

Christian movies useful as discipleship and evangelism tool, churchgoers say

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP) – Not only are churchgoers watching Christian movies, but some find them useful as an evangelistic and discipleship tool.

A recent study by Lifeway Research finds 68 percent of American Protestant churchgoers have watched a Christian movie in the last year. Around 4 in 5 (81 percent) say Christian movies are effective evangelism tools.

“The Forge,” the latest film from the Kendrick brothers, releases in theaters nationwide this Friday, Aug. 23. The movie focuses on issues central to evangelism and discipleship. Stephen Kendrick, co-producer of “The Forge,” believes Christian movies can play a role in those fundamental aspects of the Christian walk.

“We live in a visual, video-driven generation. Movies can be great tools to reach people where they are and share biblical truth in the context of an emotional and memorable story,” Kendrick said. “Countless people have come to Christ through watching a Christian movie. The Holy Spirit continues to use art to point to the glory of Christ and the Gospel.”

Evangelism on the big screen

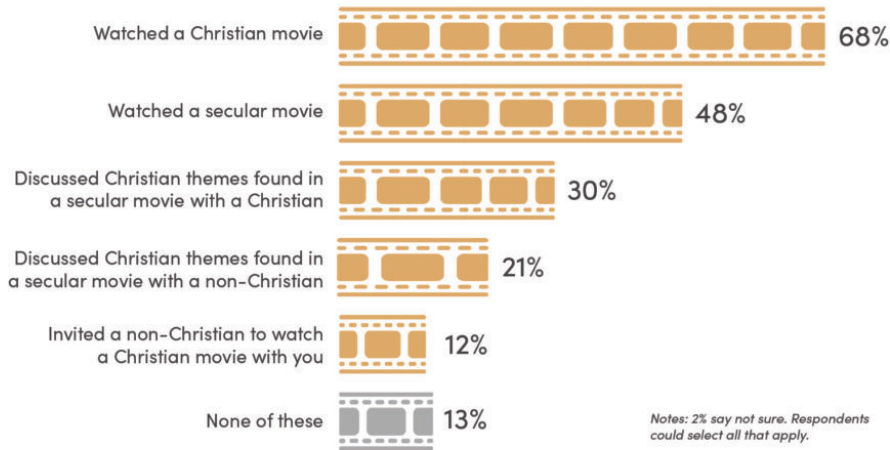
The study asked churchgoers if they agree with the statement, “Christian movies are effective evangelism tools.” Baptist (84 percent) and non-denominational (84 percent) churchgoers are more likely than Lutheran (75 percent) and Presbyterian/Reformed (68 percent) churchgoers to believe Christian movies are effective evangelism tools. Those with evangelical beliefs are also more likely than those without

such beliefs to agree (90 percent v. 71 percent).

Most churchgoers engaged with movies in some way last year

Among U.S. Protestant churchgoers

Which, if any, of the following have you done in the last year?"



Notes: 2% say not sure. Respondents could select all that apply.

Lifeway research

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More than 1 in 10 churchgoers (12 percent) have invited a non-Christian to watch a Christian movie with them in the last year. Younger churchgoers, aged 18-34 (26 percent) and 35-49 (21 percent), are more likely than those 50-64 (8 percent) and 65+ (3 percent) to say they have offered such an invitation. Non-denominational (15 percent), Baptist (14 percent) and Restorationist movement churchgoers (14 percent) are more likely than Lutheran (3 percent) and Presbyterian/Reformed churchgoers (3 percent). White churchgoers (9 percent) are the least likely ethnicity to have invited a non-Christian to a Christian movie.

Additionally, almost 3 in 4 churchgoers (72 percent) say they

intentionally watch movies with Christian messages. Fewer mentioned Christian themes found in a secular movie with a Christian (30 percent) or non-Christian (21 percent).

While more than 2 in 3 churchgoers (68 percent) say they have watched a Christian movie in the past year, less than half (48 percent) say the same about a secular movie – a stat that may be misleading.

