

Using Film as a Medium for Advocacy: Hosting a Movie Screening in Your Home Church

We all know that film motivates people to take action! With this resource-filled “toolkit”, you can explore critical social issues through film and develop strategies for Christians who want to make positive change in our world. You should make each screening and discussion your own, so these are guidelines that can be modified where needed.

Goals of Film Screenings

- TO HONOR GOD by gathering in God’s name and seeking to find God’s will for our communities.
- TO CREATE AWARENESS by getting the film to the widest audience possible (and at the cheapest possible price!)
- TO ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE amongst friends & neighbors about what is to be done about some of the greatest social challenges of our time.
- TO GATHER FEEDBACK from those hosting and attending screenings.
- TO EDUCATE people in order to help all of us to become better members of society.
- TO MODEL a tool for community-based organizing that promotes social change in accordance with the Gospel.
- TO CREATE A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION to reduce corporate harm, respect the earth, and keep our government officials accountable.

Plan your film screening

1. Decide on what style of film screening you would like to have. Will it be an intimate gathering in your home? Will it be geared towards women, men, seniors or youth? Feel free to be creative. Choose a theme for decorations, special foods or ask people to come dressed for a particular theme or give away copies of the DVD as prizes. Hold a series of weekly discussion nights or Sunday school classes each focusing on a different topic covered by the film. The possibilities are limitless!

2. How will you invite folks? Will it be announced in church for any who may want to attend or a private invitation? Are outside friends and guests welcome? If so, be creative with who you invite. You could invite unchurched friends, members from local activist groups or other churches. For example, if you’re watching a moving on trade and globalization, invite a member of a local food co-op to share how your group can buy locally grown food. Build ways for people to RSVP so that you can plan food or snacks.

3. Secure a place to host the party. It could be your church’s basement, youth room, or your own home. How many people will fit in the space you are holding your party in? Do you need additional chairs or cushions for your guests to sit on during the film & discussion? Will everyone be able to comfortably view the television or screen? Perhaps you’d prefer more of a stand up event. Either way, decide on a number so your party gets filled up but doesn’t overflow!

4. Decide if you want to offer your guests snacks or refreshments. Whatever works for you! Keep it simple. Why not delegate a couple of your guests to bring snacks or turn your party into a potluck? These details are good for your guests to know in your initial invite.

6. Continue to advertise! A personal invite is always the best strategy. Post your event and all its details online if possible. Posters and newspaper ads are great ways to generate community interest.

7. Decide if you need to ask any of your guests to volunteer to help make your event run smoothly. Will you need help setting up, cleaning up, supplying snacks, or promoting your event? If you want to give your guests a chance to pitch in (and lots of people like to) make a list of possible tasks you might need help with and include these in your invitation asking your guests to sign up for specific jobs, or try contacting friends you think would be willing to help you out. Decide if you need to ask any of your guests to volunteer to lead discussion, if you're uncomfortable doing so. Just because you planned the event, doesn't mean you have to lead the discussion!

8. Whoever you invite, ask them to RSVP by a certain date. Keep a list of confirmed guests & their email addresses so you can keep them informed of any changes & send out a reminder email closer to the date of your party.

9. Decide whether you want to show the entire film or select clips (which you can do easily with a DVD). We recommend showing the entire film when possible. You may find that most of the people have already seen the film – in that case you may want to just show clips or extras.

10. Be as creative as you want with your party's agenda. A focused discussion can be very productive and having a facilitator can be helpful. Also, if you are focusing on a particular angle you may want to invite someone with expertise in that area to attend. (Or maybe that person is you!)

A few quick things to consider

- Is there a specific topic from the film you'd like to focus on?
- Do any topics in the film lend themselves to other Bible studies going on at church or any common Biblical themes?
- Are there any local issues that could be brought up during the discussion & possible actions discussed? The more relevant the topic is, the more powerful the party will be.
- Are there people that you would like to get together as resources for a discussion you might have? Are there guests who will, if in attendance, be a draw for other guests?
- Do you want a facilitated discussion – if so who would be good for this role?
- The "Discussion Guide" supplies some suggested topics and questions, but you can create your own. Draft a set of discussion questions.
- Delegate someone to take notes so you can refer to them in following strategy session. You can also document your discussion with video, audio, or photos (or any combination of these things).

11. Promote your event. Make flyers that you can put up in your church or neighborhood as you see fit. Get the word out!

12. Walk through your party agenda. (see sample party agenda below) Good planning is the key to perfect spontaneity. Creating a rough timeline is highly recommended. Make sure you factor in about 10 minutes for your guests to arrive (remember there are always a couple of late-comers), another 5 minutes for introductions & if you plan on showing the entire film make sure you start early

enough so that you have plenty of time for discussion afterwards. Some people will really want time to talk. Others may want a more structured affair. As the host, make sure you know what you want and that your guests know what to expect.

After the Film Screening

Thank your guests and send them a follow-up email with a review of action steps discussed or with the date for the next party if more discussion, education, or action-steps brainstorming is needed.

SAMPLE Screening Agenda

1. **7:00PM - 7:15PM** Guests arrive / Meet and Greet
2. **7:15PM - 7:30PM** Introductions and Opening Prayer
3. **7:30PM - 8:30PM** Show clips of the film or the entire film
4. **8:30PM - 9:00PM** Biblical Reflection
5. **9:00PM - 9:05PM** Discussion topics, ground rules, proceedings read by host,
6. **9:05PM - 9:45PM** Discuss the film and brainstorm action steps
7. **9:45PM - 10:00PM** Discuss follow up steps (do you need more information, more time to watch the film, more time to brainstorm action step, more time to implement actions together, etc?)