who, I might point out, are *married*. And unless someone edited the Bible lately... [picks Bible off of producer's desk and blows thick layer of dust off of it]

**PR:** [embarrassed] Sorry, I've not read that copy lately.

**SW:** ... Where is Proverbs? Aren't the books in alphabetical order?

**PR:** No, Proverbs is in the Wisdom Literature section.

**SW:** Where is that? Is it *reverse* alphabetical order?

[A few minutes later]

**SW:** Here it is! Hiding right there in the middle. Strange. Okay, Proverbs 5:19. "As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love." I'm basically using that as a script for one of the scenes. This movie is, after all, based on the Bible.

**PR:** Wait, you just said—

**SW:** This isn't illicit sex we're talking



The movie was promoted with several posters including this one. But the most common poster (and the one we chose not to share) was of the couple copulating, though fully clothed.

Yes, really.

about. It's *married* sex. The best kind. The kind that any woman would want to drag her husband and children to the theater to watch together.

**PR:** Married sex isn't supposed to be a spectator sport!

**SW:** Look, we're not gonna be filming *real* sex. It's just simulated. Nothing really happens.

**PR:** Oh. So, even the *kissing* will be a special effect?

**SW:** No, they'll be kissing for real.

**PR:** So them taking off their clothes will be a special effect?

**SW:** No. They'll take their clothes off.

**PR:** So the fondling will be a special effect?

**SW:** No, he'll really be touching her.

**PR:** So the thrusting will be fake?

**SW:** Why would that need to be fake? It'll be real thrusting.

**PR:** So when you say, "Nothing happens," you really mean...everything happens.

**SW:** No, nothing does happen. I mean,

they don't actually... "do the do."

**PR:** But they *do* do everything else leading up to "the do," which they simulate with thrusting?

**SW:** Right. Non-sexual thrusting.

**PR:** When is thrusting *not* sexual? When are fondling and thrusting *not* sexual?

**SW:** When it's acting? I mean, the actors we'll hire probably won't be in an actual relationship.

**PR:** So, if two people aren't in an actual relationship, any intimate activities they engage in are magically unsexual?

**SW:** Not when you put it like that. But in this case, yes. None of the sex will be actually real. It's simply actors doing everything married couples do (except the "final act," of course) in front of a camera, with footage that will be considered by audiences to be hot and steamy. Only a prude would consider that sexual. It's not real.

**PR:** Is your brain even real?

**SW:** Okay, let's take a step back. I think we're losing perspective. The *whole* point of this movie—the whole point—is to be redemptive, right?

**PR:** [Takes a deep breath] I suppose. I mean, it's in the title.

**SW:** Right. Exactly. So, in order to redeem this movie, we need to show audiences just how hot and steamy married sex can be.

**PR:** We *need* to do that?

**SW:** Yes! If Hollywood wants to take us down the road of porn-inspired content, we'll turn the tables with our *Christian* sex scenes—but with the actors' critical body parts strategically blocked.

**PR:** Wait. So the actors *won't* be naked?

**SW:** That's not what I mean. The actors *will* be in various stages of undress, but we won't see it. That's all that matters, right? Who cares if the actors have to actually get naked on set and touch each other in... "Proverbs 5:19" places? We won't see any full nudity ourselves. By placing his hands on her, the actor will be protecting the sexual wellbeing of the audience.

**PR:** But not *his* sexual wellbeing—or hers,

for that matter.

**SW:** That's just the thing. Instead of getting professing Christians to play the roles of Angel and Hosea, we'll get people who won't put up a fuss. It'll be perfect. I'm sure we can find actors who lack a scriptural sexual ethic. That's the ideal recipe for shooting godly sex scenes that will whack people over the head with the good news of steamy love.

**PR:** You mean "redeeming" love?

**SW:** Right. What did I say?

**PR:** [sighs] What about the other sex scene?

**SW:** What about it?

**PR:** Can they keep their clothes on for that one?

**SW:** Ah, a compromise. I can dig it. Sure, we'll choreograph it so the actors can remain basically fully clothed. It'll be so pure, it'll rock the audience's socks off!

**PR:** [holds up a warning finger] Keep those socks on – we have enough clothes coming off in this project already.

**SW:** Will do, sir. You're the boss.

**PR:** And I don't want the male protagonist's first name to be Hosea. This story just isn't a very accurate allegory.

**SW:** Okay, we can call him...Mike. Or Michael.

**PR:** Fine.

**SW:** Yeah, Michael Hosea.

**PR:** [sigh] I guess that will work.

**SW:** Good! Oh, and I just had another great thought.

**PR:** [wincing] What?

**SW:** You know that fully clothed sex scene?

**PR:** . . . Yeah?

**SW:** We can use a screenshot of that scene for the official movie poster.

**PR:** What?! RP

*Cap Stewart blogs at CapStewart.com where a version of this article, reprinted here with permission, first appeared. If this article grabbed you, you might want to enroll in Cap's 10-lesson course (for \$49 US) "Personal Purity Isn't Enough" on loving our entertainers as ourselves. It is available at CapStewart.teachable.com.*

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# RP Welcomes New Executive Director and Administrator

**R**eformed Perspective is pleased to announce that Mr. Mark Penninga has been appointed to serve as the Foundation's Executive Director. Mark has served as the Executive Director of ARPA Canada for close to fifteen years, and under his leadership, working together with his colleagues, ARPA Canada has become a significant player in Canada's political realm.

Mark's experience in setting and implementing a strong vision for a Christian organization will be a great asset for the mission of Reformed Perspective Foundation. We are excited that Mark has a vision for the opportunities that RP has and will be

pursuing. More details will be shared with RP donors in the coming months. In recent months, Mark worked with the ARPA Canada team to find and train a replacement before joining the RP staff on March 1st.

He can be reached at [mark.penninga@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:mark.penninga@reformedperspective.ca).

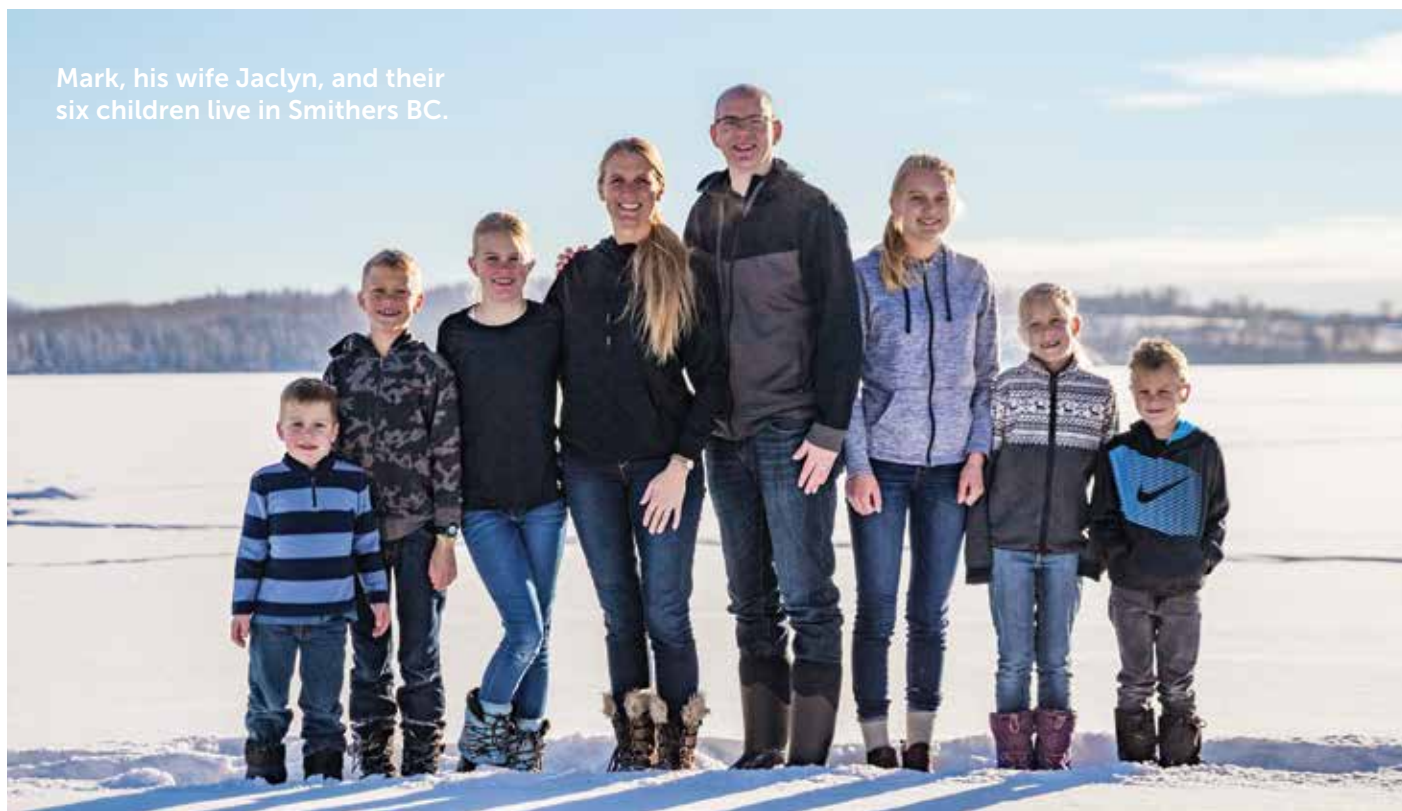
We may welcome Mark Penninga because we recently bid farewell to Chris deBoer. Earlier this year, Chris returned to the field of Reformed education and administration where he will continue to use his many varied gifts. Under Chris' leadership as a long-term Board member and our first Executive Director, Reformed Perspective Foundation has

grown in many different ways. We thank Chris for his leadership and direction, and wish him the Lord's continued blessings in all his future endeavours.

We are also grateful to welcome Joanne DeRuiter to the RP team. Joanne and her family are also based in Smithers. She will be serving part-time, assisting with administration and book keeping. She can be reached at [joanne@reformedperspective.ca](mailto:joanne@reformedperspective.ca).

We thank the LORD for His care over this organization in providing capable staff to continue and grow this mission. Will you please pray for the RP team as we work through this transition and make plans for the future?

Mark, his wife Jaclyn, and their six children live in Smithers BC.





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Completed forms, along with a void cheque, can be mailed to: *Reformed Perspective*, Box 1039, Carman, MB, R0G 0J0.



# 200 MOVIES KING DAVID MIGHT WATCH

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by Jon Dykstra

One impetus for this article was a moment, a few years back, when two great minds thought alike: a missionary in Brazil, and an evangelist in California.

The evangelist, Ray Comfort, passed along a story, first told by Jeremy Archer, about a man who invited all sorts of folks into his house to meet his family. Often the visitors would talk crudely and angrily with each other, teaching his children words he'd rather they not know. But these visitors could also get his whole family laughing so the man decided to focus on the good they did, rather than the bad.

Over time the man could see the visitors were having an impact on his family, and it wasn't a good one. He found that his own children were now using crude language and making coarse jokes. What was worse, the visitors were behaving

outrageously, even taking their clothes off right there in front of his family!

That's hard to believe, isn't it? Why didn't the man just kick them out? Why didn't he protect his family from their influence? Well, it turns out this man had some sense, and as the visitors started getting naked the man acted. Together, with his family, the man finally "turned off the television."

That same month the missionary, Rev. Ken Wieske, expressed the same concern, titling a Facebook post "David vows to get rid of his TV." Underneath he included the text of Psalm 101 which reads (in part):

I will ponder the way that is blameless.  
Oh when will you come to me?



I will walk with integrity of heart  
within my house;  
I will not set before my eyes  
anything that is worthless.

The pastor's point was clear: most of what's on TV is worthless and if the author of that psalm were here on earth today, he might well pitch his TV right out of his palace. Of course, it isn't quite as easy as that. Today we also have computers, and smartphones, so getting rid of the TV isn't going to restrict our access to fluff and filth that's so readily available.

So let's take this a step further. Yes, much of what's on TV (and on YouTube, Facebook, etc.) is worthless. But some of it isn't. Some of it is quite good. Excellent even! So if we were to make the same promise King David makes in Psalm 101 – to put away all that is worthless – what sorts of film and videos might we still watch?

I've got some suggestions, and I've listed them under 10 categories, with 20 or more movie recommendations in most categories. My hope is that this list can help families find something worth watching. With over 200 suggestions there should be something for everyone.

While I've listed some cautions for parents, space doesn't permit a complete summary of each film, so do be sure to check out the longer reviews available for most of these films. They are linked to in the online version of this article at [ReformedPerspective.ca/200](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/200). (There are only a few documentaries included, so if that's your preference be sure to check out my other article "100+ documentaries that make learning a joy" up on [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca).)

I've included an entertainment rating out of 10. In my books 7 is a solid mark, while 8 is something special, and 6 is still watchable but there is some notable flaw (maybe some corny writing, or a bad bit of acting, that sort of thing). The only reason I've included a few films that rate as low as 6 is because there's something about them that still makes them valuable viewing – often times their educational value. I'll note also, that a 7 for a children's film means that this target audience will think it a 7, and not adults. The same is true of a black and white classic. If you hate anything B&W, then you probably won't like one with a solid 7 rating (though maybe you'd be swayed by one with an 8, 9, or 10). Films nominated for an Oscar have a bold "O" next to their rating. And films you can watch via their online review have been labeled "FREE."

None of these films and videos take God's name in vain. That's important. While a degree of violence and even sexual content of some sort can be appropriate on screen, the way God's name is abused on film just isn't.

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## Ratings

Each movie is given an entertainment rating out of 10.

- 10** Nothing better
- 9** Exceptional
- 8** Above average
- 7** Solid
- 6** OK but with something (acting, script, etc) subpar

## Free films

More than 30 of the films reviewed here can be watched for free online at [ReformedPerspective.ca/200](http://ReformedPerspective.ca/200)

**Animated:** Jungle Beat

**Based on a book:** The Gospel Blimp, The Man in the Iron Mask

**B&W Classics:** The Amazing Adventure, Meet John Doe, Grandma's Boy, Sherlock Jr.

**Biographical:** God's Outlaw: the Story of William Tyndale, The Jackie Robinson Story, John Hus: a Journey of No Return, Martin Luther, The Torchlighters series (Corrie Ten Boom, Eric Liddell, Harriet Tubman, Jim Elliot, John Bunyan, John Newton, Martin Luther, Richard Wubrand, William Tyndale), Tortured for Christ

**Children:** I Dig Dinosaurs, A Jurassic Ark Mystery, The Defense of New Haven, Patterns of Evidence: Young Explorers, The Sparky Chronicles

**Family Fun:** Dude Perfect: Backstage Pass, Storm: Luther's Forbidden Letter

**Mom and Dad:** 2081, Audacity: Love Can't Stay Silent, Extraordinary

**Foreign:** Antboy

# ▶ ANIMATED VIDEOS

This mix of shorter videos (whether standalone or TV series) can be ideal when mom doesn't want the kids in front of the TV forever.

## Anne Of Green Gables: The Animated Series Vol. 1-3

CHILDREN  
150 MIN / 2003  
RATING: 7/10

It's an animated Anne brought to you by Sullivan Entertainment, the same folks behind the original Canadian series. As always, Anne means well – it's just that sometimes her exuberance gets the best of her! Anne fans will enjoy showing their children this 6-episode collection of Anne mishaps. From her quest for puffy sleeves, to her first exposure to headlice, whatever Anne does she learns valuable lessons...though usually the hard way.



people's minds. As regularly happens, Whit gets some pint-sized help, this time from 10-year-old Dylan Taylor and his dog Sherman (who aren't from the radio dramas). This is enjoyable Christian fare, but menacing villains and sometimes simplistic morals mean there is reason to hit the pause button, whether for relief, or discussion.

## Curious George

CHILDREN / TV  
30 MIN X 170 EPISODES / 2006-2021  
RATING: 8/10

The genius of this series, is that Curious George is a monkey and not a boy. If he were a boy, he'd be a very naughty one. But as a curious, often clueless monkey, he can get into all sorts of hi-jinks without actually being bad. We can wonder what his owner, the Man in the Yellow Hat, is thinking leaving George all alone again after what happened the last time he did just that, but that's really on the Man, and not George, right? While there is an educational aspect – George's curiosity has him learning all sorts of things – it is George's delight at the world around him that makes this such fun to watch. Good, clean, gentle fun!



## Adventures in Odyssey

CHILDREN / CHRISTIAN  
27 MIN X 17 EPISODES / 1991-2003  
RATING: 7/10

Viewers are expected to be familiar with the long-running radio drama of the same name that this video series is based on – main characters John Avery Whittaker ("Whit" for short) and Eugene Meltsner aren't even introduced. For those that don't know, Whit is a lovable grandfatherly figure and an inventor, while Eugene is his geeky, cheerful, and probably early twenties, assistant. In the first episode, some bad guys have stolen Whit's "Imagination Station" invention which allows people to travel back in time in their imaginations to find out what life was like. However, the bad guys have turned it into a "Manipulation Station" to control



## The Gruffalo

FAMILY  
27 MIN / 2009  
RATING: 8/10

How can a mouse meet up with a hungry fox, snake, and owl, and live to tell the tale? It helps if he has a monstrously big

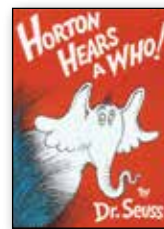


friend he's just about to meet. A fox, or a snake, or an owl, wouldn't dare eat a small mouse who has such a big friend! But...what if they found out what the mouse knows: "There's no such things as a Gruffalo"? Or is there? Clever, but at times quite tense (the musical score making it more so). There is a sequel, but it is far less charming.

## Horton Hears a Who

CHILDREN  
30 MIN / 1970  
RATING: 7/10

A Dr. Seuss cartoon with a pro-life moral, even if it is unintentional: "A person's a person, no matter how small!" The 2008 feature-length version is also good.



## Jungle Beat

FAMILY  
537 MINUTES  
RATING: 10/10 – FREE

With a cast of critters that never talk but sure do communicate, these short videos deliver on the physical humor. In one episode a turtle has an itch he just can't reach because his shell is in the way. Slipping it off seems like a smart idea, until he can't get it back on, and a hungry eagle shows up, which leads to some hi-speed sand surfing, the turtle riding his shell to evade the eagle. Every story has a creative set-up, and all come with a happy ending making them suitable even for the very young. The creators have also made two other series: *Munki and Trunk* about a monkey and elephant who are best buddies, and *The Explorers* about four human friends investigating the jungle. All are 5-minute episodes, dialogue-free, delightful, and free to see online!



## Life at the Pond

FAMILY / CHRISTIAN  
30 MIN X 5 EPISODES / 2004-2009  
RATING: 8/10

A Christian series aimed at the pre-school set that, like *VeggieTales*, pairs



simple animation with somewhat sophisticated humor – there's yuks here for mom and dad to enjoy too. The four stars are aquatic:



- Bill the Duck is a regular joe; we are Bill the Duck
- Tony the Frog fills the role of wise-cracking comic relief
- Floyd the Turtle is the most child-like, and often the straight man setting up Tony's zingers
- Methuselah the Alligator is older, and a voice of biblical wisdom

The first two episodes, *There's Something Funny in the Water* and *The Little Things*, are calm enough for even the youngest, while *The Alligator Hunter*, *Big Mouth Bass*, and *The Rise and Fall of Tony the Frog*, have some tension, and even some frantic action, so might be best for 5 and up.

## Lost and Found

FAMILY  
24 MIN / 2013  
RATING: 8/10



This is a classic boy-meets-penguin tale, a tale of loneliness felt, and friendship found. Adding to the wistful charm is the minimal narration and complete lack of dialogue - this is almost a silent film, with only the character's body language and facial expressions to guide us. Beautiful to the point it might prompt some tears (though it has a happy ending). There is one scary scene, out on the ocean, involving big waves, lightning, and a scary-looking but actually friendly octopus.

## Peppa Pig: the Balloon Ride

CHILDREN  
52 MIN / 2014  
RATING: 7/10

Peppa Pig is a lovable big sister to her toddling brother George, and daughter of Mommy and Daddy Pig. She's prob-

ably best known for her love of jumping in muddy puddles. In this collection, Peppa has 12 short adventures, all about 5 minutes long, that see her take a ride in a hot air balloon, then in a new car, and even lace up a pair of ice skates. For parents, the biggest attraction might be that the short stories make this an easy one to turn on for only a brief time, as there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. In large doses, Daddy Pig's occasional cluelessness starts coming off as yet another TV bumbling father, and Peppa's occasional bossiness and bad sportsmanship aren't that occasional anymore. But while a lot of Peppa might be too much, a little Peppa will be a wonderful treat up to about Grade 1 or so.



