

“Movie Mania” by Carol Duerksen

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

This session is based on your students seeing two different movies: *Dead Man Walking* and *End of the Spear*. There are several ways you can make sure they see the movies prior to your session together:

- 1 Circulate them among the youth. Encourage them to get together in their own homes and watch the movies over a 1-2 week time frame.
- 2 As a group, watch one per week and spend the third week talking about them.
- 3 Plan a weekend retreat or lock-in to watch both of them and then have the discussion.
- 4 Make copies of the discussion questions
- 5 Bible dictionary and concordance
- 6 Bibles, Pencils and paper
- 8 The background soundtrack for a rap song if you think you have students that will do #2 in the Respond section.

Option: Tell students the theme and ask them to find videos that illustrate the theme of “Loving people that are unlikable.” Then follow one of the above steps.

Dead Man Walking is the true story of a caring nun who receives a desperate letter from a death row inmate trying to find help to avoid execution for murder. Over the course of the time to the convict’s death, the nun begins to show empathy, not only with the pathetic man, but also with the victims and their families. In the end, that nun must decide how she will deal with the paradox of caring for that condemned man while understanding the heinousness of his crimes. The movie is rated R due to a depiction of a rape and murder.

End of the Spear is the true story of a group of Christian missionaries in Ecuador who set out to reach the Wadani tribe (a violent Ecuadorian tribe defined by revenge killing). When the 5 men from this group are speared to death by Mincayani and others in the tribe (who believe all foreigners are cannibals), the wives and children of those men move into the Wadani tribe to teach them about God. Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of violence.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS:

Begin the session by asking everyone to state the “best moment” and “worst moment” of the movies they watched.

CONNECT WITH THE MOVIES:

Discuss the following questions. If your group is large, divide into small groups and report back the answers“

- 1 What is your stance on the death penalty? Was your opinion affected by either one of these movies?
- 2 Read the following quotes. What feelings do you get with each quote? How does your heart respond to them? Now switch gears: What do you think when you hear each quote? How does your brain respond to them?

“I want the last face you see in this world to be the face of love, so you look at me when they do this thing. I’ll be the face of love for you.”

“I’m just trying to follow the example of Jesus, who said that a person is not as bad as his worst deed.”

— Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking*.

Sister Helen Prejean: You are a son of God.

Matthew Poncelet: [in tears] Thank you. I’ve never been called a son of God before.

[laughs slightly]

Matthew Poncelet: I’ve been called a son of a you-know-what plenty of times, but I’ve never been called a son of God.

Mincayani: Do it! I killed your father! Do it!

Steve Saint: No one took my father’s life. He gave it.

- 3 Why did the people in these movies (or the movies the students chose) love the unlikable people?

Could you do what they did? Be honest.

- 4 Using the Bible dictionary and concordance, find passages that support what you feel is the main message in the films.

- 5 Lead a discussion about any other aspect of the films that the students want to share.

APPLY:

Ask students to think about their lives. Are there people in their lives that are as “unlikable” as those in the films?

Or, does watching these films make their “unlikable” people look pretty nice?

(Note to teacher. If any of your students have been abused, they may indeed have people in their lives that are totally unlikable to them. Tread carefully here in terms of asking them to love these people, because they must learn to separate themselves from the abuser and seek healing for that, which involves much more than loving them. This would be a time to encourage them to talk to an adult they trust if there are abuse issues in their lives.)

RESPOND:

Invite youth to choose one of the following options.

- 1 Dream up your own movie. Imagine the movie you’d make on this theme. (It doesn’t have to be true.) Come up with the general plot line.
- 2 Write a rap song on this theme.
- 3 Role play the following: One person is from another planet, here on earth to see how earth people handle different situations. The other person tries to explain today’s theme, and the rationale behind it, to the extra-terrestrial.

Share responses.

Close with a prayer.