“Our intention in asking churchgoers if they watch secular movies was to contrast viewership of movies that are not overtly Christian themed,” McConnell explained. “However, it’s clear some churchgoers may not have been familiar with this use of the term ‘secular’ and others may have thought it was seeking to contrast movies that are overtly anti-Christian.”

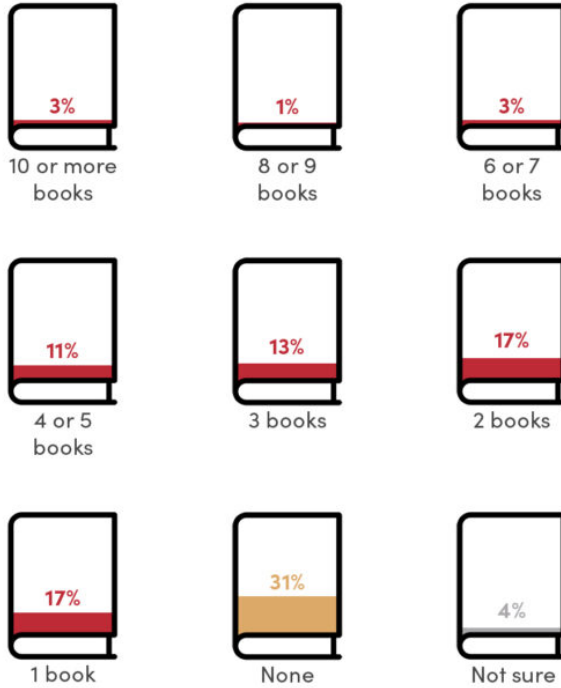
Turning the page on discipleship

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Most churchgoers read fewer than three Christian books last year

Among U.S. Protestant churchgoers

Not including the Bible, how many Christian books have you read in the past year?



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Close to 1 in 6 (17 percent) say they read one Christian book recently. Another 17 percent say they read two this past year. Fewer say they've read three books (13 percent), four or five

(11 percent), six or seven (3 percent), eight or nine (1 percent) or 10 or more (3 percent). Three in 10 (31 percent) admit they haven't read any Christian books in the past year, while 4 percent aren't sure.

Older churchgoers, those aged 65 and older (37 percent), are more likely than those 18-34 (25 percent) and 35-49 (26 percent) to say they haven't read any Christian books in the past year. More than a third of white churchgoers (34 percent) say they haven't read one in the past year, compared to a quarter of African American churchgoers (25 percent). Lutherans (50 percent) are more likely than Presbyterian/Reformed (34 percent), Baptists (26 percent) and non-denominational churchgoers (25 percent) to select "none." Those who attend a worship service one to three times a month (36 percent) are more likely than those who attend four or more times a month (28 percent) to say they haven't read any books in the past year. Additionally, those without evangelical beliefs are more likely than those with evangelical beliefs to have skipped the books recently (38 percent v. 25 percent).

Kendrick believes Christian books can be an excellent follow-up to watching a Christian movie. "After the emotion of a movie ends, a Christian resource can bridge them to what the Word of God instructs about a topic or issue they are facing," he said. "Our hope is that people will see a film and be inspired to dive into a resource that will help them be transformed by the renewing of their minds."

Kendrick said this has happened repeatedly with their previous films. "We praise God that countless marriages were saved through the combination of the movie 'Fireproof' and the follow up book 'The Love Dare.' The movie 'Courageous' inspired men to read 'The Resolution for Men,' and countless prayer ministries have been blessed by the movie 'War Room' and the follow-up resource, 'The Battleplan for Prayer,'" he said. "We believe 'The Forge' movie and its follow-up

resources will become a powerful suite of tools to help local churches more effectively disciple the next generation.”

For more information on the research study, view the complete report and visit LifewayResearch.com. To find resources related to “The Forge,” including specifically curated Bible studies and books, visit Lifeway.com/TheForge.