## Larry-Boy and the Fib from Outer Space

FAMILY / CHRISTIAN  
30 MIN / 1997  
RATING: 8/10

Larry the Cucumber and Bob the Tomato head a cast of animated vegetables who have been entertaining Christian children since way back in 1993. This episode is our first glimpse of Larry the Cucumber's alter ego, Larry-Boy, a super-hero with suction cup ears. Parents will recognize it as a Batman spoof, complete with Larry-mobile, Larry-cave, and butler named Alfred. There are dozens of other "VeggieTales, many good. But the producers have also tried to tell Bible stories, and transforming King David's seduction of Bathsheba into a story about a cucumber coveting an asparagus's rubber ducky is to forget that Scripture is holy. It's when they steer clear of biblical tales that there's lots to love. I recommend:



- *Madame Blueberry* – 8/10
- *Larry-boy and the Rumor Weed* – 7/10
- *Lord of the Beans* – 8/10

- *Larry-boy and the Bad Apple* – 7/10
- *Sheerluck Holmes and the Golden Ruler* – 7/10
- *Tomato Sawyer & Huckleberry Larry's Big River Rescue* – 7/10
- *The League of Incredible Vegetables* – 8/10
- *McLarry & the Stinky Cheese Battle* – 8/10
- *Veggies in Space* – 8/10

## Wallace and Gromit in Three Amazing Adventures

COMEDY / FAMILY  
85 MIN / 1989-1995  
RATING: 7/10 O

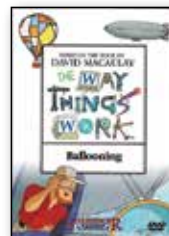
In the best of these three claymation shorts, the inventive Wallace and his long-suffering dog Gromit have their happy home life disrupted by a mysterious penguin who rents one of their rooms. Soon the shift-eyed flightless foul is trying to replace Gromit in Wallace's affections. But never fear, the loyalty of this tried-and-true dog does win out in the end. The moral? Either never neglect your dog, or don't trust shift-eyed penguins. Fun and silly.



## The Way Things Work

EDUCATIONAL / FAMILY  
13 MIN X 26 EPISODES / 2001  
RATING: 8/10

Based on David Macaulay's book of the same name, this series takes place on a small, seemingly modern, island... except for the woolly mammoths everywhere. Everything is mammoth-powered, but as you might imagine, mammoth power has its downsides, so each episode is actually an investigation into simple machines – inclined planes, screws, wheels, pulleys, etc. – that can replace the mammoths. It's education at its most fun! The 26-episode series is expensive, but available from many public libraries.



# ▶ ANIMATED FILMS

It seems like cartoons used to be safe for kids, though boring for adults. Today, with the appearance of obscene animated fare like "South Park" and "Family Guy," many cartoons are unsuitable for children, and for that matter, adults. But there has been a change for the better too – movies like "Monsters, Inc.," "Curious George," and "Meet the Robinsons" show that some animated fare can keep the kids happy, and entertain their parents as well.

## Balto

EDUCATIONAL / FAMILY  
78 MIN / 1995  
RATING: 7/10

In 1925, the city of Nome, Alaska was hit by an outbreak of diphtheria, deadly to children. That might not seem the best topic for a kid's animated movie, but they did it anyway, and made something special. The needed medicine was hundreds of miles away, so to get it in time, dogsled teams involving more than 100 dogs completed a 1,000-mile relay. The last team, that brought the medicine right to the hospital door, was led by a dog named Balto and this is his story. Sort of. Balto is depicted as half-wolf and has a goose and two polar bears as friends. He and his villainous rival Steele are both interested in the same girl, a sable-colored dog named Jenna. In reality, Balto was a Siberian husky that didn't hang around with geese or polar bears. And no details are available about his love interests. Oh, and he couldn't actually talk. But aside from these historical quibbles this is fantastic. The action never lets up: Balto goes from facing a bully twice his size to taking on a bear ten times his size. For kids who can handle the excitement, this will be a favorite, with lots of laughs too.



In this claymation homage to World War II escape films, chickens are trying to get past the barbed wire before they're all turned into chicken pot pies. Their many previous plans have all been for naught but this time, with some help from an American rooster, they think they might finally fly the coop! This one will be too scary for younger crowds.

## Curious George

CHILDREN  
88 MIN / 2006  
RATING: 8/10

George is a monkey whose curiosity always gets the best of him. And that curiosity gets him his first meeting with the Man in the Yellow Hat, and then gets him accidentally transported from the jungle right across the ocean to the United States. And that's only the start of this adventure! In the TV show, we're told repeatedly that "George is a monkey and he can do things that you can't." In the movie that comes out in George painting the walls of an apartment with a jungle scene. He didn't have permission, but as a monkey, he didn't know he needed it, so it isn't nearly the bad thing it would be if a person had done it. Parents



## Chicken Run

COMEDY / FAMILY  
84 MIN / 2000  
RATING: 8/10



can make the point the film misses: don't imitate monkeys, even cute ones. Another caution: at one point the Man in the Yellow Hat lies. Parents will need to hit the pause button to explain that the hero is failing the test here...and so much so that the villain of the film is the one protesting that lying is wrong! Those cautions aside, this is a gorgeous, gentle, sweet film that children will want to watch multiple times. Teens? Maybe not. But mom and dad won't mind, if only to appreciate the visual feast. The best of the sequels are Curious George 3: Back to the Jungle and Curious George: Royal Monkey (riffing off of Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*).

## Finding Nemo

FAMILY  
100 MIN / 2003  
RATING: 8/10

How many films are about awesome dads? When his son Nemo gets swept away, an otherwise cautious stay-at-home clownfish named Marlin will go wherever and do whatever it takes to get him back. Comic relief is provided by Dory, a fish with short-term memory loss who is willing to help. Scary scenes with sharks, and the brief recap as to how Nemo's mom died, mean this isn't one for the very young. But it'll be enjoyable for older kids and their parents. As will the sequel, *Finding Dory*, which focuses on Dory's search for her parents.



## Fox and the Hound

FAMILY  
83 MIN / 1981  
RATING: 8/10

A fox and a hound meet as young pups and become best friends. But as they grow older, they are told by nearly everyone that they shouldn't be friends – that foxes and hounds should be enemies! Peer pressure and circumstances





convince the hound to turn his back on his friend, but the fox's steadfastness eventually wins back his friend, and everyone else. This is a morality tale about racism, worth viewing and watching as a family. But because it involves hunters and dogs trying to kill the fox, this is only appropriate for 10 and up.

## Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh

CHILDREN  
74 MIN / 1977  
RATING 8/10 O

It all starts with a "bear of very little brain" using all of his thinking to think up a way to get some more honey. After a misadventure with some bees Pooh heads for the home of his obliging friend Rabbit and asks himself in for lunch. But when the stuffed bear stuffs himself with too much honey, he gets stuck exiting Rabbit's hole. Silly bear! Two more "chapters" follow in which we meet all of Pooh's friends: Kanga, Roo, Piglet, Eeyore... and Tigger too! This is the first and very best of the Pooh movies, with 2011's *Winnie the Pooh*, a close second.



## Meet the Robinsons

FAMILY / SCIENCE FICTION  
95 MIN / 2007  
RATING: 7/10

It's so utterly unique, it's hard to sum up. Time travel, an evil hat, a brilliant orphan, and a super villain with the silliest of all origins stories make this a movie you'll either appreciate for its astonishing originality, or dismiss as just too strange and weird.



## Minuscule

SILENT / FAMILY  
89 MIN / 2014  
RATING: 7/10

A lost ladybug teams up with a colony of black ants to fight off a horde of red ants who want their sugar stash. A couple of things set this film apart: it seamlessly



# HELPFUL WEBSITES

## FIND THE FILM

If you want to find out where you might be able to stream a film online, **JustWatch.com** and, in Canada, **JustWatch.com/ca** will point you to your options. If your preference is DVDs, your local public library might be a place to go.

## CHRISTIAN REVIEWS

**ChristianAnswers.net/spotlight**, **Pluggedin.com**, **Dove.org**, and **MovieGuide.org** all offer a generally conservative Judeo-Christian perspective and will have something to offer on most any current film and many older ones too. Of these four, *Plugged In* and *Christian Answers* might offer the best worldview help, while *Dove* often has the most detailed listing of objectionable content. *Movie Guide* is helpful, but sometimes not half as critical as it really should be.

## SECULAR REVIEWS

Two more review sites aren't Christian, and therefore don't offer much by way of worldview analysis. But they do offer the most reliable and detailed overview of a film's objectionable content. **Kids-in-mind.com** has a 10-point scale for three categories: sex, violence, and language, and is searchable via this scale (ie. You can search for movies that have no sex). It has fantastic coverage from 1990 onward. **CommonSenseMedia.org** is not particularly conservative, but offers lots of concisely delivered information, including both parental and children's quick takes on a film. The one downside? After three free reviews, you'll have to pay \$3 a month to access more. One last option is **IMDB.com's** parents guide, which isn't nearly as detailed, but seems to exist for most every film out there. Find it by googling "imdb parents guide" followed by the film's name

## SEARCH THE SCRIPT

While these other sites do their best, they'll often miss instances of God's name being taken in vain. The most effective tool on that front is simply to do a word search of the film's script. **Scripts.com** and **SpringfieldSpringfield.co.uk** both have thousands of movie scripts, easily searchable by simply opening the script and (on most computers) hitting your Control button, and the letter F (for "find"). You can then type in "God" to find out how they use His Name. While both sites are huge, neither prioritizes keeping up with what's currently playing in theaters so they are most useful for films that are at least a few years old.



meshes animation and gorgeous nature footage, with the overall look more like a *Planet Earth* episode than a kid's cartoon, and, second, it has no dialogue. Our kids had to decipher the storyline from strictly physical cues and their Dad had to occasionally "narrate" the action to help them figure out what was going on. While the action was muted compared to many an animated film, *Minuscule's* brilliant use of sound and music really amplifies the tension. If you have younger viewers – maybe 9 and under – you can help them through these sections by either turning down the sound (minimizing the music's impact) or, by doing what we did: sharing the last ten minutes of the film to show that it all turned out alright.

## Monsters, Inc.

FAMILY / COMEDY

93 MIN / 2001

**RATING: 9/10 O**

Sully, a big blue furry monster, and his buddy Mike, a green, one-eyed, beach ball of a monster, work at the Monsters, Inc. power company collecting screams by scaring little kids. It's hazardous but necessary work – children may be toxic to monsters (a single touch might be lethal!) but the city of Monstropolis is powered by screams. Brilliantly original buddy film, but the premise means this isn't for the youngest kiddies who might get nightmares from some of these monsters. The sequel, *Monsters University* is almost as good, and if this gets you on a Pixar kick, you may also enjoy *A Bug's Life*, though it has some "potty humor" concerns such as dung beetles, and flies ordering "poo poo platters."



## Paw Patrol: The Movie

CHILDREN

86 MIN / 2021

**RATING: 8/10**

This is a team of talking puppies, each with their own expertise, working together whenever there's an emergency. That



it had puppies meant our kids were sure to like it, so the only question was whether it was going to be good enough to keep the parents awake. It turned out, yes – it opened with a bang (and a *screeeeeeeech*, and an "oh no!") as a semi-truck driver narrowly misses a baby turtle crossing the road. His emergency maneuvers cause him to crash over the edge of a bridge, leaving driver and truck dangling precariously over the bay hundreds of meters below. It's as tense as a G-rated film can be! I most appreciated when the story headed to Adventure City where a new cat-loving, dog-hating politician had just won the mayor's race. There's some political satire here, as the power-mad Mayor Humdinger tries to transform the city into his own vision of utopia, which, of course, goes disastrously. I don't know if the writers were purposely trying to mock big government but, regardless, they did a good job, as everything the arrogant mayor touches goes comically amuck. I'd recommend this for the 8-11 crowd but older teens may enjoy watching too, if only for the enjoyment of their little siblings' giggles and gasps.

## The Peanuts Movie

FAMILY

88 MIN / 2015

**RATING: 8/10**

It has the comic strip's funniest bits (we even find out how the Red Baron first became Snoopy's nemesis) minus the melancholy. Sure, Charlie Brown still has more than his share of misfortunes, but he also has good friends – including a far more loyal version of Snoopy – to help pick him back up and push him to keep on trying. The storyline revolves around a new kid who has just moved across the street. She has red hair and very good judgment, and from the moment Charlie Brown sets eyes on her he wants to figure out a way to go talk to her. That proves to be a very difficult, largely due to the difficulties Charlie Brown sets up for himself. But with some help from Linus, Snoopy, Marcie and others, our hapless hero learns how



to bravely go where Charlie Brown has never gone before. This is the happy ending we were all waiting for.

## Sgt. Stubby: An Unlikely Hero

FAMILY / HISTORY

84 MIN / 2018

**RATING: 8/10**

Stubby was a real dog who served on the frontlines during the First World War. Here he starts off as homeless before attaching himself to a unit ready to be shipped overseas. One by one, from the lowest private to the general in charge, he wins over everyone. Then, when the unit heads overseas, Stubby manages to sneak aboard the ship, and he too is heading to the fight. From this point onward there's one perilous scene after another, but to make it appropriate for (nearly) the whole family, the filmmakers decided to make this an entirely bloodless film. Even as bullets are whizzing, no one gets shot. While parents will appreciate the muted violence, doing so ran the risk of also muting the sacrifice that these soldiers made. But as the film draws to a close there is one death – to a secondary character – that drives home, even to the younger audiences, what these men risked and what they lost. Without giving it all away, I'll note that the death happens offscreen and we don't even see the body. While his friends are looking for him after the last big battle, Stubby brings them his helmet. That'll get kids crying, and even moisten the eye of many an adult. But it is necessary. And it is done with great care and restraint. For other cautions be sure to check out the online version of this review.



## Tangled

FAIRYTALE / FAMILY

100 MIN / 2010

**RATING: 9/10**

Rapunzel gets a great Disney animated update, doing away with the theft in the original, and replacing it with a charming rogue who abandons



his rogue-ish ways to help a maiden in distress... but only after she hits him in the head with a frying pan. Loads of fun, with just one bit of weirdness: a short old guy dressed up like Cupid is mildly creepy but his appearance is thankfully brief.

## Toy Story 1-4

FAMILY  
81-103 MIN / 1995-2019  
RATING: 8/10

When I saw the original *Toy Story* in the theater I thought it was kids' fare. Watching it with my own kids 25 years later, I came to a different conclusion. A children's film has children in the main roles, but what about *Toy Story*? It is populated almost exclusively by toys as voiced by adults. Their problems are also adult problems, as becomes increasingly evident in successive films. In the first, one toy (Woody) has to teach another (Buzz Lightyear), a toy's purpose in life: to be there for their kid. In the follow-up, Woody wrestles with what it means to grow old and start to break down. In the third, the gang is wondering what they're meant to do, now that their kid Andy has grown up. This is ultimate-meaning-of-life, material, which is pretty heavy, even if it's only on a toy scale. The films also feature events that, if viewed through the eyes of a child, would be downright traumatic, like when a bully blows up one of his army men. For kids, who have watched these toys come to life, this is too close to seeing *somebody* getting blown up. Finally, add in some minor innuendo – when Mr. Potato Head travels down the Barbie aisle in a toy store he has to remind himself “I’m a married spud, I’m a married spud.” It’s tame, and infrequent, but not kid stuff either. *Toy Story* is meant for adults.



## Up

FAMILY  
96 MIN / 2009  
RATING: 9/10

Boy meets girl, falls in love, gets married, they make plans for an adventurous trip, life gets in the way but it is a wonderful life nonetheless, and then she dies, leaving the boy now alone. All of that is covered in the opening few minutes, quickly and beautifully. But young ones may find this simply too wistful a beginning to endure without bawling. This is just the setup for the adventure – an old man inflating hundreds of balloons to sail off, house and all, on that long-delayed adventure. Once air-bound he discovers he has a stow-away, a boy scout who happened to be on the porch when the house took off. It's a sweet tale about a lovable but grouchy old man who finds the friend he is in need of in this eager young Scout. An evil villain has a role, and his appearance, and the dizzying heights make this a tad tense at times. But not for kids 12 and up.



## Wall-E

DYSTOPIAN / FAMILY  
98 MIN / 2008  
RATING: 9/10

Wall-E is a small robot with a big job – he has to tidy up Earth! 700 years earlier humans abandoned the planet to the garbage they'd covered it with (and have lived ever since on a giant space ark). Wall-E's job these last centuries, has been to get on with the cleanup job. The first twenty minutes are completely dialogue-free – a homage to silent films – and utterly charming as we watch Wall-E stack up cube after compacted cube of garbage. He's also keeping the “treasures” he finds: a rubber ducky, an old boot, a kid's sports trophy. This could be understood (and is probably intended) as a climate catastrophist film, shaking a finger at anyone who doesn't think the world is about to end in 12 years. But if you overlook that messaging and just ad-



mire the main story – a romance between the hard-working Wall-E, and a new robot arrival, Eve – then this is simply delightful.

Other animated fare on this list: *The Secret World of Arrietty* (page 57), *The Hobbit* (page 29), *Animal Farm* (page 29), *The Boxcar Children* (page 28), *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1979) (page 29), *The Torchlighter* series (page 38), *The Wright Brothers* (page 39), *Destination Moon* (page 43) and *The Phantom Tollbooth* (page 30).

## THE INKLINGS

The Inklings were a group of British friends, all Christian, and most of them teachers or professors, who met weekly in the 1930s and 40s to socialize and discuss literature.



The movies that follow were based on the lives or the books of the two most famous Inklings, J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, and they are ranked in their own Top 10.

10. The Silver Chair
9. The Hobbit (animated)
8. Lord of the Rings (animated)
7. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (animated, 1979)
6. Lord of the Beans (the VeggieTale version)
5. Prince Caspian
4. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005)
3. The Hobbit Trilogy
2. C.S. Lewis: The Most Reluctant Convert
1. Lord of the Rings Trilogy



# ▶ BASED ON A BOOK

It's always hard to live up to the book, but some of these get awfully close!

## 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

HISTORICAL DRAMA / FAMILY  
127 MIN / 1954  
RATING: 7/10

The year is 1868, a time of both sail and steam on the high seas. When rumors of a gigantic sea creature stop ships from venturing onto the Pacific, the US government asks if oceans expert Professor Pierre M. Aronnax and his assistant Conseil will join a Navy expedition. The goal is to either disprove the creature's existence or, if they find it, then to kill it. That'll be harpooner Ned Land's job. However, Ned's harpoons are no use against the creature's hide because it is not flesh and bone but made of iron and steel! What's been destroying the ships turns out to be a submarine. When the sub destroys the Navy's ship, only these three – the professor, Conseil, and Ned – survive. They end up being taken on board. So who created this sub, and why is it being used to destroy ships all over the Pacific Ocean? I won't give it away. A caution I'll share is in regards to the good guys' morality – the three shipwreck survivors don't agree on much, and for any kid used to films where the good guys wear white, and where right and wrong are very easy to distinguish, this will be something quite different.



portrayal: Robin, as a loyal servant of the absent King Richard, has to defend the King's most vulnerable citizens against the thievery of tyrants who are plotting to overthrow the King. Throw in some swashbuckling and a little romance, and you have yourself quite a story!

## The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

DRAMA / MYSTERY  
82 MIN / 1939  
RATING: 7/10

While only very loosely based on the book of the same name, this is one of Holmes' better appearances on film (and also one of the first). Professor Moriarty conspires to pull off the crime of the century while sending his arch-nemesis Holmes after a red herring.



## Animal Farm

ANIMATED  
72 MIN / 1954  
RATING: 7/10

Based on George Orwell's book of the same name, this cartoon tells the tale of a barnyard revolution that puts the animals in charge. Orwell used this setting to explore the evils of the old Soviet Union and its corrupt government. It is a dark cartoon, unsuitable for young children, but a great one for adults and teens to watch together and discuss.



