

Welcome

to the first issue of *Blueprint*, a Bible magazine for teens.

We feel that the Bible is God's blueprint for us. Jesus Christ is the foundation we build on. But we, as teens, have to do the work of building our own unique lives of faith.

Join us as we explore how God makes a difference in our lives, and how He wants us to make a difference in the world.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

—Jeremiah 29:11

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R stands for Re-evaluate

Do movie ratings
really matter?

BY CAROLINE FERDINANDSEN



Oh they're good.

Moviemakers are some of the cleverest psychologists around. "Gee, let's make a movie we know will appeal to young people, but let's pretend it's not designed for them. Let's give it an adult rating of 'R' but market it for teenagers." The not-so-secret code behind an R-rating sends a loud message to its audience: this movie is raw, edgy, adult-themed, or just plain raunchy, but we hope every teenager sneaks into the theater just to see how much. If he's not brave or tricky enough to do that, then later he'll smuggle the DVD, catch it on HBO or Netflix, or borrow it from his buddy's house a few months from now.

Okay. You've heard the rules already. R-rated movies should be off-limits for Christians, but how come? And why do some Christian adults go to see them? These are good questions. But before we answer your good questions, we should ask another good one: Why are you asking? The answer to that question is even more important than the first two. Some teenagers are notoriously eager to find out exactly where the line should be drawn in the sand. The reason? They are all too happy to get as close to that line as possible while still maintaining parents' trust, a rationale to do as they please, or an excuse to give their conscience when it rears up and whispers, *Don't go there*.

That answer is just no good. A better answer to "Why are rated R movies off limits?" might be found in your motives. If your goal is to find a spiritual loophole so you can indulge your own sin nature or fantasy, your motive becomes suspect. If your goal is to feel more normal since you're the only one in school who hasn't seen a particular film, your motive smacks of insecurity or fear. If your goal is to satisfy simple curiosity, your motive sounds pretty naïve.

Let's use an analogy. In professional tennis matches, a tiny sensor pierces the silence when a ball penetrates the line between in and out. Likewise, a movie's R-rating sounds the alarm. Enough said, right? But

human line judges can overturn the call, using judgment, experience, and a great set of eyes to keep the match fair. In the same way, parents can be effective line judges with the kind of experience that might at times override the censor under the right circumstances. *Schindler's List*, *Saving Private Ryan*, or *Braveheart* might be films that have a raw story to tell with truthful and compelling stories about adult issues. Are you ready for that? Maybe. But maybe not.

Admittedly, there are times when a filmmaker has artfully and honestly chosen the imagery and dialogue best suited for his movie's effectiveness. Are teenagers—or adults—the best line judges for that call? I would suggest that the answer is not found in whether you are old or young, but whether you're intimately connected with Jesus Christ.

Ah, now we're onto something. It seems that the Christian's rating system has nothing to do with the movie industry at all. What if we found out that God's standards aren't measured by letters, legal

The Christian's rating system has nothing to do with the movie industry at all.

age—or even the lax standards of some adults? God's standards are measured by sharing the mind of Christ and growing in relationship with Him. Not by an easy checkbox. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you [and your movie watching?], which is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom. 12:2, NLT).

Jesus Christ spoke clearly to people who tried to draw lines in the sand rather than consider the

spiritual implications of their behavior and decisions. In John 7:24, Jesus told the Pharisees to chill when they tried to nail Him to the wall with a legal loophole: “Don’t be nitpickers; use your head—and heart!—to discern what is right, to test what is authentically right” (MSG).

Here are some non-check box questions to help you judge movies:

■ When your friends say, “Hey, c’mon and see a movie with us,” the first question shouldn’t just be, What’s it rated? Even some PG movies might be depressing, crude, insulting, or simply a waste of money. Instead, ask yourself, “What’s in it that is good for me?” Also ask, “Is there stuff that is not good for me?” If the answers to those questions come out okay, then ask:

■ “Why do I want to see it?” Sin, fear, insecurity, or the “curiosity excuse” aren’t the best answers.

■ Christians and non-Christians get their standards from different sources. Should a Christian and a non-Christian have different standards for appropriate movies? What should those be?

■ “Art” does not always mean appropriate. Simply because a film is dubbed artistic doesn’t mean it’s automatically a good choice. Just like there’s no such thing as “tasteful porn” or “beautiful obscenity,” some so-called art films are really just smelly hogs wearing expensive perfume. What is the artist’s stated intention and message of this film? Is it one that should be endorsed?

■ What will be the impact of this movie on your brain and memory? Shocking, graphic, or disgusting scenes can stay in your mind for years. If you’re watching *Hotel Rwanda*, those shocking scenes might spur you on to social justice. If it’s the latest horror flick, those scenes just sit in your head for no good reason.

