

BLOCKBUSTERS [movies]

THIS WEEK

Cable, VHS, and DVD movies give high schoolers the chance to watch nearly anything—whatever they want, whenever they want. This TalkSheet provides you with the opportunity to talk about the kinds of movies your group members are viewing and to encourage them to discern what they watch. Since most late high schoolers can legally watch R-rated movies, you won't be able to use that legal rule as a point of persuasion. But you can discuss the pros and cons of healthy and unhealthy movies, and how to make good decisions about them.

OPENER

Start by getting a list of movies showing in your town from a newspaper or off the Internet. Make a list of all the current movies playing on a poster board or whiteboard. Your kids will most likely know all the titles and may even have seen a few of them. Take a poll to see how many of these movies your kids have seen. Then ask if they can say what each movie is rated. How close do they come? Write the rating next to the movie title. Point out that often people don't even look at the ratings before going to the movie. What are the ratings for? How many of their parents enforce the ratings? Why are certain movies rated the same as others, but have less violent or sexual content?

For information on movies and reviews, check out www.HollywoodJesus.com, Preview Family and Movie Review (www.gospelcom.net/preview), Plugged In Magazine (www.family.org/pplace/pi), Movie Finder (www.moviefinder.com), or Film.Com (www.film.com).

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Get a group average for a month. Then let the students estimate how many movies they will have watched by the time they graduate from high school—they'll be surprised to see how much they watch!
2. Ask several students to share their top three movie choices (this will give you an idea of the kinds of movies your group is viewing!). How many of the movies they have watched would pass their parents' approval? Why or why not?
3. This activity will (1) help kids become more aware of the reason for a rating system; (2) help kids discern good from bad moral content; and (3) help kids create their own Christian rating system. Ask the group to create a list of all the reasons for rating a movie NC-17, R, PG-13, PG, and G. You will get answers like violence, foul language, sex,

nudity, and so on. Now challenge the kids to create their own rating system in light of Christianity. How would they rate the movies differently?

4. Create a group list of all the young people's responses. (You may want to ask them for examples from specific movies.) Then compare the list to see how many good values are taught versus how many bad values are taught. Ask the students to explain how they can watch movies without being affected by the bad values.
5. After getting the students to share their answers, ask them to go back, look at the list, and decide what changes they would like to make in their movie viewing. What changes are they willing to make, if any? Why or why not?
6. Ask them to read their summaries and describe one thing they learned from the book of Romans about movie viewing.

THE CLOSE

Let the kids know that they do have decisions to make when it comes to going to the theater or watching a movie at home. Just because a movie was made doesn't mean that it should be seen! Challenge your kids to find out about movies before they see them (possibly refer them to one of the sites listed above). And even when they can watch an R-rated movie, talk about the content with your kids. How does watching a lot of violence affect a person? What about a highly sexual movie? Encourage them to be discerning with what they see and to take responsibility for their parent's rules and their own beliefs.

MORE

- You can use movies to teach your youth! Check out *Videos That Teach* by Doug Fields and Eddie James (Youth Specialties). This book includes over 75 teachable movie moments from film classics on over a hundred topics. Also, visit the Web site www.teachwithmovies.org for ideas on teaching with movies.
- Consider going to a movie or watching a video with your kids. Make sure that it's a rating that passes the approval of all parents. Afterwards talk about the movie in light of Christianity and their beliefs. What was the movie about? What message did it give about life, love, happiness, and so on? What good or bad influences could this movie have on others? Why or why not?