## The Adventures of Robin Hood

DRAMA / ROMANCE  
101 MIN / 1938  
RATING: 8/10

Robin Hood is often portrayed as simply a thief, justified in stealing from the rich because he gives to the poor. This is the second sort of



series of books. Like the book, the film is about four children – three brothers and one sister – who have lost their parents and been told they will have to live with their grandfather. But Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny don't know their grandfather, and imagine that, because he never came to visit, he must be a cruel man. So they run away. The first part of the story is about how they get by, day to day, all on their own. It's when they find an old, long abandoned, railway boxcar that things start looking up for them. Then the older brother can go into town to do odd jobs, and the other three can start setting up the boxcar as a real home for them. This is a children's story so, of course, it has a happy ending. And I don't think I give away too much to say it involves their cruel grandfather not being cruel at all. Little kids will also enjoy its sequel, *Boxcar Children: Surprise Island*, but it will probably be too quiet and calm for kids over 10.



## The Giver

DRAMA / DYSTOPIAN  
97 MIN / 2014  
RATING: 8/10

*The Giver* presents us with a future in which war and crime have been done away with by doing away with strong emotions of any kind... including love. There's still affection, but no passion. Even sex has been eliminated to calm the strong emotions it might prompt. How do they do it? Everyone is sedated, taking their regimented daily dose. And history isn't taught – no one even knows war is a thing. But there is one man who isn't drugged. He is *The Giver*, a repository of all the knowledge of the past, there in case a crisis requires the elders to be able to learn from the past. But it is quite the burden to know how things once were, both the bad and the good. And when a young man is designated as the next



## The Boxcar Children

ANIMATED / CHILDREN  
81 MIN / 2013  
RATING: 7/10

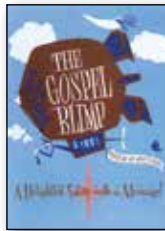
*The Boxcar Children* is the first title in a popular and still expanding children's

Giver, and has his eyes opened to what once was, he doesn't like the cost that has been paid for his society's safety and security. This is a very different sort of story, but for those familiar with the book, it is as good a cinematic transition as we could hope for. Lots to talk about in this thought-provoking film, but the philosophical nature means this would only be of interest to teens and up.

## The Gospel Blimp

SATIRE / CHRISTIAN  
38 MIN / 1967  
RATING: 8/10 – FREE

It may be 40 years old now, but this understated satire still ranks among the better Christian films ever made. A group of enthusiastic Christians is having a barbeque, discussing how they can evangelize the unconverted next-door neighbor. They're looking for something... special. Why not buy a blimp? Then they can fly it over the neighbor's house, and over the entire town, and throw down gospel tracks. That'll get people's attention – what a brilliant plan! That they miss the obvious alternative is only part of the film's point, but it's the satiric take that makes this both cutting and memorable.



## Ivanhoe

ADVENTURE / DRAMA  
107 MIN / 1952  
RATING: 7/10 O

In this tale of knights and chivalry the villains persecute the Jews while the hero Ivanhoe enlists Jewish help to return Richard the Lionhearted to his throne. A great film that will teach kids the unfortunate fact the Nazis weren't the first anti-Semites.



## The Hobbit

ANIMATED / FANTASY  
78 MIN / 1978  
RATING: 7/10

This prequel to J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy tells the

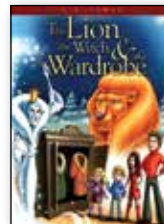


tale of Bilbo Baggins as he discovers "the Ring" of power and uses it to help his friends fight a dragon. Readers of the book may be disappointed as the film condenses things rather severely, however, as children's films go, it is quite a nice introduction to Middle Earth. There is also an animated version of the Tolkien's trilogy told over the course of two films. But while the first part, *Lord of the Rings* (1978), is intriguing, part two, *The Return of the King* (1979), done by a different director in a completely different animation style, is simply horrible.

## The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

CHRISTIAN / ANIMATED  
95 MIN / 1979  
RATING: 7/10

Part of the magic of C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* series was that while they were clearly children's books, they had a depth that made them good adult reading as well. Some of that same magic can be found in this animated film version of the first book in the *Narnia* series. It has most of the book's depth, and almost all the action (though done with discretion, making the film appropriate even for younger children - Aslan's death and the battle scenes are either not fully shown or are bloodless).



## The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

ACTION / DRAMA  
125 MIN / 2005  
RATING: 8/10 O

While this is the more entertaining of the two versions of C.S. Lewis's famous children's book on this list, it is also the more violent (battle scenes take up a large portion) and the less faithfully adapted. Christian symbolism, so obvious in the book and in the animated version, is muted here, though still present. Perhaps it could best be summed up this way: in the book Aslan isn't actually encountered until near the end, and yet he manages to be *the* character – every-



thing revolves around him – but in the movie, while he appears far sooner and far more often, he is reduced to being merely *a* character, one of many. Still, an entertaining movie, though the violence makes it unsuitable for preteens. The sequel *Prince Caspian* is also quite entertaining, while the third, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, unfortunately takes God's name in vain.

## Little Women

DRAMA  
121 MIN / 1949  
RATING: 8/10 O

This is both funnier and sadder than the 1994 version. It's a great one to watch and discuss the concept of Christian charity – do we only give from our excess or, when the need is there, do we give even when we are also faring poorly? Those who have read the book will be able to follow everything but those that haven't may prefer the more accessible 1994 rendition. (A 1933 version stars Katherine Hepburn as Jo but the acting is a bit over the top. A better bet is a 1940 film of the sequel book *Little Men*).



## Little Women

DRAMA  
118 MIN / 1994  
RATING: 9/10 O

This may be appreciated more by the ladies: a female friend has watched this 10 times while her husband thought once was more than enough. Taking some liberties with the book, *Little Women* tells the tale of Marmee's four daughters (her four "little women") growing up in the shadow of the US Civil War. Each sister is as unique as a snowflake, but while differing in attitudes and interests each turns to their family for support and comfort. Some viewers might be put off by a few strange references to Transcendentalism, an early New Age movement, but it is referred to only in passing.





## The Man in the Iron Mask

DRAMA  
113 MIN / 1939  
RATING: 6/10 – FREE

Based loosely on the Alexander Dumas story, it takes place 20 years after the events of his *Three Musketeers* novel. Twin princes are born, and the younger, Philippe, is hidden away, and never told his true parentage. But when the older, Louis, becomes ruler and starts arresting all his father's most trusted advisors, he inadvertently arrests his brother too, only then to discover their startling resemblance. Knowing no reason for it – the birth of his brother has been kept a secret from him too – he decides to use Philippe as a body double. His unhappy subjects hate him, and he sees in Philippe an opportunity to redirect the danger to this other! However, there are now two in the palace playing the part of the King, and that is one too many!



by everything, who returns home from school to discover a mysterious tollbooth – a talking tollbooth! – in his bedroom, inviting him on an adventure. He hops in a miniature car, and the moment he drives through the tollbooth, the whole live-action film switches over into animation, taking Milo into a weird and wacky world that couldn't be depicted any other way. Both the book and the film are a morality tale, but of a secular sentiment. The bored boy is going to learn that all those things he's being taught in school – numbers, and letters, addition and spelling, subtraction and writing – are far more interesting than he's ever realized. The closest thing I can liken it to is *Alice in Wonderland*, not in plot, but in peculiarity.

## Pollyanna

FAMILY  
99 MIN / 2003  
RATING: 8/10

Moving the story from Vermont to England will leave viewers a little surprised, especially if they've grown up watching the 1960s Disney version. But, accents aside, this is the more authentic version. Pollyanna is a poor but cheerful girl who, after becoming orphaned, is sent to live with her very rich, and very strait-laced aunt Polly. The two have very different ways of viewing the world, with the joyful Pollyanna seeing



nothing but wonder, despite the losses she's faced, and aunt Polly seeing nothing but the problems, despite the riches that surround her. Parents will appreciate this story for Pollyanna's "glad game." Her father taught that even when things aren't going our way there is always something to be glad about, and the two made a game out of finding that silver lining. They first played the game one Christmas when Pollyanna was hoping for a doll, but the only gift sent to her poor family was a pair of tiny crutches. What is there to be happy about crutches? It took some thinking, but eventually father and daughter came up with something: they could be glad because at least "we didn't need to use them!" One caution: near the end of the film Pollyanna gets seriously injured. It all happens in a flash, so nothing gory is shown, but it came as quite a surprise!

## Pride and Prejudice

ROMANCE / COMEDY  
104 MIN / 2004  
RATING: 8/10

Instead of five sisters, there are now five friends, in present-day United States. They are still women "in need of a husband" but this time a self-help guide will aid their quest. If you are a loyalist to the book, you won't like this. But if you've been looking for something quite like *Pride and Prejudice*, well, this is quite like it indeed. Though with a car chase... and fisticuffs. (It's my favorite film.)



## The Phantom Tollbooth

FANTASY / ANIMATED  
89 MIN / 1970  
RATING: 7/10

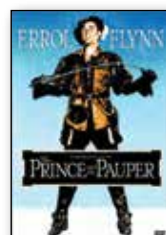
This is a peculiar movie based on a peculiar book, and as such, will have only peculiar appeal – this is *not* for everyone. Milo is a boy bored



## The Prince and the Pauper

ADVENTURE  
118 MIN / 1937  
RATING: 8/10

Though Mark Twain's classic tale has been filmed numerous times, this, one of the very earliest versions, did it best. Darker than some adaptations (this is no "Disneyfied" retelling), it is a good leap off point for discussions about the backstabbing, corruptive nature of politics and why there is a need for good people to enter into this dangerous arena.



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## Sarah, Plain and Tall

DRAMA / ROMANCE

98 MIN / 1990

**RATING: 8/10**

It's a quaint, quiet flick, sure to bring a tear to your eye at least once or twice. In 1910 a Kansas widower places a newspaper ad asking for a woman interested "in making a difference" in the lives of his two small children. Sarah responds to his ad and agrees to a 30-day trial. She brings with her a cat, a collection of seashells and a streak of stubbornness that is the young widower's match.



the two groups get to pretend to be rival pirate gangs. But the island is also home to a real-life spy. And there are a couple of other suspicious sorts following him. For a small little island, there's quite the population on it!

The additions of the spies adds to the excitement, but brings tension to a story that didn't really have that before. So, if you like the book, you probably aren't going to appreciate this adaptation – it's like adding a couple of spies to Winnie-the-Pooh. However, if you don't know the book, or can at least forget it for a bit, this is quite the adventure for families with older children.

## The Silver Chair

CHRISTIAN / FAMILY

155 MIN / 1990

**RATING: 6/10**

The BBC made three live-action Narnia movies but in their first movie, *The Lion, the Witch and Wardrobe* the special effects were laughably bad, while in their second movie, *Prince Caspian and the Voyage of the Dawn Treader* most of the stories' Christian subtext is lost. Only in this, their third effort, did they do much better. Special effects are still subpar but the adaptation is faithful to the book.



## Swiss Family Robinson

DRAMA / ADVENTURE

126 MIN / 1960

**RATING: 8/10**

Based on the classic 1812 Johann Wyss book, *Swiss Family Robinson* tells the tale of a family of five that gets shipwrecked on a tropical island after being pursued by pirates. Life on a tropical island can be fun but work is involved too – the family has to struggle together to build a treehouse that will keep them safe from the island's tiger. Later the two oldest boys save a girl from the pirates and then compete to see which one of the two can win her affections. This is a wonderful, old-fashioned film that parents can use to discuss just why it is a man's (and even a boy's) role to be women's protector. While most of the violence in this film is softened (a tiger, rather than maul its victims, sends them flying high into the air) there are intense scenes near the end of the film (as the pirates attack) that would scare young children.



## Swallows and Amazons

DRAMA / FAMILY

96 MIN / 2016

**RATING: 7/10**

The four Walker children are on a lake for the summer in 1935 Britain, and they have their parents' permission to take the *Swallow*, a small sailboat, out to explore a densely wooded island to camp overnight there. But they are not the first to land on the island: a sign, surrounded by animal bones, warns that it belongs to the "Amazons." This is all loyal to the book – the Amazons are a couple of girls with a sailboat of their own, and



For more "based on a book" films see: *Curious George: Royal Monkey* (page 24), *The Gruffalo* (page 22), *Anne of Green Gables: the Animated Series* (page 22), *Horton Hears a Who* (page 22), and *Winnie the Pooh* (page 25).

## THE "GUEST IN OUR HOUSE" RULE

"Something has to be done to counter the trend to watch virtually anything that comes along and to remain silent when things go wrong. A useful guide may be the 'Guest In Our House' rule: we ask whether we would welcome a person who tells this kind of a story, behaves in this way, uses this kind of language or goes around in this state of (un)dress into our home as a guest. We would give a stranger one warning about inappropriate behavior, etc., but if it recurs we would ask him to leave. On the other hand, if he blatantly dishonors God and despises His service, we would expect him to leave right away. Precisely the same standard should apply to a selected movie or program.

"....It is easy to be so drawn in by the suspense of a story that one excuses a blemish in order to continue viewing. The only way to avoid this is to be absolutely consistent. There will be groans of dismay at the instruction to turn the TV off. Yet experience shows that with a proper code in place the dismay is directed not to the parent who gives the order, but to the movie which has caused it.

"It is especially important at this stage to talk about the decision. The lesson this experience teaches will stay with them later, when they are on their own."

– N.H. Gootjes, J. Plug, and J. Poppe, from their book "Watching Movies: No? Yes? How?"

# ▶ BLACK AND WHITE CLASSICS

These films have stood the test of time and are still being watched today. As a subcategory there are also a half dozen silent film selections. If you've never gotten into silent films, be sure to start with the comedies – there the overwrought acting just adds to the funny. And Buster Keaton is the best!

## 12 angry men

DRAMA

96 MIN / 1957

**RATING: 9/10 O**

Dialogue-driven, the film takes place almost entirely in a jury room. Eleven men are eager to declare the defendant guilty but one man (Henry Fonda) has doubts, and over the course of the movie he starts raising doubts in the others jurors' minds as well. Is he pulling something over on them, or is the defendant really innocent? This is a great look into the inner working of a jury and the logic (and sometimes lack thereof) that jurors use to come to their verdicts.



## The Amazing Adventure

ROMANCE

62 MIN / 1936

**RATING: 7/10 – FREE**

Ernest Bliss (Cary Grant) is a young man who has inherited a lot of money from his father. That's allowed him to have a very nice house, to buy whatever he wants, and to never worry about working. Yet he's nervous, can't eat, and can't sleep. When he goes to the specialist and the doctor diagnoses him with "self-indulgence" Bliss is both offended and intrigued. What's the prescription



then? The doctor tells Bliss to earn his own living for a year and dismisses him with a wave, knowing that this pampered socialite would never follow this advice. But Bliss ends up making him a bet: if Bliss does do it, then one year from now he'll expect a handshake and an apology from the doctor, and if Bliss loses, then he'll give £50,000 for the doctor's downtown charity clinic. This is part *The Prince and the Pauper* and part *Cinderella*, and while it might be predictable it's also delightful!

## The Absent-Minded Professor

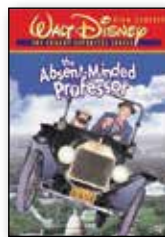
COMEDY

96 MIN / 1961

**RATING: 8/10**

When a lab accident blows up Ned Brainard's garage the explosion produces a wondrous new substance:

rubbery material that when rolled up in a ball and dropped gains height with each bounce. The professor names it "flubber" and uses it to create the world's first flying Model T! The bad news? While he was out cold the professor missed his wedding...for the third time! Betsy loves her Neddy, but this is it – she doesn't want to hear any more excuses. "I say, three strikes and you're out!" So, to regain Betsy's attention, Ned puts his flubber to use. When the college's basketball team is losing badly, Ned secretly irons flubber on the soles of the players' shoes. When the second



half starts the Medfield team is now able to jump right over the other team! This stunt doesn't impress Betsy, but Ned and his flying Model T do catch the attention of all three branches of the US military and a particularly unscrupulous businessman. Car chases and hijinks follow.

## Adam's Rib

COURTROOM DRAMA

101 MIN / 1949

**RATING: 8/10 O**

One form of feminism demands identical outcomes for the two genders. The flaws in this approach become apparent in this silver screen battle of the sexes. When Doris Attinger finds her husband with another woman, she takes a shot at him and is charged with attempted murder. Adam Bonner is assigned to prosecute the case, and to his surprise his wife Amanda takes on the defense. But she doesn't care if her client is innocent or guilty – instead Amanda argues that her client should be set free because that's what a jury would do if they were dealing with a man caught in similar circumstances. Amanda doesn't want justice; she wants equal injustice for all. So it's up to Adam to convince the jury – and his wife – that equal *injustice* just isn't just. This is a witty, dialogue-driven movie that you have to watch right to the end for a satisfying but surprising conclusion.



## Casablanca

DRAMA / WAR

103 MIN / 1943

**RATING: 10/10 O**

When Ilsa Lund hears that the Nazis have killed her husband she is inconsolable...until she meets Rick Blaine. They meet in Paris, a city on the brink of an invasion by



German forces, and in the midst of this ongoing chaos the two quickly fall in love. But then, mysteriously, Ilsa runs away. She disappears from Paris without a word of explanation, and leaves Rick a bitter man. Three years later they bump into each other again, this time in the free French North African town of *Casablanca*, but Rick is stunned to find out that Ilsa is there with her very undead husband! *Casablanca* is not a movie about heroes doing heroic things. Rather it is about wretched people in difficult conditions doing the right thing in the end.

## Citizen Kane

DRAMA / TRAGEDY

119 MIN / 1941

**RATING: 7/10 O**

In a series of flashbacks told after his death, we watch Charles Foster Kane becomes one of the richest and most powerful men in America. He marries the president's niece and even has an adoring son and yet he still isn't satisfied. Then he loses almost all of it, retreats to his secluded palace, and dies wishing for the simplicity of his childhood. *Citizen Kane* has repeatedly been called the greatest movie ever made. But it makes this list not because it is so very entertaining, but rather because it is a tragedy so famous it can be used in conversations with gentiles to discuss the futility of life without God.



## High Noon

WESTERN / DRAMA

85 MIN / 1952

**RATING: 9/10**

When a bad guy looking for revenge is set to arrive on the noon-hour train, the sheriff goes looking for help from the townsfolk. One by one, they give in to fear and let the sheriff stand alone. And he's willing to stand



alone if he has to, rather than run away. An absolute classic, with some limited gunplay.

## I Remember Mama

DRAMA / TEARJERKER

134 MIN / 1948

**RATING: 7/10 O**

If you like to bawl during movies, then this unabashedly sentimental flick is one you are sure to love. The year is 1910, the city is San Francisco, and things are tough for the Hanson family, newly arrived from Norway. In a way, nothing much really happens in this film – the events are all quite ordinary – but any immigrant will be able to empathize with Papa's trouble in finding work, and with Mama's thrifty budgeting and the way she keeps pushing her children towards a better life. This is really an ode to all immigrant mothers, a touching tribute to their love and self-sacrifice.



## It Should Happen to You

ROMANCE / COMEDY

87 MIN / 1954

**RATING: 7/10 O**

Gladys Glover wants everyone to know her name, so she does something about it. She rents the largest billboard in New York and plasters her name across it in big bold letters. One thing leads to another and soon she's endorsing soap, making TV appearances, and having aircraft named after her. But is fame enough? Or is her boyfriend right when he tells her, "It's better if your name stands for something on one block than if it stands for nothing, or something bad, all over the entire world?"



## The Man in the White Suit

COMEDY

85 MIN / 1951

**RATING: 7/10**



What if someone invented a fabric that never wore out, and never got dirty? Would the inventor be celebrated? Or would he have to fear for his life? What would the textile industry do to eliminate a product that would eliminate the need for their customers to keep buying clothes? It's quite the conspiracy comedy!

## The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance

WESTERN / MYSTERY

123 MIN / 1962

**RATING: 8/10 O**

Ranse Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) wants to reign in the Old West to make it safe for decent folk. In the town of Shinbone, that means making it safe from the likes of Liberty Valance, the town bully, villain... and killer. But Ranse isn't a sheriff, a marshal, or even a gunslinger – he's just a lawyer fresh out of law school who refuses to carry a gun. He thinks he can restrain the likes of Valance with nothing but his law books and his sense of justice. Tom Doniphon (John Wayne) knows better, and also knows how to use a six-shooter. He's strong and tough but also a loner, so while Valance doesn't dare mess with Tom, Tom won't help the town rid themselves of Valance. The story hits its climax when Ranse realizes that while he has the will to fight Valance, he doesn't have the ability; and while Tom has the strength for the task, he doesn't care enough to do it. If you're looking for more Westerns, you may appreciate *Tin Star* (1957) and *The Man from Laramie* (1955).



