

In our Reel Life program, we use film and television clips for several specific and intentional purposes. The ancient Hebrews told patriarchal stories. Jesus told parables. The medieval church staged morality plays. And Hollywood has become our culture's premiere storyteller. Stories, whether read, recited, or enacted, have always gripped people's imaginations and emotions. For good or for bad, movies are today's parables.

Our decision to use film and television clips in our program stems from this pattern, but also because many students today are visual learners. Film clips grab our students' attention and can easily be responded to. We also know that today's middle school student is surrounded by visual media; therefore, it is effective to use this tool to point to Scriptural truth.

We also understand that most films and television shows do not stem from a biblical worldview and a responsible Christian should use discernment when engaging with it. We also know that you as parents work hard to keep your children's minds pure and often decide for them which parts of the media they can participate with. We encourage such discernment and parental involvement and do not mean to interfere with any such boundaries. However, the media is a gray area in which different students have different boundaries, and sadly some have none at all.

Therefore, we felt it appropriate to inform you on our decision-making process for which media clips we use in Reel Life:

- We chose clips based upon how well they introduce a topic for discussion. It is by no means the final word on the issue, but merely an introduction. Each clip is followed by response from a panel of mature Christians, small group discussion led by our adult leaders, and a final response based upon Scripture.
- Media clips are screened well before they are shown to students for content. They can be thought of as a trailer for a film would be: Suitable for all ages. We would never use a clip containing excessive violence, language, sex or nudity. Some are edited for language or may contain mild language (such as 'suck' or 'shut up').
- That said, we must also state that our use of a clip does not mean that we endorse the film as a whole, other scenes from the film, the lifestyle of the actors, or the worldview of the film. Our intention is to make this clear to the students. We simply feel that that short clip we use is suitable to be viewed and can be used to provoke Godly discussions.
- We understand that the Motion Picture Association of America ([www.mpa.org](http://www.mpa.org)) is responsible for rating films and do not use Scriptural guidelines for doing so. However, we still use their rating system as a guideline for picking our clips. We typically use G or PG films, but also PG-13. Again, we would not endorse these films as a whole, and the individual clip is suitable for a middle school audience.

We do not pick media clips that only adhere to a biblical worldview. Many times we show a clip with a false understanding of a particular topic. It is then exposed for its inaccurate view and students are pointed to a biblical one. Sometimes good theology can be taught by exposing bad theology. This is also important in teaching students how to discern and filter what they see in the media through a biblical perspective.

It is a complicated issue (a G-rating does not ensure an appropriate clip, etc) and we take great care in choosing what is shown to your children. Please know that we love your students and our goal is to challenge and point them to God's Word and not to corrupt or offend them. If you are uncomfortable with anything mentioned here, we encourage you to email Bryan Dyer at the church ([bdyer@ehills.org](mailto:bdyer@ehills.org)).