In short, movies and their ratings can’t be trusted at face value. Many moviemakers are notoriously greedy and famously manipulative. A few try to use their extraordinary talent to speak truth, but most will just suck you in and then pocket the cash. But a committed follower of Christ can begin to trust his spiritual instincts over secular standards. An R rating in most cases is probably non-negotiable—not because we are supposed to follow the world’s rating system, but because all Christ-followers should long for soul nutrition rather than junk food. What should our response be, then? If you’re not sure, then “R” stands for Reconsider, Re-evaluate, or just plain Run. 🚫

MPAA MISRATINGS

The MPAA’s (Motion Picture Association of America) standards are absolutely different from God’s standards. The MPAA is all about quantifying how many swear words are used, or defining levels of nakedness. God’s standards are about watching things that are spiritually uplifting. Let’s look at some MPAA misratings:

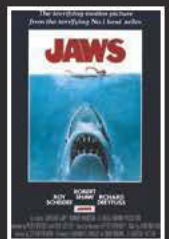
PG? – **Gremlins:** the violence and gore of this movie were directly responsible for the creation of a PG-13 rating. This movie gained infamy for terrifying kids, but kept its PG label even after it spawned a more-mature level of rating.



PG? – **Watership Down:** It’s an animated movie about rabbits! Any animated movies about rabbits should be safe for kids, right? Unfortunately, this was actually a dark satire, with the rabbits slowly being killed off by a variety of enemies.



PG? – **Jaws:** more violent than many R-rated movies, Jaws somehow struck the MPAA as being safe with some parental guidance. Funny, considering the first horrifying death happens before the opening credits even roll.



PG? – **Raiders of the Lost Ark:** Exploding heads, melting faces, bloody fight scenes—what’s not to say that kids under 13 shouldn’t see this movie?



PG? – **Facing the Giants.** Even though there is no swearing, no violence, and no sex—usually the hallmarks of a G-rating—the MPAA rated this Christian family movie at PG, because it talked about faith issues. This frustrated many Christian groups.



the what fors of proverbs

Proverbs 1:1-7

Some books of the Bible give very specific reasons about why they were written. Luke wrote his Gospel so that his friend Theophilus might know with certainty the facts about Jesus (Luke 1:4). John wrote his first epistle so that Christians might know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

Solomon began the Book of Proverbs by telling us why he wrote it. When the Lord told Solomon that he could have anything he wanted, just for the asking, he asked for wisdom. The Book of Proverbs contains much of this wisdom.

▶ Read Proverbs 1:1-6.

List the eight reasons Solomon wrote the Book of Proverbs.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

If by reading the proverbs you gained each of these things, how could you use them?

▶ Read Proverbs 1:7.

Fearing God means respecting His power and control over your life. Why is this kind of respect a good starting point for gaining wisdom?

Why is it foolish to treat wisdom and discipline lightly?

Proverbs 1:1-7

¹The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ²for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight;

³for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; ⁴for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—⁵let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—⁶for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. ⁷The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

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In Proverbs 1:7, fear doesn't mean fright. It means being in awe of who God is and what He is capable of doing. Write down one way God has demonstrated His power in your life sometime in the past week. Praise God for His ability to do anything.

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Learning without any respect for God only results in academic arrogance. When He is ignored, people begin to believe what is false. Praise God today for being the source of all that is true.

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Read Proverbs 13:16. Everyone behaves foolishly sometimes. What was the last foolish thing you did?

What were the consequences? Ask God to help you learn from foolish decisions so that you don't repeat them.

» thurs

It often takes courage to act wisely and to do the right thing. What's the most difficult "right" thing you ever did? Ask God for the same courage when you face those kinds of choices in the future.

» fri

Read Proverbs 10:17. Discipline is as essential to the growing Christian as training is to the committed athlete. What are the best 10 to 15 minutes of your day? Consider giving that time to God by focusing on Him. Ask the Lord to help you be consistent.

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Ideally, everyone should continue to learn throughout their life. Do you remember your perception of God when you were 10? Has it changed? If so, how? Thank God for the spiritual growth you have experienced.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

—Proverbs 1:7

Who Said This?

a "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion."

b "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

c "Before God, we are all equally wise—equally foolish."

d "You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves."

e "By all means marry. If you get a good wife you will become very happy; if you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher—and that is good for any man."

WORD TO THE WISE

Wisdom about Wisdom

How would you fill in the following quotes about wisdom? The original words can be found in small print on the right.

1. The application of knowledge is wisdom. The application of wisdom is _____ . —*The Editor*
2. The wise learn from _____ ; the foolish merely repeat it. —*Michael Novak*
3. The Lord set limits on man's wisdom, but none on his _____. —*Konrad Adenauer, former chancellor of West Germany*
4. Nine-tenths of wisdom is being wise in _____. —*Teddy Roosevelt*
5. The wisdom of this world is _____ in God's sight. —*The apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 3:19*
6. From *The Pilgrim's Regress*:
"And what is this valley called?"
"We call it now simply Wisdom's Valley; but the oldest maps mark it as the Valley of _____ ." —*C. S. Lewis*

SOMEONE WOULD WANT TO QUOTE YOU, WHAT WISE SAYING WOULD YOU GIVE THEM?

Answers: A. Solomon, Proverbs 11:22; B. Benjamin Franklin; C. Albert Einstein; D. Abraham Lincoln; E. Socrates; 1. obedience; 2. tragedy; 3. stupid; 4. time; 5. foolishness; 6. Humiliation.