## Meet John Doe

DRAMA

122 MIN / 1941

**RATING: 7/10 – FREE**

After a round of layoffs leaves newspaper columnist Ann Mitchell out of a job, she decides to go out with a bang. For her last column,





she submits a letter from an unemployed “John Doe” who is threatening to jump off the roof of City Hall on Christmas Eve to protest society’s degeneration. The letter is fake, concocted by Mitchell to express her own disgust, but it causes a sensation. Readers flood the newspaper with letters, some of them marriage proposals, some job offers, but all wanting to know, “Who is John Doe?” When Mitchell’s editor finds out the letter is a fraud, he hires her back to prevent the public from learning about the deception. Then he takes things one step further, hiring a derelict former baseball player (played by Gary Cooper) to take on the role of Doe. What starts as a deception soon takes a positive turn. When the paper’s new “John Doe” begins making public appearances his simple speeches encourage a helping spirit among his listeners. John Doe Societies spring up spontaneously to enable neighbors to help one another. Doe becomes the leader of a huge, helpful movement... that’s built on the lie of his false identity. A wonderful film, but slower pacing means it is not for everyone.

## Mr. Deeds Goes to Town

DRAMA / ROMANCE

115 MIN / 1936

**RATING: 7/10 O**

A small-town yokel, Longfellow Deeds, inherits a vast fortune making him one of the richest men in the world but decides to give it away when it proves to be too much trouble. That gets him in even more trouble when the big city men figure his generosity proves he’s insane and must be locked up! A 2002 remake starring Adam Sandler is quite crude.



## Mr. Smith goes to Washington

COMEDY / DRAMA

129 MIN / 1939

**RATING: 8/10 O**

An honest man (Jimmy Stewart) is appointed to fill out the term of a deceased



senator. *Mr. Smith* is a comedic (but all too accurate) look at both what is wrong in the realm of politics, and what it might take to fix it. An absolute classic.

## Sea Hawk

DRAMA / ADVENTURE

127 MIN / 1940

**RATING: 8/10 O**

It’s Errol Flynn at his swashbuckling best. Though set in the 1500s, this movie is very much about World War II, which was just commencing when *Sea Hawk* was filmed. Spanish king Phillip II – intent on conquering the world – could only be more Hitler-like if he wore a tiny little mustache. British sea captain Geoffrey Thorpe and his band of merry men stand in for the Allies, attacking Spanish ships to free English slaves, collecting treasure to provide his queen the money she needs to fight Spain, and just generally opposing tyranny wherever they find it. *Sea Hawk* is a great action flick with undertones of political intrigue.



## The Sign of Zorro

DRAMA / FAMILY

90 MIN / 1958

**RATING: 8/10**

Is Zorro a Spanish version of Robin Hood? The Spanish California of the 1800s stands in for medieval Sherwood Forest, but both men are outlaws who rescue the oppressed, and both frustrate the local tyrannical authorities even as they remain loyal subjects to their king. There’s also a dose of Scarlett Pimpernel, with the young Don Diego disguising himself as a fool, an academic with his nose buried so deeps in his books, that no one would ever suspect him of being the brave and brilliant Zorro. While there is lots of sword fighting, no blood is shown and no one dies. A bigger concern would be a



couple of Spanish dancing scenes, where the dancer swishes her skirt around so vigorously, she momentarily flashes her underwear. *Zorro* could be fodder for some good family discussions about what it means to live in submission to the proper authorities. When Diego defies the local corrupt Commandant, is he doing so in defiance of authority, or in submission to a greater authority? *The Sign of Zorro* is a classic worthy of the label, with enough action, twists, and turns, for two films!

## The Shop Around the Corner

DRAMA / ROMANCE

99 MIN / 1949

**RATING: 9/10**

Though he finds the newly hired store clerk quite attractive, Alfred decides she just isn’t the girl for him – for some reason the two of them just can’t get along. And besides, he already has a heart-to-heart, mind-to-mind connection with his long-time pen pal, so how can mere physical attraction compare to something like that? But before he rushes off to marry his pen pal, Alfred decides he should meet her once first. That’s when he finds out she looks a lot like the new store clerk...an awful lot like her! Remade in 1998 as *You’ve Got Mail*, the original is better, and doesn’t take God’s name in vain. It’s also a good counter to the Hollywood notion of love at first sight – this is love done write!



# ▶ SILENT FUN

## The General

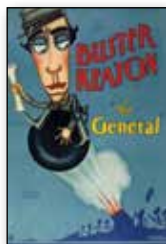
SILENT / COMEDY

80 MIN / 1927

**RATING: 8/10**

*The General* is equal parts comedy and action, with just a dash of romance thrown in. Johnnie Gray has two loves in

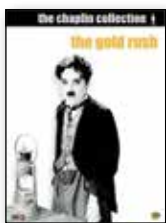
his life: his steam engine “The General,” and his girl Annabelle. When the American Civil War begins, Johnnie, like every loyal Southerner, lines up to enlist in the Confederate Army. But unbeknownst to poor Johnnie, train engineers aren’t allowed to sign up, as they are more valuable as engineers, not soldiers. Try as he might, he just can’t join the Army, and when he finally returns to Annabelle without successfully enlisting, she thinks it’s because he’s a coward. She sends him away, telling Johnnie she will only see him again when he’s in uniform. Johnnie leaves, heartbroken, and returns to his other great love, his steam engine, “The General.” But Johnnie is in for even greater heartache – Northern spies steal his “General” and take off with it. In an instant Johnnie goes from being sad and lonely to determined and resourceful. He steals another train and chases after the spies in one of the most brilliant, madcap, action-packed sequences ever caught on film. If you watch only one silent film in your life, make it this one.



## Gold Rush

SILENT / COMEDY  
96 MIN; 1925  
RATING: 7/10

*The Gold Rush* is one of Charlie Chaplin’s very best; it even made the American Film Institute’s list of the 100 best films of the last 100 years. It begins with Chaplin’s most famous character, the Tramp, heading to the Yukon to prospect for gold. Chaplin’s films always have a good mix of tragedy thrown in with the comedy, so before too long the Tramp gets mixed up with a couple tough characters, gets lost in a snowstorm, becomes so hungry he eats his shoe, and then, after all that, he falls in love with a beautiful girl who barely notices he’s alive. Of course, in the end the girl can’t resist the Tramp’s simple charms – Chaplin’s films do have happy endings.



## Grandma’s Boy

SILENT / COMEDY  
56 MIN / 1922  
RATING: 7/10 – FREE

Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton are better known today, but Harold Lloyd was every bit as popular in the silent era. Here Lloyd plays a mama’s boy twice over, too timid to stand up to the town bully even when that bully is trying to steal his girl, and so cowardly he’ll rely on his little old grandmother to come to his rescue. Grandma concocts a story about a magical charm that will protect anyone who holds it, and then passes off what’s actually her umbrella handle as that charm. The now fearless young man grabs a firm hold of it and takes charge, braving car chases, gun battles, and fist fights to get his man. Children might need to be told that despite the good result, grandma’s “little white fib” was still wrong. This is a good movie that could become great if shown at a faster speed, which is possible on YouTube. Just click on the settings (the little gear icon at the bottom of the frame) and change the playback speed from “normal” to 1.5 times. That’s something you couldn’t do in a talking picture, but for silent films it is a great option, sure to improve the experience for most audiences. What’s a little long at 56 minutes becomes a unique experience of cinema history when it is just 39 minutes.



## Seven Chances

SILENT / COMEDY  
56 MIN / 1925  
RATING: 8/10

Buster Keaton is a down on his luck lad who finds out he is to inherit seven million dollars... but only if he is married by 7:00 pm that night. When the newspapers report on his predicament, Keaton is forced to flee

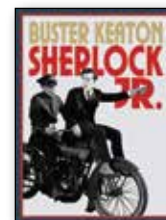


a throng of very aggressive would-be-brides who are out for his hand...or if not that, his head!

## Sherlock Jr.

SILENT / COMEDY  
44 MIN / 1924  
RATING: 8/10 – FREE

For anyone who wants to get their kids interested in the golden oldies, *Sherlock Jr.* may be the perfect introduction. This is a black and white classic with the frenetic pace of a Saturday morning cartoon – the action never stops! Buster Keaton plays the part of a movie theater janitor/projectionist who has ambitions about becoming a great detective and winning the hand of a certain beautiful girl. But he’s not the only fellow interested in the lass. Standing in his way is a tall, dark, and handsome rival who, we quickly find out, has no scruples – when no one’s looking this scoundrel steals a watch from the girl’s dad. But wait, there’s a theft? Isn’t this an opportunity for a detective wannabe to show his stuff? Buster offers to do an investigation. The best action scene in the movie is when Buster, in hot pursuit of the villains, hops on the front handlebars of a motorbike being driven by his trusted sidekick. But, unbeknownst to Buster, just as the motorbike started off, his sidekick fell off – Buster is on it alone, up front on the handlebars of the speeding bike, urging the absent driver to be a little more careful about the way he’s driving! More madcap Keaton can be enjoyed in *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1928).



For more Black and White classics be sure to check out: *The Jackie Robinson Story* (page 37), *Martin Luther* (page 38), *The Miracle Worker* (page 38), and *The Spirit of St. Louis* (page 38) and the whole War category (page 54).

# BIOGRAPHICAL

Most of these are Christian biographies, and being true gives them a leg up on fictional Christian fare that too often concludes with “happily ever after” endings, more fairytales than our one truth faith. It’s simply a fact that here on earth bad things often happen to good, faithful Christians. I will also note that while many of these are great, others are merely okay (ranking only a 6), but are still included here because of their educational value.

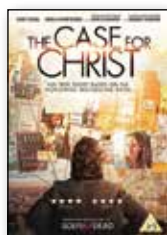
## The Case for Christ

DRAMA / FAMILY

113 MIN / 2017

**RATING: 7/10**

This is the true story of how investigative journalist Lee Strobel turned to God. It began with a restaurant dinner, his little daughter almost choking on a candy and then being saved by a wonderful Christian lady. His wife stays in contact with the woman, and soon starts attending church too. That’s when Strobel sets out to disprove Christianity, so he can bring his wife back to her senses. So he starts investigating, and as the facts pile up, he is brought to his knees. This is a wonderful story, but if it tempts you to track down more about Strobel, you should know he is an Arminian, and also a theistic evolutionist, both of which come up in his writing. So while the film could be a nice evening’s entertainment for you and your family, Strobel shouldn’t be a go-to resource for matters of faith and doctrine.



wonder God works in his and our own hearts. This is the story of Lewis’s conversion from ardent atheist to “the most reluctant convert,” bowing his knee to God not because he wanted to, but because he couldn’t do otherwise. It’s also a story superbly told. There are three different actors playing Lewis, one as a boy, another as Lewis in his twenties, and the third, portrayed by Max McLean, as Lewis in his fifties. McLean’s Lewis, the Christian Lewis, is actually the film’s narrator, “breaking the fourth wall” by talking directly to the audience and explaining the thoughts being thunk by the other younger still-kicking-against-the-goats Lewises. It’s all shot on location, so we’re able to walk along with the older Lewis through the halls of Oxford as he takes us, for example, to a pivotal discussion his younger self is about to have with J.R.R. Tolkien. What an absolute delight! Lewis fans will quickly notice that the dialogue is taken almost entirely from his books, all stitched together seamlessly by McLean himself. The dialogue is similar to the script he wrote for his one-man play *C.S. Lewis Onstage* which was the seed for this film version (and which can be watched for free online). But while the play is very good, the fully fleshed-out film is downright fantastic. Excellent acting, writing, and craftsmanship are put in service to the more excellent work God did in Lewis’s heart. God took a man angry at God and determined to run from Him, and transformed this rebel into the foremost Christian apologist of the twentieth century. And then He used that man as a spark for many thousands (millions?) more such transformations.

## C.S. Lewis: The Most Reluctant Convert

DRAMA / ADULT

93 MIN / 2021

**RATING: 9/10**

If you already know Lewis you’re going to love this film; if you don’t, this film will soon have you loving Lewis for the way he could put into words the



## End of the Spear

DRAMA / ADULT

108 MIN / 2006

**RATING: 7/10**

In 1956, five missionaries were killed by the Waodani tribesmen they were trying to befriend. The men were speared to death, and while their murders caught the attention of the world-wide media, it was what followed that was even more attention-worthy.



Three years later one missionaries’ wife, and his sister went to live with the tribe, presenting the gospel of the forgiveness of sins by offering that forgiveness. This was quite something because the tribe wasn’t just murderous to outsiders – one estimate was that 60% of the Waodani died by “unnatural” means. And over the decades that followed God used the witness of these women to transform the tribe, with many turning to Him. This being the Hollywood-ized version, the Gospel is muted, with Jesus never being explicitly mentioned. That said, God’s transformation of the tribe is central to the story, so His presence is still inescapable, and that’s what makes this a film to see. Cautions for this would involve violence – the men were all speared to death – and immodesty. The natives are depicted wearing more clothes than they actually did, but there is still a lot of skin on display, especially backsides. For a more thoroughly Christian presentation of the same story, see the documentary *Beyond the Gates of Splendor* (though it has even more exposed backsides).

## Final Solution

DRAMA / ADULT

106 MIN / 2002

**RATING: 7/10**

*Final Solution* is set in 1993 South Africa, right before Nelson Mandela was elected the country’s first black president. When a white paramilitary





group decides to raid a black village, shooting whomever they come across, things don't go as they planned. After all his comrades are killed the one remaining white thug flees for refuge to a black church. There he is confronted, surrounded, and defended by the very people he was trying to kill. The film is violent, but insightful, portraying neither black nor whites as heroes but instead pointing to Christianity as the only way to find true peace through asking for and offering forgiveness. This is a Christian movie with strong Christian principles underlying it, and it is far subtler than the average Christian flick (for example, there is no "obligatory conversion scene" as occurs in most films of the genre). A wonderful film, but the violence means this is definitely not one for children.

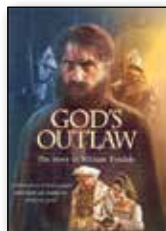
### God's Outlaw: The story of William Tyndale

DRAMA / FAMILY

93 MIN / 1988

**RATING: 6/10** – FREE

Tyndale used his great language abilities to translate the Bible into English but was burned at the stake for his efforts. This is a well-acted film but it is a tad hard to keep track of who everyone is (the cast of characters is quite large). So while this does require some deliberate concentration, the performances make it a good one for study groups, teachers and anyone interested in Church History.



### Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer

DRAMA / ADULT

93 MIN / 2018

**RATING: 8/10**

This was a film I almost didn't watch. I'm already pro-life so did I really need to sit through a 90-minute film detailing the horrors of committed by Dr. Kermit Gosnell, a Philadelphia abortionist who in 2013 was convicted

of killing three babies *after* they were born. I'm glad I did, for two reasons. First, the film wasn't the unrelentingly depressing drama I had expected. This felt more like a *Law and Order* episode, with a mystery that needs solving, and dedicated men and women trying to deliver whatever justice they can. Second, the film is a much better pro-life tool than I ever expected. Gosnell killed thousands so this could have been as hard to watch as *Schindler's List* (*Schindler* is in everyone's top 100 list, but has anyone watched it twice?). But by hiding almost all of the gore, and by keeping a quick pace, not lingering in the clinic too long, audiences aren't confronted with the full horror of what Dr. Gosnell did. That makes this a film that can be shared with the undecided; if they can handle network TV, then there's nothing here that'll be too graphic for them. When Gosnell was being tried, both the prosecutor and the mainstream media emphasized that the case wasn't about abortion – this was about the murder of *already born* babies. But in his defense, Gosnell's attorney shows that what Gosnell did to these babies *after* birth was not significantly different from what other abortionists were – with the law's blessing – doing to babies *before* birth. His reasoning was sound, even if it wasn't enough to get his client off. And seeing an abortion defender make the case that killing an unborn baby differs not a whit from killing a newborn baby is an argument that is sure to hit viewers right between the eyes.



### The Jackie Robinson Story

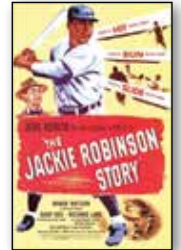
B&W / FAMILY

77 MIN / 1950

**RATING: 7/10** – FREE

This is the true story of the first black man to play Major League Baseball, made all the more interesting by the fact that Jackie Robinson plays himself and does a solid job of it. He first

caught the eye of a major league scout while playing for a traveling African-American team. Brooklyn Dodgers president and part-owner Branch Rickey has both practical and principled reasons to want to integrate blacks onto his team: he had seen discrimination impact someone close to him and so wants to fight it, and he also knows that whatever team is first to integrate will have their pick of the best black players. But Rickey wants Robinson to understand what sort of abuse he'd be signing up for. And most importantly, the two of them need to be in agreement that no matter what insults are directed at Robinson, or cheap shots delivered on the field, he can't hit back. Robinson's play, and not his fists, need to do that talking. Robinson made this film in the off-season, just three years after breaking into the major leagues. While he continued to get death threats throughout his career, this still marks an encouraging shift in the populace's thinking. Just three years after many folks were jeering at him to get out, many more were now flocking to theaters to learn how he made it in.



### John Hus: a Journey of No Return

DOCUDRAMA

55 MIN / 2015

**RATING: 7/10** – FREE

This docudrama covers the last months of Reformer Jan Hus's (1369-1415) life when he was imprisoned and awaiting trial on charges of heresy. His "errors" were of the sort that Luther would preach 100 years later: Fictional, but based on historical facts, it has lavish production values, solid acting, and decently done dubbing from the original Czech. However, this dialogue-driven movie likely won't engage anyone not already interested in Church history.



## Martin Luther

B&W / FAMILY

105 MIN / 1953

RATING: 7/10 O – FREE

Produced by the Lutheran church, this was nominated for an Oscar; it is solid theology paired with high production values. How often has that happened? That said, it does get off to a slow start; the first couple of minutes are more documentary than drama. But when we get introduced to Niall MacGinnis as Luther, his brilliant portrayal sweeps us into the story. If you're considering showing this to your class or to your family, here's the secret to helping them get into it: make the sound your priority! In a dialogue-driven film it's the sound, much more than the visuals, that really matters. I still remember watching this with my Grade 6 classmates, years ago. The screen was small – minuscule by today's standards – but this big box TV had great speakers. There was no fuzziness, no straining to understand what was being said – we could all follow it. And after 30 minutes, we were all hooked.



## The Miracle Worker

B&W / DRAMA

106 MIN / 1962

RATING: 8/10 O

Seven-year-old Helen Keller, blind and deaf almost from birth, learns to communicate through the discipline and unpatting love of her teacher Annie Sullivan. Miss Sullivan never gives in to Helen's tantrums because she knows to do so would leave Helen trapped in a dark, silent world. This is a tearjerker and a good discussion starter on the importance of discipline in raising children (Proverbs 13:24). There is also a half hour good (but not great) animated version of her story called *Helen Keller* (2005).



## The Spirit of St. Louis

FAMILY / DRAMA

135 MIN / 1957

RATING: 7/10

Charles Lindbergh's 1927 flight was the first solo crossing of the North Atlantic. Lindbergh's flight showed the world that commercial aviation was a real possibility. Just a dozen years later the first commercial transatlantic flights began. But enough history, how was the film? Well, if you like Jimmy Stewart, or appreciate biographical films, or enjoy learning even as you're entertained, or have wanted to know more about Charles Lindbergh, or wanted a nice family film, then you're sure to enjoy *The Spirit of St. Louis*.



## The Corrie Ten Boom Story

ANIMATED / FAMILY

34 MIN / 2013

RATING: 7/10 – FREE

What's an appropriate age to expose our children to the truth about Nazis, concentration camps and dead numbered in the millions? Those are horrible truths, but ones that can't be avoided if we are to have the next generation remember the self-sacrificial love, the bravery, and faithfulness of the many millions who rose up to fight this evil. *The Corrie Ten Boom Story* might be a good way to begin. The film's producers suggest that it is appropriate for children as young as 8. The filmmakers have done a remarkable job of presenting a muted, yet still accurate account of the horrors of World War II. The Ten Boom family ran a watchmaking business in the Netherlands, and when the Germans invaded and started rounding up Jews, the Ten Booms began hiding Jews. It was a courageous yet simple decision for them – they knew this was what God wanted them to do. They helped many, but were eventually betrayed and sent to concentration camps. Here the same love for God that had them hiding Jews helped Corrie endure the loss of her father and sister – she trusted that God knew what was best.



After the war she traveled extensively telling the story of God's faithfulness in all her trials. At one speech she met a former captor, a man who had viciously beat her. He was asking Corrie to forgive him. What would have been too much to ask of anyone, Corrie was able to do with God's enabling strength – she gave the man the forgiveness he was seeking.

This is a part of a larger *Torchlighter* series put out by Voice of the Martyrs. Our family has been impressed with nine of the ten we've watched, the exception being St. Patrick, only because it was really unclear what was fact and what was legend. I'd recommend the following, all of which are available for free viewing online:

- *The Eric Liddell Story* – 6/10
- *The Harriet Tubman Story* – 7/10
- *The Jim Elliot Story* – 7/10
- *The John Bunyan Story* – 8/10
- *The John Newton Story* – 7/10
- *The Martin Luther Story* – 7/10
- *The Richard Wurmbrand Story* – 6/10
- *The William Tyndale Story* – 6/10

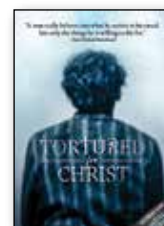
## Tortured for Christ

DRAMA / ADULT

77 MIN / 2018

RATING: 8/10 – FREE

Shortly after the Soviet Union moved into Romania, the new rulers invited all of Romania's most prominent religious leaders to attend a "conference of the cults." At this conference – broadcast over the radio – these leaders were supposed to, one after another, talk about how respectful to religion the new rulers would be. Except it is a lie. And all the religious leaders know it. But the people don't. None of the religious leaders have the courage to tell them. In the auditorium audience sits Pastor Richard Wurmbrand and his wife. As they listen Wurmbrand turns to his wife: "If I speak now, you will have no husband" His wife's reply? "I don't need a coward for a husband." Woah! So up he goes to the podium, he has his say before the mike is taken away, and he makes himself a stench in the nostrils of the authorities. Wurmbrand is eventu-



ally arrested, and then imprisoned and tortured for 14 years for his absolute refusal to deny his love for his Lord. For a time the torture happened every day, as Wurmbbrand would be beaten for doing his nightly devotions. In one scene the guard asks him what he could possibly be praying to God for: he was in prison, his wife was too, and his children were basically orphans. So why, the guard wanted to know, was Wurmbbrand still praying? "I am praying for you," Wurmbbrand tells him. *He wanted the guard who beat him every night to know the love of his Lord.* While the torture scenes are muted, this is not family viewing. But it is a film I wish that everyone 16 and up would go and see!

## Unbroken: Path to Redemption

DRAMA / ADULT  
98 MIN / 2018,  
RATING: 8/10

*Unbroken*, Laura Hillenbrand's 2010 best-selling biography of World War II hero Louis Zamperini was so good *two* movies have been based on it. The 2014 adaptation, titled *Unbroken*, was a major motion picture that made more than

\$100 million focusing on Zamperini's World War II heroics, and his career as an Olympian. What was missing from this Hollywood production was Zamperini's conversion, which gets only a passing mention right as the credits roll. Director Angelina Jolie didn't see it as a significant part of his life. Hollywood didn't know what to do with an unbreakable man who gets shattered but fortunately this Christian production does. While the special effects aren't at the level of a major motion picture, the acting is very good. And what makes this the superior adaptation is that it gives God his due. How was Louis able to survive it all? Only because God was there, every step of the way, protecting, pursuing, and forgiving. Wartime flashbacks means this is not one for little kids. And if you're watching this with teens, you might want to mention that this is not a how-to on dating, as it shows a good Christian lass letting herself be unequally yoked to the lapsed Catholic Louis.



## The Wright Brothers

ANIMATED /  
CHILDREN  
27 MIN / 1996  
RATING: 7/10

In just the first 15 minutes we get to see the history of aviation develop from disastrous first attempts at gliding to the Wright brothers' first successful powered flight. In the second half we see the Wrights continue to refine their design, but others are flying now too. And because the Wrights are content to do their work in private, their achievement is disputed. Even the American press doesn't believe they've flown. And when the Brazilian-born Alberto Santos-Dumont gets his own plane up in the air, he claims the title "first man to fly." It seems as if the Wrights "have lost their place in history." It's all here: tension, amazing inventions, and loads of historical detail packed tightly into just a half hour package.



# WHAT DOES A FILM SAY ABOUT TRUTH?

In a review some years back for the film *Water for Elephants*, Drew Zahn exposed the flaw underlying most Hollywood fare.

Zahn noted that for "more than a century now four very distinct worldviews have been competing to answer one critical question: 'What is truth, and how can you know it?'" Christians know that God is the source of all truth (John 14:6) and the very Definer of reality – that's our worldview. But three other worldviews all deny that Truth is from God. They instead say:

- 1) *Truth is defined by our reason:* This is the worldview of "science says," presuming that "man – in all his scientific, progressive wisdom – could determine truth on his own."
- 2) *Truth is what you feel:* "[This] worldview agreed that man defines truth, but insists it is a matter of the heart, not the mind. Sometimes called romanticism, this worldview argues what we feel to be true is true."

- 3) *There is no truth:* The attraction of a relativistic worldview is that if nothing is true then everything is permitted.

Zahn notes that what most often shows up on the silver screen is romanticism:

"When push comes to shove, most folks eventually do what... feels right (romanticism). What we really, really want to be true, we usually insist is true, then stretch all bounds of reason and theology to prove it is true. In the end, romanticism usually wins."

In *Water for Elephants* this romanticism is evident in the central plot, when a young man connects with an older married woman, and the audience is expected to cheer this illicit affair because, well, the two of them just seem so right for each other!

SOURCE: "The art of stealing another man's wife" [www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=291093#ixzz1Kk21Jk1g](http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=291093#ixzz1Kk21Jk1g)



# ▶ CHILDREN

This is fare for younger children – not a lot of tension here. And that means, while the kids will probably like it, mom and dad might not. Because children often watch their favorite videos repeatedly, even dozens of times, it's all the more important to make sure what they do watch is the good stuff.

## The Adventures of Milo and Otis

NATURE / DRAMA

76 MIN / 1989

**RATING: 7/10**

The key to all good buddy flicks is an unlikely pairing and what's more unlikely than a dog and cat being best friends? Otis, a pug puppy, and Milo, a kitten endowed with an extra-large helping of curiosity (extra-large even for a cat!), get separated early on and spend the rest of the film trying to find each other.



## I Dig Dinosaurs

DOCUDRAMA

26 MIN / 2011

**RATING: 7/10 – FREE**

Buddy Davis is a musician, dinosaur sculptor, and children's entertainer. In his "Buddy Davis' Amazing Adventures" series, he's teamed up with the folks at Answers in Genesis to craft something that kids will really like. In this first episode Buddy invites us to go on a dinosaur bone dig to see how paleontologists find them and take them out of the ground, and then put them on display. Davis really knows his stuff. Dinosaurs have long been promotional tools for evolutionists, but Davis will have none of that. He approaches the topic of dinosaurs and their fossils from a thoroughly Christian, creationist perspective. In a number of instances, he contrasts the biblical position with the evolutionary one. To generate interest for the series, Answers in Genesis has made this first episode free to see online. Other great episodes in the series include: *Swamp Man*, *Extreme Caving*, *Alaska*, *Ice Age*, and *Safari*.



## A Jurassic Ark Mystery

EDUCATIONAL

45 MIN / 2001

**RATING: 7/10 – FREE**

The Creation Adventure Team is out to discover when the dinosaurs died, how they lived, and whether there were any on the Ark. This video features non-stop action, impressive special effects, a number of clever spoofs, and a robot dinosaur sidekick named Proto. Renown dinosaur sculptor Buddy Davis, his teenage friend Ivan, and of course Proto, explore a dinosaur museum and show how these "terrible lizards" did indeed fit on the ark. This is one of the most entertaining creationist videos available for children. The only better? The sequel: *Six Short Days, One Big Adventurer*.



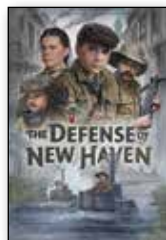
## The Defense of New Haven

FANTASY

82 MIN / 2016

**RATING: 7/10 – FREE**

This is a wonderfully bizarre adventure: a steampunk Christian allegoric comedy adventure, with every character played by a child actor, *even though the characters are adults*. Our hero, Alec, is a one-armed man who gets recruited by a fully-bearded six-year-old to carry a secret message to the city's miniature-steamboat-driving defensive forces so that they'll be able to stop gasmask-wearing raiders. That is a sentence I never imagined writing, but this is a movie I would have never imagined seeing. And it is both cheezy and



fantastic. If you enjoy this, you'll also like the producer's earlier all-children film, *The Runner from Ravenshead*.

## Hans Brinker or the Silver Skates

DUTCH / DRAMA

90 MIN / 1962

**RATING: 8/10**

When Hans' father is hurt repairing a dike, young Hans drops out of school to take care of his family. But the Netherlands in the 1860's were a hard place to find work and try as he might Hans can't find enough work to pay for both his family's food and the medicine his father needs. He is fast though, and when he hears that the prize for the annual 26-mile skating race is 300 guilders, he enters in the hope of winning the money his family and father so desperately need. This is a great film for showing how we should love our neighbors in need, and a wonderful sports movie without the typical sports ending. The only downside is that this Dutch tale is done with an entirely Swedish cast, and thus the accents are all wrong.



## Incredible Creatures that Defy Evolution I

DOCUMENTARY

47 MIN / 2006

**RATING: 7/10**

Dr. Jobe Martin was once an evolutionist but now investigates and shares some of the most incredible features of some pretty incredible creatures. Did you know:

- ...the bombardier beetle repels attackers by shooting a fiery liquid out of its rear end?
- ...the woodpecker has a barbed gluey tongue that sticks to bugs but doesn't stick to its own beak? And it has a skull that is designed to do the work of a jackhammer without giving the poor fellow a headache.



Dr. Martin shows us why we should be amazed by many other creatures including: the beaver, the Australian incubator bird, the platypus, the chicken egg, the chuckwalla lizard, the gecko, and us humans. And he has two more episodes in this series to share even more amazing creature features.

## Lassie Come Home

DRAMA

90 MIN / 1943

**RATING: 8/10 O**

This is the first and very best of the Lassie movies. Poverty forces a family to sell their treasured dog...but the dog won't stay away and returns to their house again and again. What is poor Lassie going to do when her new owner takes her all the way to the other side of Britain? Will she still be able to find her way home?



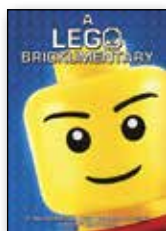
## A Lego Brickumentary

DOCUMENTARY

93 MIN / 2015

**RATING: 7/10**

Here's something different: a documentary the whole family can enjoy. The basic building blocks of the Lego story are simple. The Denmark-based company has been making these little bricks for 65+ years. The film itself is a hagiography of sorts, looking at the company with the wide-open eyes of a fan. This is sure to get your kids building, but the target audience for the film is as much adults and children. The only cautions for this G-rated film I can come up with is that there are about 10 to 20 seconds of evolutionary nonsense, accompanied by a depiction of primordial life emerging from the sea and turning into man (primordial Lego life turning into a Lego man). We are shown some folks that are a little *too* obsessed with Lego, so mom or dad might want to raise the issues of balance after watching this.



## FADING TO BLACK: Alternatives to Screen Time

This edition of RP is all about movie recommendations, and were someone to watch even a fraction of these films, that'd be an awful lot of screen time. So, in the name of balance, let's make a plug for taking a screen sabbatical, going without our smartphone, TV, and computer for a day, a week, or even a month. We're not talking about the time you have to spend on your laptop for work, or when you're using

your phone to talk to your dear old mom. What we're talking about here is Tik Tok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter time. Could you go without all that, for a week? It'd be difficult, but could you go screen-free?

And if it'd be really difficult, might that be a sign that you should make the attempt? After all, we want to own our phone; we don't want it to own us.

Of course, going screen-free for a whole week (or a month, or a day) isn't about simply stopping the scrolling. Stopping will just leave you bored and antsy - you can't replace something with just doing nothing! No, if you're going to succeed then you'll need to find other activities to fill the time. To that end, here's a list of 25 alternatives to consider:



1. grab a good book
2. organize a \_\_\_\_\_ tournament (ping pong, horseshoes, croquet, etc.)
3. listen to a podcast, audiobook, or the car radio
4. go for coffee with a friend
5. read through the Bible in a month
6. play a card or board game
7. share a favorite book with your children
8. find a hobby (car repair, woodworking, fishing, etc.)
9. go for a walk and talk, chatting up all the neighbors you meet
10. hold a \_\_\_\_\_ tasting party (wine, cheese, foreign cuisine, etc.)
11. shoot hoops with your kids
12. actually clean the garage
13. phone your mom (it doesn't count as screen time, even if you Skype her)
14. knock off some of those home repairs
15. have your kids help you with home repairs (even if takes twice as long)
16. hit Costco as a family
17. join a Bible study
18. get an old-fashioned newspaper subscription
19. take a night class
20. hold a games night with neighbors
21. serve a meal at a Rescue Mission
22. go biking or rollerblading or bowling
23. plant a garden
24. hike up the nearest mountain
25. organize a painting party (painting the fence, etc.) for a widow

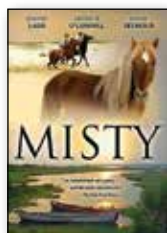
## Misty

DRAMA

91 MIN / 1961

**RATING: 7/10**

If you have girls in your home there's a good chance you've already heard of Marguerite Henry and her most famous book *Misty of Chincoteague*.



It's the story of two orphans who, after coming to live with their grandparents, fix their minds on buying a pony named Phantom. But it's not going to be easy. First, Phantom is a *wild* pony, running loose on the neighboring island of Assateague, and to this point no one has been able to catch her. If she is caught, it'll cost the two children \$100 to buy her and they don't have any money. And last but not least, Phantom is three years old already, and their grandfather says that no one can gentle a pony that's been wild that long. But while these two have their work cut out for them, they're up to the task! Gambling is a minor element, so children will need to be told that we should never seek to become wealthy at another's expense. The moral of this story is an old-fashioned one, and while powerful, it is gently presented: "love is not possessive; love seeks the best for the other." I'm not going to spoil things by telling you how that moral is learned, but if you have a sensitive daughter or two, there might be a little crying at the end of this one...though it certainly ends on a happy note.

## Odd Squad: the Movie

FANTASY / EDUCATIONAL

67 MIN / 2016

**RATING: 7/10**

Odd Squad is an organization founded to correct the "strange, the weird, and most especially the odd" wherever they might occur around the world. The organization itself is odd in that it is run entirely by children. In a nod to James Bond, there are agents, cartoonish villains, gadgets galore, the science types

who invent them, and a leader known only by her letter, "Miss O." But, thankfully, there isn't any of Bond's violence and sex. So who do they have to battle? Well, it turns out, nobody. A new rival adult-based agency, the Weird Team, is also dealing with all things weird and odd, and fixing things so quickly that Odd Squad doesn't have any cases to solve. So the film begins with Odd Squad *disbanding*. How's that for an unexpected twist!



However, the Weird Team may not be quite as effective as they first seemed. Their fixes are coming unfixed... or maybe they were never really fixed in the first place! Whatever the case may be, it's clear the world still needs Odd Squad.

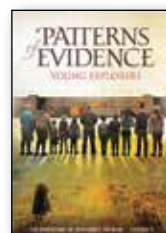
## Patterns of Evidence: Young Explorers

DOCUDRAMA

190 MIN / 2020

**RATING: 7/10 - FREE**

This 5-episode series is based on filmmaker Timothy Mahoney's documentary *Patterns of Evidence* about his search for evidence of Israel's captivity in Egypt. The original was part mystery, part biblical history and this sequel covers the same territory, but this time with a group of kids along for the ride. This is now not simply a documentary, but a docu-drama, with fact and fiction, education and entertainment, all mixed together. There is humor on two levels here, with pratfalls for the kids, and dry humor for the adults – there are some snort-worthy moments! The five episodes in order cover:



1. The adventures begins when the kids hear about Timothy Mahoney's work and are eager to help
2. They learn that we may know where Joseph lived in Egypt

3. The team searches for signs of captive Israel's population explosion
4. The Young Explorers go search for signs of the 10 plagues
5. The search continues on into Israel, where the team now investigates the fall of the walls of Jericho

## The Sparky Chronicles

SPY / CHRISTIAN

25 MIN / 2003

**RATING: 7/10 - FREE**

When Sparky is dognapped, three college-age friends vow to find their pooch. But was Sparky also involved in international espionage? This Christian spy spoof is wonderfully silly, professionally done, and has a great moral to top it off – two thumbs up!



## Space Buddies

FANTASY

84 MIN / 2009

**RATING: 7/10**

In this adventure five talking puppies end up stowed away on an incredibly advanced spaceship – so sophisticated even a dog could fly it – but which is short on fuel. To get back home they have to refuel at a Russian space station where they befriend a Russian dog, Sputnik, and have to contend with a crazy cosmonaut. This is *not* a film mom and dad are going to love but they likely won't mind it either. And if you have kids aged 5-8 who find most movies frightening, what might make this a treat is that it has *some* tension – there is a bad guy – but it isn't *too* scary. And then five cute puppy stars only add to the fun! I've taken a peek at the other *Buddies* films, and this strikes me as the very best of the batch. That's why, even though our youngest really enjoyed it, I've concluded this one is enough for us.





## Destination Moon

ANIMATED  
83 MIN / 1992  
RATING 7/10

Normally the young journalist Tintin travels the world in pursuit of his stories, but this time he goes further afield – all the way to the moon! When Tintin's friend Professor Calculus gets involved in a multi-country race to the moon it is up to Tintin to find out who is trying to sabotage the Professor's new rocket.



## The Wild Brothers: Welcome to our World

REALITY TV  
30 MIN / 2015  
RATING: 7/10

Everyone in our family enjoyed the Wild Brothers series, from our 2-year-old all the way up to mom and dad. At series start, the Wild family lives in the deep jungles of Papua, Indonesia, where dad is a missionary to the Wanu tribe. The four Wild brothers are the sort of boys who collect pets in their pockets, and who love to explore the jungle with a butterfly net in one hand and a slingshot in the other. In their first adventure, titled *Welcome to our World*, we get introduced to the family, and the boys introduce us to God's creation. We go hunting with them, we're introduced to their best friend, a native Indonesian child named Pu, and we get to watch their facial expressions as Pu introduces them to a local delicacy, raw echidna brain. A fun extra is the boys skinning a ten-foot python that even after it has been dead for an hour is still moving! And there are seven other interesting episodes!



## QUICK QUOTES



### They know who they hate

...the attitude you have from Hollywood, where every time someone in today's world is portrayed as some kind of religious believer, that person is viewed as some kind of a crook, or deviant, or weirdo, or as an ugly person, or something is wrong with him or her, it's poisonous."

– Michael Medved

### ...but is it good?

The primary task and calling of the Christian is to glorify and enjoy God in all things. When assessing a film, we should not ask if we can watch it without falling into sin, but whether watching this film will equip or hinder our calling as we seek to bring glory to our God.

– Tim Challies

### You are what you consume

"To quote Mr. [Rob] Reiner, 'Movies are basically advertising cigarettes to kids.' No knock on Rob. In fact, I agree with him. But why is smoking open to censorship and not these other issues? And what happened to Hollywood's argument that movies and TV shows don't *cause* bad behaviors, they just reflect it? ...The answer is, there is no answer. It's just Hollywood being Hollywood. *It's monumental hypocrisy.* Kids can't pick up bad habits from what they watch...oh, except for smoking."

– Pat Sajak

### Why dig for diamonds in dungheaps?

"it's not hard to discover redemptive themes and death and resurrection in basically everything. It's like hitting the ground with your hat. We live in the world God made, and so death and resurrection are obvious themes in everything – it doesn't mean the artist isn't thumbing his nose at heaven, and it doesn't somehow sanctify the rest of the trash. It's like getting all excited because you've noticed that the debauched film you're not supposed to be watching relies heavily on the use of gravity which, as we all know, was created by God."– Rebekah Merkle

## ▶ FAMILY FUN

These are films that mom and dad can also look forward to watching. But that does mean that some of them have action or drama that may be too intense for the youngest children, so be sure to research age-appropriateness.

### Babes in Toyland

MUSICAL  
105 MIN / 1961  
RATING: 7/10

*Babes in Toyland* stars all your children's nursery rhyme favorites. There's Little Jack Horner, Simple Simon and the pieman, Jack and Jill, Little Bo Peep and her sheep, and of course, Mother Goose herself. That might make this the perfect way to introduce your little ones to the musical genre. Our story begins with preparations for a wedding. Tom (as in, "Tom, Tom, the Piper's son") and Mary (quite contrary) are going to get married and the whole village is so excited they just have to dance and sing! There has to be a villain, of course, and the black-hatted, black-caped, black-elevator-shoe-clad Barnaby Barnacle is such an over-the-top meanie that only the youngest of children might be scared by him. He knows something Mary doesn't – that when Mary is married, she's going to inherit a large sum, so Barnaby wants to marry Mary, instead of Tom! So Barnaby plots to get rid of his rival. The target audience is clearly children but there's so much color and energy and action that older kids and parents will enjoy it too.



### A Bear Called Winnie

CANADIAN / WAR  
90 MIN / 2004  
RATING: 7/10

This is the (mostly) true story of Winnie, the bear that inspired A.A. Milne's much-loved *Winnie the Pooh* books. While she lived most of her life



in the London Zoo, many don't realize that Winnie was a Canadian bear so it was very fun to learn how she got from the wilds of Canada to inside the pages of everyone's favorite children's story. One big caution concerns what one reviewer called the film's confusion about its target audience: it is a generally gentle story about a beloved children's character, but which also kills off a charming character – a young funny veterinarian during a war scene. The violence happens off screen, but still, this is not the sort of thing the Winnie-the-Pooh loving set will know how to deal with. But humor, hijinks, and also a little Canadian history rank it as quite a good TV movie for mom and dad and the older ones.

### Beyond the Mask

CHRISTIAN / DRAMA  
2015 / 103 MIN  
RATING: 8/10

When a young 18th century assassin wants to leave his dark life behind his employer tries to have this loose end tied up, with a bomb. The assassin survives thanks to the warning of a passing vicar who ends up paying for his kindness by getting blown up himself. In search of a new life and a new identity, Reynolds adopts the vicar's identity, and, meets Charlotte, a young woman who knows a lot more about God than this "vicar" does. Romance, intrigue, daring-do and plenty of explosions follow. A concern would be the violence, which, while never gory, is frequent – lots of fisticuffs going on here. That said, this is one of the better produced, better acted, better written Christian films you'll see.



### Born Free

DRAMA / NATURE  
95 MIN / 1966  
RATING: 8/10

When a man-eating lion has to be shot, and his mate too, three little cubs are left as orphans. Game warden George Adamson takes them back to his wife Joy, and their home.



As you might expect, three wild lion cubs can get into all sorts of hijinks when they're kept inside. Seeing Elsa, Lustica, and Big One bound on the furniture, and on the Adamsons will be a favorite part for many younger viewers. The Adamsons raise the triplets until they are too big to manage, and then send two to the Netherlands Rotterdam Zoo. But Elsa, the runt of the litter, ends up staying with them....until it become impossible to keep her too. But how can they send Elsa off to a zoo when all she's known was the wide spaces of the game reserve? The couple hatches a plan to teach their Elsa how to hunt and survive in the wild. The story begins with a lion attack, and a lion getting shot – little is shown, but it is tense, and will be too much for younger viewers (so I just fast forwarded this scene for our kids). Overall, in *Born Free*, Man's management role is assumed – the Adamsons are exercising dominion (Gen. 1:28). That makes this film a counter to some of the unbiblical environmental propaganda children will encounter, particularly if mom or dad use it as a conversation starter.

### City of Ember

FANTASY  
95 MIN / 2008  
RATING: 7/10

In *Ember's* opening scenes we learned for humanity to survive they have to hide underground for 200 years. That's why a group of engineers and scientists – the Builders – have crafted a city, the City of Ember, and buried it deep underground so the residents can survive the apocalypse that is presumably kill-

ing everyone who remains above. But now, after 200 years have passed, no one alive remembers there is another world out there – they only know of Ember, and the only light they see is provided by light bulbs powered by their mighty generator. However the generator – their whole city – was never meant to last forever, and now everything is starting to break down, and they're running out of food too. The biggest problem? No one will admit what's happening. So to the rescue comes Doon Harrow, a teen with a knack for fixing things who wants to have a go at working on the generator. But to get at it he has to break rules and venture where he's not supposed to go. When Doon's friend Lina uncovers some long-lost and only partially intact instructions from the Builders the two of them have to piece together all the clues to figure out how they can save their family and friends before all of Ember's lights go dark. A gigantic mole – the size of a Volkswagen Beetle – makes for a scary chase scene and the mole's slimy pink tentacle-like feelers on the end of its nose might make this a bit too creepy for any kids under 10. The more notable caution would be the religious aspect of the film. God is never mentioned, and His absence in a movie about a coming end to the world is glaring.



## Condorman

SUPER HERO  
90 MIN / 1981  
**RATING: 7/10**

When comic book creator Woody Wilkins gets the chance to help out the CIA he jumps at it. But he gets a little too into the role, telling his Russian contact – his *beautiful* Russian contact – that he is a long-time secret agent with the code name "Condorman." When

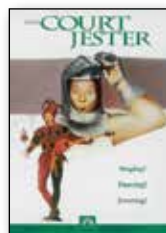


some toughs try to grab the Russian, Woody makes use of his quick wits and astonishing luck to fight them all off. That so impresses the Russian agent that when she later decides to defect, she tells the CIA she'll only go if they send their "top agent" Condorman to come pick her up. Woody is willing to help again...but with a few conditions. He'll go, so long as the CIA agree to give him a few special tools he's dreamed up that come straight out of his superhero comics! Lots of goofy fun.

## The Court Jester

COMEDY / SPOOF  
1956 / 101 MIN  
**RATING: 8/10**

Danny Kaye stars as a bumbling spy/jester who is hypnotized to be the world's best sword-fighter...except when people snap their fingers. And to escape a poisoning he has to remember that, "The pellet with the poison is in the vessel with the pestle but the chalice from the palace holds the brew that is true." Or is it in the flagon with the dragon? A brilliant, silly "Robin Hood" type story.



## Dude Perfect: Backstage Pass

DOCUMENTARY  
84 MIN / 2020  
**RATING: 8/10 – FREE**

In 2009 some college friends, calling themselves the "Backyard Stuntmen" videotaped each other trying crazy basketball shots – behind the back shots, roof shots, hitting-a-hoop-driving-by-in-the-bed-of-a-pickup-truck shots – with each guy trying to outdo the last. Then they posted all their makes to YouTube, shared the link with family and friends, and then headed off to bed. And that was how Dude Perfect began. The very same ingredients that make



their videos so popular are all on display in the documentary: amazing trick shots, over-the-top excitement, loads of humor, and good friends enjoying each others' company.

## The Fighting Prince of Donegal

HISTORICAL DRAMA  
110 MIN / 1966  
**RATING: 7/10**

Halfway through *The Fighting Prince*, I figured out why I was enjoying this so much, and why it was also so familiar: this is Robin Hood, but with Irish accents! Irish prince Hugh O'Donnell takes the Robin role as leader of a rebellious and yet righteous band, alpha males every one of them, but willing to unite under this one man. Like Robin, Hugh's dispute isn't so much with the English crown, as with those who have usurped the crown's power. As the newly installed Prince of Donegal, Hugh offers a treaty to the English Queen, but the local English representative, Captain Leeds – in a Prince John/Sheriff of Nottingham role – won't even pass it along. Instead, he imprisons Hugh. And when Hugh escapes, Leeds occupies the O'Donnell castle and holds Hugh's mother hostage. Holding a man's mom hostage? How low can you go? Of course, that only sets the scene for the hero to make his triumphant return. Give this one ten minutes, and everyone in the family, ten and up, will really enjoy it.



## Greyfriars Bobby

DRAMA  
91 MIN / 1961  
**RATING: 8/10**

*Greyfriars Bobby* is based on the true story of a dog that was inseparable from his master in life and, when his master died, spent each night on his master's grave for another 14 years (that's





98 in dog years). The funeral that begins this film, and the Scottish brogue spoken throughout, make this one a bit too difficult for young children, but for everyone else the faithfulness of “wee Skye terrier” Bobby makes this an enjoyable, memorable story.

## Hangman's Curse

TEEN SUSPENSE / MYSTERY  
106 MIN / 2003  
**RATING: 8/10**

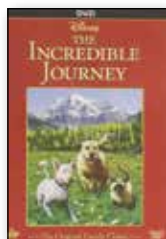
Bullies at Rogers High School are all getting deathly sick. Is this the work of Abel Frye's ghost, a student who committed suicide ten years earlier? The Veritas Project, a family of investigators, is brought in to uncover the truth and they quickly find things are not at all as they appear to be. If you were going to judge this movie by its cover you would probably dismiss it as some weird supernatural thriller, but the villains in this story turn out to be familiar foes. At its core this is a movie about bullies and the bullied, about cliques and trying to belong. That's what makes it a great one to watch with your kids. That said, it begins with a student's suicide and delves into the practice of witchcraft so it clearly isn't suitable for anyone under 10. In fact parents should really preview this one before watching it with their kids.



## The Incredible Journey

DOCUDRAMA  
89 MIN / 1963  
**RATING: 8/10**

When the Hunters head to Oxford where dad is going to teach for a semester, family friend John Longridge volunteers to take care of their trio of pets back at his own cabin, a few hours away. Shortly after they arrive, Luath, a Yellow Labrador, convinces the other two – Siamese Cat Tao, and Bodger, an English Bull Terrier – to take off and go find their family. While Luath knows the right direction, he doesn't realize that home is more than 200 miles, and a mountain



range, away. That's the set up for their incredible journey. On the way, they have to contend with hunger, whitewater, bears, a lynx, and, unfortunately for Luath, a porcupine!

## Jack and the Beanstalk

COMEDY  
83 MIN / 1952  
**RATING: 7/10**

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello star in their own version of this classic tale. The story begins with the desperate-for-work pair signing up for a night's work as last-minute babysitters. We get to the fairy-tale part when Costello asks the boy they are sitting to read him a story. Then, when we shift from the real world to the fairy tale, the film switches over from a sepia-toned black and white to full color, like happens in *The Wizard of Oz*. And also like *Oz*, the people populating this fairyland look awfully familiar. This is a good film for the kids, but in need of some parental guidance because of the slapstick – some of the physical humor is just rude, not funny. For the parents, it is a little slow, and a little too silly, but still enjoyable overall.



## The Last Chance Detectives: Mystery Lights of Navajo Mesa

MYSTERY  
47 MIN / 1994  
**RATING: 7/10**

Four young friends spend their spare time investigating any mysteries they can find. Sometimes that means tracking down missing cats, but other times it means investigating strange voices on the radio, weird lights in the sky, or the disappearance of valuable museum artifacts.

This is a great short flick that has kids behaving like kids, getting into the stupid fights we all got into as kids, but then doing what so many of us didn't do – asking for forgiveness. *Mystery Lights of Navajo Mesa* is the first in series of three



*Last Chance Detectives* movies put out by Focus on the Family.

## Old Yeller

DRAMA  
84 MIN / 1957  
**RATING: 9/10**

The classic boy and his dog story. Old Yeller saves the day again and again as two boys, Travis and particularly his younger brother Arliss, find themselves in danger in the Old West. This is a movie for the whole family and one that parents can use to discuss the importance of children obeying their parents, even when they don't understand why (Arliss ignores his mama twice to the peril of all).



## Overcomer

SPORTS  
119 MIN / 2019  
**RATING: 7/10**

This was going to be John Harrison's year. The high school basketball coach had all his best players returning, ready to make a legitimate run at the championship. But then the local steel manufacturing plant closed and took their 6,000 employees, and most of his players, out of town. So what's a basketball coach to do when he has no team? How about switching to a new sport? But when the school principal convinces John Harrison to give coaching cross country a try, his new team turns out to be just one student, Hannah... and she has asthma. That setup allows for a generous dollop of humor in this drama, but the best part of this film is more serious. Producers, the Kendrick Brothers, are known for packing messages into their movies, and they do so once again, making this film/sermon about finding our identity, not in our job, spouse, political party allegiance, or what ethnic group we're part of, *but in Who we belong to*. There are nits to pick, as the Arminian flavoring to the film manages to even make having Jesus as first in our life somehow as much about us as it is about Him. Still, this is an effective reminder of



how often we can put other things – our career, our family, our hobbies, our interests – ahead of our God.

## Shark Boy and Lava Girl 3D

FANTASY  
93 MIN / 2005  
RATING: 7/10



Max is bullied at school, and uses his imagination to dream up a whole other world where Lavagirl and Sharkboy are heroes and friends. This is a mostly nonsensical film, but the 3D aspect makes it a delight to show to your kids, just so long as you have enough 3D glasses!

## Storm: Luther's Forbidden Letter

HISTORICAL DRAMA  
105 MIN / 2017  
RATING: 7/10 – FREE



Storm Voeten is the 12-year-old son of a printer, living in 1500s Antwerp. Martin Luther has written his 95 Theses and his ideas are a source of debate and division across Europe. That's also true in the Voeten household, where Storm's mother, a staunch Catholic, doesn't even want to hear Luther's name. But his father is interested in learning more... and he's even willing to print Luther's ideas. The opening scene has Luther making his brief appearance in the film.

He's writing a letter, even as a squadron of soldiers is heading his way. The letter is entrusted to the care of an assistant to quickly and secretly take to Antwerp. Though the events in this film are more of the "inspired by" variety, rather than purporting to be historically accurate, there is some real history here. Luther did send a letter to Antwerp. In the film the letter is a rallying cry against the Catholic Church, and a call to rely on Jesus alone. When Luther's assistant arrives in Antwerp he seeks out Storm's father. Voeten Sr. accepts the printing job, even though the town's Inquisitor has already arrested another printer for producing forbidden Protestant materials. And that's when the film turns into a chase movie. The authorities catch Storm's father in the act

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Repeal Assisted Suicide	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Balance the Budget	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Protect Free Speech	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Eliminate Carbon Taxes	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Defend Conscience Rights	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Enforce Border Protection	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
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CHP Leader

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of printing and arrest him, but not before Storm runs off with the letter's printing plate. He gets chased through the alleys and only escapes when 12-year-old street orphan Maria, and her handy sling, intervene. Now it's up to Storm to figure out how to get the letter printed, and how to save his dad. The big caution with this film concerns the tension and violence – lots of people getting banged up in this film, and while it is all brief, it isn't always offscreen.

## The Sword and the Rose

HISTORICAL DRAMA

92 MIN / 1953

RATING: 7/10

As a bold and beautiful princess, Mary is much admired by all the young men of the court. But as the sister to the king, her marriage prospects are tied up with her brother's political machinations, and he wants her to marry the aged King of France. She, however, is a very stubborn lady, so it's an open question as to whether she'll do as he says. It's only when she falls in love with the Captain of the Guard, and tries to sail off to the New World with him, that the king gains the upper hand. The couple is caught, and her knight in shining armor is going to be hung for treason... unless she submits to her brother's wishes and marries the French king. I won't give away the ending, but will note there is, ultimately, a happy ending for all. This is a "Disneyfied" version of history, and that is both its strength and weakness, suitable for all ages, but gentler than the events really were.



## The Three Investigators in the Secret of Skeleton Island

MYSTERY

91 MIN / 2007

RATING: 7/10

Jupiter Jones, Pete Crenshaw and Bob Andrews are a team of juvenile detectives that "have never lost a case." Jupiter is the



"Sherlock Holmes" of the group, always able to put the pieces together. Pete is the athletic, fearless "muscle" (or, at least, as much as a 13-year-old can be) while Bob is the researcher extraordinaire, their very own version of Google, always ready with a pertinent fact. When Pete's dad invites them to come visit him at his new job site building an amusement park on an island in South Africa, the Three Investigators set out on what they think will be a nice vacation. But a fearsome mythical beast makes an appearance and it is up to Jupiter Jones and his team to figure out what sort of beast it might be – there has to be a logical explanation. In films starring children, parents are mostly absent, and that holds true here too. While the Three Investigators are only 12 or maybe 13 or 14, they are portrayed as smarter and more capable than the adults around them, which isn't generally so, and which parents might want to point out.

## Time Changer

DRAMA / SCIENCE FICTION

99 MIN / 2002

RATING: 7/10

In the year 1890, seminary professor Russell Carlisle proposes teaching morality to the masses without making mention of God, reasoning that even if people don't become Christians it would be a good thing if they were at least taught that stealing was wrong. But after a colleague uses a time machine to send the professor more than a hundred years into the future, to the present-day U.S.A., Carlisle realizes that morals founded on anything but God have no foundation at all, and are just dismissed as opinion. This is a good-looking science fiction movie with an important and powerfully presented Christian message.



## Unitards

COMEDY

107 MIN / 2010

RATING: 8/10

The producers bill this as "High School Musical meets Napoleon Dynamite" but

I'll have to take their word for it, not having seen either. I do know it is laugh-out-loud, tears-in-your-eyes funny in parts. When the vice principal charges Lewis Grady with building up school spirit, he decides to start a guys-only dance...thing (he isn't quite sure what it is, but he knows it isn't a dance team because that's what girls do). His two quirky friends are happy to help, even if they've got some misgivings about dancing in front of the whole student body. The three buddies bribe, beg, and bargain their way through the recruitment process, ending up with a group of a dozen or more. But it's one thing to get a group together, and another to get that group dancing together, especially when the guys have more than their share of left feet. But with a little help from mom and some friends on the school's award-winning girls' dance team, they start figuring things out. While the dancing is modest by worldly standards, there is a lot of it, and it isn't the formal sort you might see in a "Pride and Prejudice" film. This is more the jump and bounce and shake and wiggle type of dancing toddlers through teens do. That includes some butt-wiggling moves that are a brief part of one or two of the dance productions. It's slightly sexually suggestive, but incidentally, rather than provocatively so. And when paired with the students' generally modest dress, it is quite tame. This is high school as we wish it could have been, and would still like it to be for our kids: full of challenges, yes, but not full of naysayers, mockers, and killjoys.



## Who is Simon Miller?

SPY

85 MIN / 2011

RATING: 7/10

In this Disney-esque movie, a family discovers their dad has gone missing because he is actually a spy, so they set out to rescue him.







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Bethel Canadian Reformed Church in Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada experiences increasing mission opportunities in our community. With a clear mandate from Council and a preliminary budget with startup funding, we are now seeking a full-time mission worker to promote and develop this work.

Based out of a well-established local church with eager membership, a tremendous opportunity exists for Reformed mission in the immediate community and neighbouring region. Qualified applicants must have a heart for mission in a diverse, multi-cultural community. The applicant is to be a member in good standing of a Canadian Reformed, United Reformed or sister church.

The position is presently geared towards non-ordained persons, but we are willing to consider ordained candidates as God leads. Qualification is not limited to those who have formal education although relevant training and experience, particularly in multi-cultural contexts, would be valuable assets.

If you are interested and would like more information along with a more detailed job description, please contact Barry Van Ommen at [bvanommen@rogers.com](mailto:bvanommen@rogers.com) or 416-953-3682.



## Emmanuel Christian High School

Located in Fergus, ON

invites applications for possible

### HIGH SCHOOL TEACHING POSITIONS

Preferences will be given to applicants with qualifications in the following areas (although other areas will also be considered):

**French, Phys. Ed./Athletic Director**

for the 2022/23 school year and beyond.

Emmanuel has a current student body of 160 students in grades 9 through 12. We are enjoying a wonderful new facility since September 2016, located in a picturesque southern Ontario town.

Qualified individuals who seek to serve in the field of Reformed Education, and who submit themselves to Scripture as summarized in the Reformed Confessions, are heartily encouraged to apply; an application should include a resume, with references, and a philosophy of Reformed education.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting the principal, Mr. Stephen DeBoer, at [principal@ech.s.ca](mailto:principal@ech.s.ca) or by phone: 226-383-7300 (work); 226-962-5265 (home)

Please submit applications by email to [principal@ech.s.ca](mailto:principal@ech.s.ca), or by mail addressed to:

Emmanuel Christian High School  
c/o Human Resources Committee  
680 Tower St. S. Fergus, ON N1M 0B1

## RP'S 52 IN 22 CHALLENGE



If you're a reader, there's a good chance you have a stack of books somewhere that you've really been meaning to get to. But, what with the busyness of life, that stack might well be growing as it is so hard to set aside the time. How then, can we get to the reading that we really want to do anyway?

The answer, for a trio of competitive lads, was to get a challenge going. So a lawyer, a minister, and an editor – André Schutten (pictured to the left, busy working through his stack), Jim Witteveen, and Jon Dykstra – all agreed that they would read 52 books by the end of 2022. This "52 in 22" challenge is a race of sorts, and to up the motivation, the three will keep a public running total of their progress, posting short reviews of each book to appear in the magazine, starting with the next issue, as well as appearing online at [ReformedPerspective.ca](http://ReformedPerspective.ca), Facebook, MeWe, Gab, and Instagram. You can find them by searching for **#RP52in22**.

Follow along and get inspired for your own 52 in 22 challenge!

# ▶ FOR MOM AND DAD

There are films intended for an adult audience, movies and videos to enjoy with your better half...and sometimes with the older kids too.

## 2081

dystopian / satire  
25 MIN / 2009  
**RATING: 8/10** – FREE

The year is 2081 and a “golden age of equality” has been ushered in by the “Handicapper General” whose job is to assess everyone’s abilities and, if they have any advantages, to then assigns them “handicaps” to take them away. In the film’s opening scene we meet George who, being a little stronger than most, is sunk down in his easy chair by the heavy weights he’s been assigned to sap his strength. He’s also outfitted with earphones that hit him with piercing sounds to make it impossible for him to use his higher than average IQ. Meanwhile, his wife Hazel sits comfortably on the couch, knitting. She hasn’t been outfitted with any handicaps because she’s been deemed to have no advantages. This is a equality of outcomes, rather the equality of treatment, and as ridiculous as it is shown to be here, it is the sort of equality that is often being pursued in the world.



Bible-believing, 3-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan for the prosecution; and for the defense, Clarence Darrow, infamous for his defense of two indefensible child-killing clients. These big names got the attention of one other: *Baltimore Sun* editor H. L. Mencken. His columns largely influenced how the trial was perceived by the public - while the creationists won the court case, Mencken made sure that the evolutionists won the publicity battle. In *Alleged* we get to see what actually happened via a fictional story about a local small town reporter who wants to make it big and hopes to impress Mencken by covering the case. This could be enjoyed as an above average Christian romance, but the setting makes this more than a fun little film. Highly recommend for older teens and adults.

## Anastasia

drama / mystery  
105 MIN / 1956  
**RATING: 7/10** O

This work of fiction is built on a base of fact. The facts are that in 1918 Russian revolutionaries murdered the Czar and his family, and for years afterwards rumors persisted that the Czar’s youngest daughter, Anastasia, survived the massacre. The fiction and the film begin in the year 1928. An exiled Russian General figures he can claim the royal daughter’s inheritance if he can find a young woman of the right age and look to impersonate Anastasia. He settles on a young amnesiac and starts teaching her how to walk and talk and react as Anastasia would. But when the young woman seems to know far more about Anastasia



## Alleged

historical drama  
93 MIN / 2011  
**RATING: 8/10**

In 1925 an anti-evolution law, which forbade the teaching of evolution in public schools, was challenged in a Dayton, Tennessee courtroom. John Scopes, a high school teacher, was charged with violating the law by teaching his students about Charles Darwin’s theory. The “Scopes Monkey Trial” pitted creationists vs. evolutionists and enlisted big name “stars”: the Scripture-quoting,

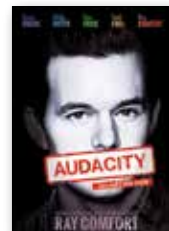


than she has ever been taught, the General starts to wonder if this woman really is the royal princess.

## Audacity: Love Can’t Stay Silent

allegory  
50 MIN / 2015  
**RATING: 7/10** – FREE

This is a message movie – a sermon disguised as a drama. But it is a decent disguise, and quite the sermon, all about why Christians need to share the Gospel with homosexuals. It begins in a typical office setting with attractive Diana aggressively challenging bike messenger Peter to defend his biblical beliefs about gay marriage. He heads to the Internet to do research. How can he present the truth winsomely? Fortunately, Peter finds YouTube videos from street evangelist Ray Comfort in which homosexuals are interviewed and challenged, and yet seem to appreciate the exchange. How does Comfort pull it off? By focusing on what we all – heterosexual and homosexual – have in common: our sinful tendency towards sexual lust. In total Comfort’s witnessing videos only amount to about 15 minutes in this 50-minute production, but they are the crux around which the whole film revolves. In the dramatic sections we get to see how “everyman” Peter ends up putting into practice what he has learned. It’s believable enough that most viewers will be able to imagine themselves in Peter’s shoes and learn right along with him what it means to speak the truth in love. We can’t stay silent.



## The Caine Mutiny

war  
124 MIN / 1954  
**RATING: 7/10**

When a Naval captain seems unstable, his first officer is forced to relieve him of duty... and gets charged with mutiny. This is a courtroom drama, with Humphrey Bogart starring as the captain.



## Courageous

SPORTS  
129 MIN / 2011  
RATING: 7/10

The moral of this story is that fathers are vital to their kids, and consequently to the whole country. We follow five fathers, four of them police officers, only one of which seems to be doing a great job as a dad. Another, Adam Mitchell, will seem quite familiar to most of us – he isn't a bad father; he just isn't as good as he could be. Or to put it in his own words, "I'm doing about half of what I should be." The comedy and action make this a film that most of the family would enjoy, however there is one tragic event that makes this too emotional for children, and might make it quite unpleasant for some parents too. Without giving too much away, one of the five families is struck by tragedy, which is what gets that father to reassess just what he's doing as a dad. It is a necessary plot element, but it turns this from a start-to-finish feel-good movie to one that will take viewers through the full range of emotions.



## Extraordinary

SPORTS  
86 MIN / 2017  
RATING: 6/10 – FREE

If you're looking for a quiet Hallmark-ish film to watch with your spouse, the two of you all snuggled up on the couch, this might fill the bill. *Extraordinary* is based on the real-life story of Liberty University professor and ultra-marathon runner David Horton, who runs race not just hours long, but weeks long. That's meant he's left the homefront to be managed by his wife on her own, time after time. And she might well have had enough! Overall, *Extraordinary* is a lightweight comedic drama about a doofus husband who takes a while to get his priorities right but who figures it out in time for a happy ending for all. That's all it is, and on some evenings that's really all we're looking for.



## Freedom

HISTORICAL DRAMA  
94 MIN / 2014  
RATING: 7/10

*Freedom* is really two stories in one, the first loosely based on the life of former slave John Newton, the author of the hymn "Amazing Grace." The second story takes place 100 years later, and is a fictional account of a family of slaves fleeing Virginia via the Underground Railroad. Cuba Gooding Jr. stars as the father, Samuel. It's almost a musical, with Newton's "Amazing Grace" the centerpiece to the story. But most of the songs have a natural fit: characters sing because they are comforting someone, or as part of a performance, or they sing to pass the time. But whatever the reason they are singing, the music is very good! The one concern is that *Freedom* received an R rating for the violence that's done to the slaves. While many of the blows happen just offscreen, communicated more by sound than by visuals, it can be brutal. That makes this best suited for older teens and parents.



## The Hobbit Trilogy

FANTASY  
474 MINUTES / 2012-2014  
RATING: 8/10

Bilbo Baggins was quite content putting around his garden, sitting in his armchair, and reading his books – he wasn't looking for adventure. But then a tall wizard and a dozen mid-sized dwarves asked this small hobbit to come help them battle a huge dragon. It was the sort of offer any respectable hobbit would refuse...and Bilbo did.

"An adventure?... Nasty, disturbing, uncomfortable things. Make you late for dinner.... We do not want any adventures here, thank you!"

But something was stirring inside this quiet soul...might he be an adventurous sort after all? The next day Bilbo surprises even himself by taking the dwarves up



on their offer. So off he goes, on a long journey to the Lonely Mountain where the fearsome dragon Smaug guards his stolen horde of treasure. On the way the company meets trolls, giants, horse-sized spiders, orcs – lots and lots of orcs! – and a kingdom's worth of elves. But why did they want this little hobbit to come with? The dwarves don't know; they agreed because the wizard, Gandalf, insisted. And Gandalf isn't entirely sure himself. The is the best explanation he can offer:

"I don't know. Saruman [another wizard] believes it is only great power that can hold evil in check, but that is not what I have found. I've found it is the small things; everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keeps the darkness at bay... simple acts of kindness, and love. Why Bilbo Baggins? Perhaps it is because I am afraid... and he gives me courage."

This is based on a wonderful J.R.R. Tolkien's children's novel of the same name, but his one book has been stretched into three lengthy movies, and all that extra padding is generally unnecessary comic gore. So, these are good films that could have been a lot better if they'd been shorter. If you have the choice, watch the shorter "theatrical editions" rather than the even more bloated "extended editions."

## I Can Only Imagine

MUSICAL  
110 MIN / 2018  
RATING: 8/10

This is the life story of *MercyMe* singer Bart Millard, or, more specifically, it's the story of what drove him to write what might be the most popular Christian song of the modern era, *I Can Only Imagine*. The story isn't as much on Bart's transformation from troubled kid to successful singer, as it is about God transforming his abusive father. While that abuse is most offscreen, there are a few brief moments onscreen, all the more scary because of how unexpected they are. While the father's transformation





is the central story, added in the mix is the sweet but certainly not simple story of Bart and his childhood sweetheart. A wonderful film about how God can and has turned evil to good.

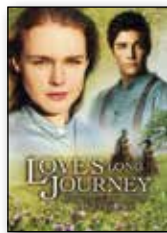
## Love's Long Journey

DRAMA / FAMILY

88 MIN / 2005

**RATING: 7/10**

Missie LaHaye isn't quite the perfect wife – she's an impossibly bad cook – but she is good with a gun, and in the Wild West that's far more important. The story begins with Missie and her husband Willie heading out west to start their own ranch, far from their family, and far from anyone they can count on. But even in the Wild West friends can be had – Willie hires a group of castoff ranch hands that no one else wants, and Missie befriends her Indian neighbor, creating a community out of this group of outsiders. And when Missie becomes pregnant, and bandits come looking for their savings, it is these friends that Missie and Willie will have to rely on. There are two more films in this series, all based on novels by Christian writer Janette Oke, but the others – *Love Comes Softly* and *Love's Enduring Promise* – each include an instance of misuse, or at the very least, questionable use of God's name. Fortunately, you don't have to view the other two to enjoy *Love's Long Journey*.



## The Lord of the Rings Trilogy

FANTASY

558 MINUTES / 2001-2003

**RATING: 10/10**

A band of brothers, dwarf, elf, human, hobbit, and wizard, set out to destroy a weapon so powerful it can never be allowed to fall into wicked, or even weak, hands. This ring of power can only be destroyed in the heat of the volcano that forged it, and to get there



the band will have to brave orcs and other creatures desperate to stop them and seize the ring for their dark master. Battle scenes and a sweeping orchestral score make this far too tense for children. But for adults, this is one of the best adventures ever written getting the best cinematic adaptation of all time.

## Like Dandelion Dust

DRAMA / CHRISTIAN

104 MIN / 2009

**RATING: 8/10**

Two families against each other for the custody of Joey, a six-year-old boy they both claim as their own. The Porters are a troubled couple – in the film's opening scenes we see a drunk Rip Porter being taken to jail for beating his wife Wendy. The Campbells couldn't be more different – Jack and Molly have the big house, the sailing yacht and the happy family life. And they have Joey. But the Porters are Joey's biological parents. So who gets to keep him? This is based on a Karen Kingsbury book of the same name.



## Seasons of the Heart

DRAMA / TEARJERKER

99 MIN / 2003

**RATING: 8/10**

On the trek west to settle their own section of the American plains, Jed and Martha lose their two young daughters to cholera. Martha is inconsolable, and blames God for their deaths. But when she is left in charge of an awkward orphan boy who still trusts God, despite losing even more than Martha, her cold heart begins to thaw.



## The Second Chance

DRAMA / CHRISTIAN

102 MIN / 2006

**RATING: 7/10**

Michael W. Smith stars as the pastor of a rich comfortable congregation, but takes an internship of sorts at an



inner city church that seems almost like it's in another world. Well-to-do pastor getting tutored and mentored by inner city pastor leads to inevitable conflict, as the two try to unite in what they both share – their love for the Lord and His sheep.

## The Song

DRAMA / CHRISTIAN

116 MIN / 2014

**RATING 9/10**

This is based on, but does not pretend to be, the story of King David and Solomon. The setting is, instead, Nashville, with Jed King an aspiring country singer, who hasn't yet measured up to the status of his superstar father. But he also hasn't fallen into any of his excesses either. When he meets Rose, the manager of a winery, he writes a special song for her that turns into his first major hit. From there we see him rise to spectacular heights. Like Solomon before him, he has it all. And like Solomon (and his superstar father) before him, he falls to the temptress, in his case the lead singer of his opening act. But it doesn't end there – repentance is possible! Some films are gritty for the sake of being gritty. This is gritty for the sake of being true. But it is also funny, romantic, thought-provoking, and toe-taping for the same reason: because that's what life is like too.



## To Save a Life

COMING OF AGE / CHRISTIAN

120 MIN / 2010

**RATING: 8/10**

*To Save A Life* is about teen suicide... and also premarital sex, abortion, underage drinking, cutting, bullying, divorce, divorce's impact on children, adultery, drug use, gossip, and Christian hypocrisy. It's also about being willing to stick out instead of fit in, being willing to reach out, to walk our



talk, to take responsibility for our sins, to be willing to forgive, and to take God and what He says in his Word seriously. High school senior Jake Taylor is the star guard on the school's basketball team and his girlfriend is the prettiest girl in school. Roger Dawson is on the other end of the social spectrum. In despair, he walks into school and pulls out a gun in a crowded hallway. As he swings the gun barrel towards his own head, only one student speaks up – Jake – but it's too late. Roger kills himself. That's how the film begins, and the rest is about how Jake reacts to Roger's suicide. The two of them used to be friends but Jake had ditched Roger after Jake got in with the popular kids. Roger needed a friend. Jake was too busy pursuing the "high school dream" to care. Guilt-ridden, Jake first turns to alcohol, and then to sex to try to forget. But those are only short-term diversions. Eventually, he ends up in a nearby church, attending the youth service. But here, too, he isn't finding what he hoped. He knows many of these same church kids are part of the same party scene he's running from. In disgust, he shouts out a challenge to the group: "What is the use of all this if you aren't going to let it change you?" Jake's angry challenge stirs things up and some of the Christian kids start meeting for lunch at school and start reaching out to others on the outside to come join them. They start to befriend the friendless. It's a good film, but the subject matter means there's lots of cautions to consider here, so be sure to check out the full review online.

### The Ultimate Gift

ROMANCE / CHRISTIAN  
114 MIN / 2006  
RATING: 7/10

Jason, a spoilt rich kid is given an inheritance by his billionaire grandfather, but it comes with conditions. To get the money Jason has to complete 12 separate tasks, all of which are intended to humble and shape him. It's a fun film, with a grandfather handing out tough love from beyond the grave in the hopes he can still teach and

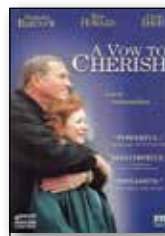


help his aimless grandson. A sequel, *The Ultimate Life*, is only middling.

### A Vow to Cherish

ROMANCE / DRAMA  
84 MIN / 1999  
RATING: 7/10

*A Vow to Cherish* is an explicitly Arminian film, with characters making "bargains" with God that if He'll be their God, they will give themselves to Him. (When we give all we are and everything we have to God, are we giving Him anything He doesn't already own? It hardly seems that we are in a position to "bargain" with God.) It makes the list anyway because of a very different theological lesson in the film – it delves into what happens when a loved one gets sick. When his son gets deathly ill, John prays and believes his prayer is answered when the child recovers. But when his young wife is suddenly and swiftly struck with Alzheimer's and soon cannot even recognize him, does it mean that God is no longer listening to John's prayers? And what exactly does it mean to vow to be with someone "until death do you part" in health, and in sickness?



### Woodlawn

SPORTS / HISTORICAL  
123 MIN / 2015  
RATING: 8/10

When a school's football program is forced to integrate – black and white players are forced to be teammates – tensions are high and a riot gets started. With nothing left to lose, the coach lets a chaplain speak to his team, and that chaplain then talk to them about playing to God's glory. This is based on true events, might be my wife's favorite movie, and has some good football action to make a good film great.



## THE BEST FILMS YOU HAVEN'T SEEN



These are all great films but which, for whatever reason, aren't as popular as they should be. Some were popular, but aren't well known today, while others are hidden gems still waiting to be discovered.

10. **The Sign of Zorro** (1958)  
Robin Hood but in the old West, with all sorts of twists
9. **Sgt. Stubby: an unlikely hero** (2018)  
Mostly true story of a great dog in World War 1
8. **Swiss Family Robinson** (1960)  
Family stranded on an island rides ostriches and fights pirates!
7. **Pollyanna** (2003)  
Best cinematic version of this classic tale (better than the Disney one)
6. **Woodlawn** (2017)  
Mostly true story of the forced integration of a public school's football team
5. **Unitards** (2011)  
High school as we wish it had been!
4. **C.S. Lewis: The most reluctant convert** (2021)  
No action but great dialogue – if you love Lewis's nonfiction, you'll love this.
3. **The Song** (2014)  
Fantastic script + great singing + above average acting = best Christian film ever?
2. **Casablanca** (1943)  
Self-sacrificial love, redemption, and fighting Nazis – what more could you want?
1. **Pride and Prejudice** (2003)  
The only version with fist fights and a car chase!

# ▶ WAR FILMS

The Second World War might have been the first major conflict in which film could play a role, presenting stories intended to encourage those on the frontlines and at home. The most inspiring World War Two films show ordinary, average people doing extraordinary, heroic things (many of whom were our parents, grandparents or great grandparents, hiding Jews or otherwise put themselves at risk simply because they knew it had to be done). Many of the best World War II films were made during the war – they have a completely different feel, because no one at the time knew what the war's outcome would be!

## Bataan

ACTION / DRAMA  
114 MIN / 1943  
RATING: 8/10

We all know how WWII ended, but when this film was made victory hardly seemed certain. Things were particularly worrisome in the Philippines, where the Japanese had the Americans on the run. As *Bataan* begins, 13 soldiers volunteer to hold off the Japanese as the rest of the American army retreats to safety. Their rearguard action is to blow up a vital bridge, needed by the Japanese to convey their troops, and to blow it up again and again when the Japanese try to rebuild it. But how long can 13 troops stand strong against an entire army? How long can they keep fighting? At times this is a pretty brutal film, but it shows the courage of men who kept on fighting even when, at that time, all seemed hopeless. An inspiring message for our time too.



## Decision Before Dawn

DRAMA  
119 MIN / 1951  
RATING: 7/10

As the war draws to a close, the Allies start using German prisoners as spies against the Nazis. But once the prisoners are free, where will their loyalties actually lie? This is a very different look at World War II.



## Desperate Journey

ACTION / COMEDY  
107 MIN / 1942  
RATING: 7/10

Ronald Reagan and Errol Flynn are two members of an Allied bombing crew assigned a near-impossible mission over Nazi Germany. When their plane is shot down, they set out to make it home again....and to do as much damage to the Nazis as they can along the way. Their desperate journey has plenty of explosions, fistcuffs, aerial shootouts, guns blazing, and, at one point, Errol Flynn diving through a window to tackle two Nazi guards at once. There are laughs too, especially when the crew has the chutzpah to steal a ride on Nazi leader Hermann Göring's private train car. *Desperate Journey* is jingoistic, and at times not so realistic (ie. the real Nazis were smarter than movie Nazis) but it has an authenticity to it that comes of being made during World War II. If you enjoy it, you may also like Errol Flynn in *Edge of Darkness* (1943).



## Destination Tokyo

DRAMA / ACTION  
135 MIN / 1944  
RATING: 8/10 O

Tight quarters and a seemingly impossible mission – infiltrating Tokyo harbor – add to the tension in this



gem of a submarine flick. Though this is an action-packed movie, it is the crewmen's interactions that really make this film, particularly an ongoing discussion between a married, faithful husband and a girl-in-every-port bounder. If you enjoy this undersea adventure, you may also appreciate *Run Silent, Run Deep* (1958).

## Flying Tigers

DRAMA / ACTION  
104 MIN / 1942  
RATING: 7/10

On January 3, 1942, just one month after Japan's sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, a group of three American fliers staged a daring attack on a Japanese base in Thailand. The three were not members of the US military, but were, instead, part of the American Volunteer Group (AVG) – they were *civilians* hired by the US government. The AVG was going to be an unofficial group that could help the Chinese fight the Japanese, even as the US remained officially neutral. But delays in the group's initial organization meant they only saw action after war had been declared.

*Flying Tigers* is about the 1st AVG. As movies do, there are some liberties taken with the facts. In the film version Capt. Jim Gordon (John Wayne) and the 1st AVG have been conducting attacks on the Japanese long before his country's official entry into the war. What isn't a liberty is how successful the Flying Tigers are shown to be: the 1st AVG was constantly, and often massively, outnumbered, and yet never lost an air battle. Still, as the fighting continues, the casualties do come, and Capt. Gordon has to take whatever pilots he can find, even if some of them are troublemakers. This film has a message and it's the same one that the troublemakers need to learn: to win this war that independent streak that's so much a part of the American make-up will need to be restrained. The biggest caution would concern the portrayal of the Chinese and Japanese, who come off as a little bit silly or simple. That can be credited in part to the language barrier – anyone speaking a language they only partially know is going to sound a





little simple. But there's also likely an element of racism here, which parents might want to point out to their kids.

## Foreign Correspondent

THRILLER / MYSTERY

120 MIN / 1940

RATING: 7/10 O

In 1939 rumors of war were constant but real news, the real facts, were hard to uncover. When American journalist Johnny Jones is sent to report on Europe's increasingly desperate peace efforts he discovers instead a spy ring using peace conferences as a cover for their activities. This is Alfred Hitchcock's take on the months before World War II. A bonus for readers of Dutch descent – much of the action takes place in and around windmills!



## Objective Burma!

DRAMA / ACTION

142 MIN / 1945

RATING: 7/10 O

Before a paratroop based invasion of Burma can begin, a Japanese radar station must be destroyed. Capt. Nelson (Errol Flynn) and his small band complete the job, but are then stranded in enemy territory far from help and safety. Real war footage is interspersed, including amazing shots of landing gliders and thousands of paratroopers floating down to earth.



## Sahara

DRAMA

98 MIN / 1943

RATING: 7/10 O

Tanks need gas and people need water, and American tank commander Joe Gunn (Humphrey Bogart) needs both. After a skirmish in the North African desert Gunn and his crew become separated from their unit and head off into the sand hoping to find either their comrades or their allies, or water. Along the way they pick up a motley mix of allied soldiers and Axis prisoners and it becomes



clear that without water none of them will last much longer. But a German motorized column also wants water, so when Gunn beats them to the only local source, he has to fight to keep it – him, his crew, and a few Allied soldiers versus an entire German column!

## Sands of Iwo Jima

DRAMA

100 MIN / 1949

RATING: 7/10

John Wayne stars in this loosely accurate recounting of the lead up to, and battle for Iwo Jima during World War II. Wayne plays Marine Sgt. John Stryker, and because it's Wayne you know Stryker is going to be a hard-nosed leader of his men. But as unpopular as his drill sergeant routine makes him, Stryker knows what his men are going to face in combat, so he wants to get them as tough as they can be so they have the very best chance of making it back alive. And when the shells start exploding, his men start to understand why he was so tough on them. This isn't a film where the main character is set up as a hero. This was purposely a film about flawed men who still managed to band together to do what needed to be done. So Stryker has an ex-wife and drinks too much. Another squad member made a thoughtless decision that got two friends killed. And a third soldier who felt overshadowed by his general father doesn't want to be anything like him. But it was troubled and imperfect men like these that also fought together and often died together to win this war.



## The Silver Fleet

DRAMA

88 MIN / 1943

RATING: 7/10

This almost unknown World War II film is told from the Dutch perspective. As the German occupation of the Netherlands begins the Nazis ask Dutchman Jaap van Leyden whether he would like to continue on in his job as shipyard manager. They want him to complete work on two half-built submarines that were





# COVENANT IS SEEKING

A Principal,  
High school  
Teachers, and  
Elementary  
Teachers

**Neerlandia Covenant  
Canadian Reformed  
School is looking to hire  
staff for the 2022/2023  
school year.**

We encourage energetic, qualified (or soon-to-be qualified) educators, committed to Reformed Christian education, to apply. All interested individuals can apply by submitting a resume, a statement of faith, a philosophy of education, and references. We would love to arrange for you to visit and would be more than happy to provide flights and accommodations to make this possible!

*If you would like further  
information please contact  
Ms Jenn Harink at  
780-674-4774 (school) or  
principal@covenantschool.ca*



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IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL  
IS SEARCHING FOR OUR NEXT

## PRINCIPAL

Our current principal, Mr. Mark den Hollander, will be joining the faculty of Covenant Reformed Teachers College in Hamilton, ON this coming fall. Consequently, we are now seeking applicants for the role of principal at our school.

This position would provide the opportunity to:

- serve as a full-time principal with negotiable administration to teaching ratio
- lead a staff of 27 (16 teachers, 10 EAs, 1 secretary)
- provide direction for a covenantal school program with 263 K-12 students
- work alongside an experienced, capable vice-principal
- live in beautiful Winnipeg, Manitoba

If you, or someone you know, may be interested in this position, please contact one of:

**Mr. Peter deBoer** | Board Chair  
pdeboerprivate@gmail.com  
204-227-7481 (SMS, Messages, Signal)

**Mr. Dave Gortemaker** | Board Vice  
dave@tandeg.ca  
204-333-5501 (SMS, Messages, Signal)

PHONE (204) 661-8937 WEB [Immanuelchristian.ca](http://Immanuelchristian.ca)

originally intended for the Dutch navy. When he decides to accept the position both his workers and his wife question his patriotism – why was he willing to be a collaborator? But while van Leyden may not have the courage to stand up to the Nazis, someone else does. The workmen have started receiving anonymous messages outlining a daring sabotage plan. The notes are all signed "Piet Hein," a historical Dutch hero from the 17th century, and stirred by the memory of Hein's great deeds done long ago, and their own strong love of country, the workmen are happy to help this mysterious figure. The Nazis are at times more buffoonish than threatening, but overall the acting is quite good. *The Silver Fleet* is a solid World War film that I would recommend to any 1940s film enthusiast, as well as anyone who wants to learn more about World War II from the Dutch perspective.

### They Were Expendable

DRAMA  
135 MIN / 1945  
RATING: 7/10



John Wayne stars as one of the WWII naval officers intent on proving that small, fast "PT boats" (basically motor boats) could be an effective fighting force. While many details are fudged, the overall initiative – to set wood-hulled PT boats up against much bigger ships – is a part of history. A warning that this does not have the typical happy ending of most films.

### To Be Or Not To Be

COMEDY / SHAKESPEAREAN  
99 MIN / 1942  
RATING: 8/10



A Shakespearean acting troupe in Warsaw gets drawn into the Resistance when the Nazis invade Poland in 1939. It's as much a comedy as it is a drama.

### Twelve O'clock High

DRAMA  
132 MIN / 1949  
RATING: 8/10



Americans entered WWII with a small force spread thin, so they needed a "maximal effort" from the men they did have to cover the gap until more men and more materials could be had. But what exactly is a "maximal effort" and how far and how hard can a man be pushed before he crumbles under the strain? When the commander of the 918 Bomber Squadron is pushed past the breaking point, General Frank Savage takes over. His job is to transform the struggling squadron back into an effective fighting force. But how long can he endure the strain of command, losing men almost every mission, before he too crumbles?

Others war films on this list include: *Sgt Stubby* (page 26), *Belle and Sebastian* (page 57), *Sea Hawk* (page 34).

**Ponoka Christian School**  
is accepting applications for

### ELEMENTARY and JUNIOR HIGH TEACHING POSITIONS

for the 2022-2023 school year.

Candidates must be a committed Christian and an Alberta certified teacher (or eligible) and dedicated to teaching from a Christian perspective.

Include the following in your application:

1. Cover letter
2. Current resume (including two professional references and one pastoral reference)
3. Statement of Faith (This should outline your faith journey)

*Closing Date:* When the positions are filled. Only applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.

Please forward all correspondence to **office@ponokachristianschool.com** attention: **Robert Morris, Principal**

For more information about Ponoka Christian School please visit [www.ponokachristianschool.com](http://www.ponokachristianschool.com)



# ▶ FOREIGN FILMS

Part of the pleasure of watching films set in foreign locales is that they provide a peek into unfamiliar cultures. Most of us will never be able to visit Mongolia, or Iran or China, but we can get an insight into the cultural life of those communities by watching their films.

## Antboy

DANISH / SUPER HERO  
77 MIN / 2013  
**RATING: 7/10** – FREE

Pelle is a 12-year-old boy who goes entirely unnoticed at his school...until he gets bit by a tiny Hercules ant and gains the proportionate strength of an ant. Of course, you can't have a superhero movie without a supervillain, and it's the scariness of Antboy's nemesis, the adult "Flea," rather than any of the comic book type violence, that would make this film too much for young children. Common to superhero movies, there is also a damsel in distress. Pelle's 6th Grade crush, Amanda, gets kidnapped by the Flea and has to wait patiently for rescue. This is a movie about a quiet boy who sees his superpowers as a chance to be popular but realizes that friendship is quite a different and better thing. Antboy was filmed in Danish, but its English dubbing is such that kids might not even notice (even as parents most certainly will). It owns its cheesiness, making it silly fun for families that can deal with the peril and tension. Recommended for 11 and up.



## Belle and Sebastian

FRENCH / FAMILY  
99 MIN / 2013  
**RATING: 7/10**

Sebastian is orphaned seven-year-old boy living in the French Alps with his adoptive grandfather. It is 1943, and the German Nazis have taken over the nearby village, and are trying to stop the escape path Jews have been taking through the Alps to Switzerland. There is also a killer beast roaming the mountain pastures, killing the sheep, and Sebastian's grandfather is eager to kill it. The beast turns out to be Belle, a gorgeous white dog that Sebastian befriends, but then has to hide away. This is wonderful film, but the way it has been dubbed into English really interferes with the enjoyment. If you can find it in the original French, and read the subtitles instead, that is the way to go!



## Children of Heaven

IRANIAN / DRAMA  
88 MIN / 1997  
**RATING: 7/10** O

When her brother loses a little girl's shoes, the two siblings decide to share his pair of runners, trading off in a mad rush each day so she can use them in her morning school and he can use them in the afternoon when his classes begin. All this frantic scurrying turns the boy into a superb long distant runner, and he puts his talents to work when he finds out that second prize in a long-distance race is a new pair of runners! This is the first Iranian film to be nominated for the Best Foreign Film Oscar. However, its slow start and very abrupt ending may put off those

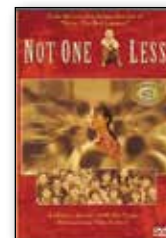


not used to foreign films. Others will find it an intriguing slice of Iranian life.

## Not One Less

CHINESE / DRAMA  
106 MIN / 2000  
**RATING: 7/10**

The setting is a small Chinese village. The dilemma: a 13-year-old girl is called in to act as a substitute teacher for a month, and told that she has to make sure she has "not one less" student by month's end. So when one of the boys in her class heads off to the big city to find a job, she takes off after him. This is half documentary, half drama, with the students and teacher played by non-professional actors of the same name and occupation (a little like what happened in *Duck Dynasty*). As with many a foreign film, this requires at least a little patience at the start, but it does pay off.



## The Story of the Weeping Camel

MONGOLIAN / DRAMA  
87 MIN / 2003  
**RATING: 7/10**

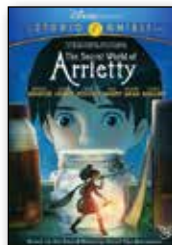
This is as much drama as documentary because, as film critic Roger Ebert described it, "It uses real people in real places and essentially has them play themselves in a story inspired by their lives. That makes it a 'narrative documentary,' according to the filmmakers." What we get is a peek inside a Mongolian nomad family during their camel birthing season. The camel of the title takes three days to give birth and then refuses to suckle her calf. It will die unless she changes her mind so two young brothers go off on a 50-kilometer journey to bring back a musician from the closest village. They hope his music will sooth the mother camel into accepting her offspring. While *Weeping Camel* is too slow for children, and probably most adults, those interested in an up-close look at a completely different culture might find this fascinating.



## The Secret World of Arrietty

JAPANESE / ANIMATED  
95 MIN / 2010  
**RATING: 8/10**

This is actually a British story, *The Borrowers*, as told by Japanese animators and placed in a Japanese setting. The "Borrowers" are tiny little people – just inches tall – who secretly live in our homes, and live off of the cast offs and bits of food that they "borrow" from us big folks.





# Second-hand Scriptures

## WHY WE DON'T HAVE BIBLICAL EPICS ON OUR LIST

by Jon Dykstra

The “telephone game” goes by many different names but it’s always played the same way. A number of children sit in a circle and the “operator” starts things off by whispering some phrase or sentence to his neighbor. The neighbor then whispers the message to the next child, trying to pass it on as accurately as she can. By the time the message makes its way around the circle to the very last child it will bear little resemblance to the original: “I’ve got a pair of red pants” somehow turns into “Ivy’s got a pail of dead ants!” It’s good silly fun but the game also shows how easily information can become corrupted by being relayed

Biblically-based movies face this same problem. It’s simply inevitable that the message we see on the screen won’t be the same as the one we find in the Bible – each step along the way, as it passes from Scripture to screenwriter this is an opportunity for corruptions to intrude, whether accidentally, or by deliberate choices. While writing about biblical stage productions, Rev. John van Popta, highlighted the problem they share with biblical movies:

The data in the Bible is usually not enough to fill out the dialogue. ....a drama based on the Bible, will have a script which includes all kinds of extra material, actions and characters, as well as inaccuracies and misrepresentations.

Consider also that a great deal of what we say is communicated by our body language. God chose not to use this medium, relying instead on the written word. So all the choices made by the director and actors in how they sit, stand,

and interact – will they have Jesus stand boldly, with hands on his hips, or meekly seated, staring down at the ground? – are going to be extra-biblical additions that depart from the text.

### *Passion of the Christ*

The changes can be subtle and yet significant. Consider *The Passion of the Christ*, likely the biggest Christian film of all time. At the time it came out Christine Farenhorst noted how the film obscured that:

“...the greatest torment that Christ experienced on the cross was not caused by the nails driven into His flesh, but in His being made ‘sin for us’ and vicariously suffering the righteous punishment of the Father in our place. Even the worst physical torments inflicted by the Sanhedrin and the Romans upon Jesus were nothing by comparison to the anguish of having the sins of all the elect imputed to Him and making full satisfaction for them. Satisfying the justice of the Romans on a cross was comparatively easy. Thousands of condemned men and women, including Spartacus and several of the Apostles did that. But only Christ could satisfy the justice of God.”

### *The Chosen*

In the recent *The Chosen* TV series, women end up in more prominent roles than they have in the Scriptures, with



Charlton Heston playing Moses in Cecil B. DeMille’s 1956 film, “The Ten Commandments.”

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the most notable being the healing of the paralyzed man of Luke 5:17-25. It was men that arranged for their friend to be lowered through the ceiling to be healed by Jesus. In this series the writers have inserted two women, Tamar and Mary Magdalene, and credited the idea to them. Why this rewrite? The spirit of our age says that women derive their value, not from being made in the Image of God, but by doing and being able to do whatever men can do. This seems in keeping with that spirit.

It’s also worth noting that in focusing more on the disciples and followers, *The Chosen* has made Jesus less central, and more of a supportive character.

## VeggieTales

The changes can also be glaring. When the folks at Big Idea Productions decided to do a version of the Fall of Jericho using animated talking vegetables – a “VeggieTale” – the Israelites in their story grumbled that they felt too silly to march around the walls of the city. But in Joshua 6 we read that this is one of the only times Israel *didn’t* complain or question God. Big Idea’s *Josh and the Big Wall* is a video made by sincere Christians, for other Christians, that Christian children are likely to watch again and again, and yet this video departs sharply from the Scripture it claims to portray.

In other VeggieTale biblical epics, the alterations are more understandable, though no less problematic. Their account of Daniel in the lions’ den had this prophet emerges unscathed, and the men who plotted against him run away. In reality, these men were thrown into the den, and,

“before they reached the floor of the den the lions overpowered them and crushed their bones” (Dan 6:24).

Not only were these plotters punished in this startling fashion, even their wives and children were consumed by the lions. In a cartoon intended for kids it might seem sensible to make this G-rated substitution for what would otherwise be an R-rated event. But that the real events would be unsuitable for a children’s cartoon isn’t a reason to recast reality in a “nicer” light – it’s a reason not to make a cartoon about that reality. And this isn’t the only time *VeggieTales* has felt free to insert a “nicer” endings to a biblical tale. In *Esther, the Girl Who Became Queen*, Haman plots against the Jews but instead of trying to kill them he attempts to banish them to the “Island of Perpetual Tickling.”

Are nicer endings really such a problem?

Well, just consider how many Christians would be shocked to read an Old Testament passage in which God demands the slaughter of women and chil-

dren. In a quest to embrace the God of love many Christians prefer to forget that He also demands justice and can be wrathful as well.

By inserting these “nicer” endings, VeggieTales actually hide the true character of God from children. And since children are likely to view these videos repeatedly, and read the corresponding Bible passages infrequently, that is real damage being done.

Even when the Veggie version is fairly faithful – as happens in *Dave and the Giant Pickle* – it’s still going to be comical – here we have a cute David, played by



who take away will have their part in the Tree of Life taken away – would also seem to encourage Christians to err on the side of caution.

Second, biblical dramas have a long history of being used to teach an illiterate laity. But the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 35 applies the Second Commandment (Ex. 20:4-5, Deut. 5:8-9) as forbidding the use of images to teach God’s people:

... we should not be wiser than God. He wants his people to be taught not by means of dumb images but by the living preaching of his Word.

Thus the Reformation brought with it a push for literacy. Instead of a “telephone game” with the message filtered through actors and scriptwriters, literacy allowed God’s children to receive His Word directly. Why go back?

*What I’ve raised here are practical objections to biblical epics – that they so often garble the message.*

Junior Asparagus. How often is cute and comical going to be a good match for the tone of the biblical text?

## CONCLUSION

What I’ve raised here are practical objections to biblical epics – that they so often garble the message. But what if someone did a much better, more careful job? Then would it be a problem? Let me answer by offering two texts to consider.

First, Revelation 22:18-19 concludes with a warning against making additions or subtractions to “the words of the prophecy of this book...” Is this referring only to Revelation, or the whole of the Bible? However you understand it, wouldn’t the principle – to have great respect for the words God has delivered – have application to the whole of the Bible? And the consequences listed – that those who make additions will have the plagues added to them, and those

Now, biblically-based movies probably won’t do much damage to biblically literate Christians; they’ll certainly see through the glaring errors, and may well catch most of the subtle miscommunications as well.

But these films aren’t really made for biblically literate Christians. Isn’t the reason that these films are so popular because they make Christians feel as if we are learning as we’re watching? How many will view the movie and then go straight to Scripture and read the passage? Don’t we watch the movie *instead* of reading the passage? Or maybe we watch it to receive what *isn’t in the passage* – the kind look on Jesus’ face, or the heartwarming interactions between the other characters. Then instead of the real deal, instead of direct communication with God through his Word, we end up settling for the garbled communication we get via the screen’s second-hand Scripture. **RP**

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