

## **Movie Discussion Guide**

You would like to have your group watch a movie and discuss it. How do you set up the discussion?

### **How to prepare**

You need to view the material in advance. As you do, select the points you want to mention in your introduction to make the material clearer to your viewers. Make note of questions or issues that may arise, or which you might want to raise. If you are going to a movie, read as many reviews as you can find and begin to visualize the discussion.

### **How to conduct the discussion**

The discussion you generate will vary with each movie you view. Discussions of dramatic films will differ from those of documentaries or panel discussions. In each case, however, the general pattern to follow remains the same.

### **Introduce the movie**

Explain what the movie is about. You don't need to go into detail; just say enough to orient participants to the subject and alert them to some key points. State the objectives for presenting this particular movie; this helps participants answer their unspoken question, "Why are we seeing this?" Tell them who produced the material. If it deals with a subject the group has discussed previously, mention some of the conclusions of the earlier discussions and ask them to look for new insights on those themes.

### **Following the viewing of the film or video**

Begin by asking specific questions about the content of the production. If the movie has a strong dramatic or emotional impact, give viewers a chance to express their feelings: "How were you feeling, or what went through your mind, when you saw those babies dying in their mothers' arms?" This step need not take a long time. If you plan for 30 minutes of discussion, three to five minutes will be enough.

### **What does this mean to you?**

You want to elicit personal reactions, personal understandings and personal thoughts in general regarding the movie. You can direct your questions to specific people if you like, especially if members of your group know each other well. Encourage people to both affirm and challenge the ideas they have received. When someone makes a statement, ask if others agree or disagree.

*Which character was most like you?*

*Did the story come out the way you would have had it come out?*

*What moved you the most?*

You should not have much trouble with this phase of the discussion. Everyone holds opinions and feelings, and most people like to talk about them. You will encourage an atmosphere of openness if you use restraint in giving your own opinions. As leader, limit yourself to asking questions and encouraging conversation. If you sense the group is overlooking some important (to you) aspects of the issue, you can inject some "devil's advocate" questions, so long as you don't leave the impression that you are trying to convert them to your point of view.

**What does this mean for us - as a church, a community, or a nation?**

Next shift the discussion from personal feelings and thoughts to the more generalized area of implications for participants as a Christian community and as citizens of the nation and the world. Here you deal with the theme. Begin by summarizing the personal ideas, feelings and reactions that have been expressed. You might list the key points on chalkboard or newsprint. These represent your group's understanding of the issue or topic. Explore wider implications:

*What does this mean for us as a church?*

*What can we do about it?*

*Where do we see signs of this issue (or its effects) in our own community?*

*How does this issue relate to other issues?*

Monitor the time so that the session doesn't end with the discussion still up in the air. Two or three minutes before the end of the allotted time, stop the discussion, thank the group for their participation, and briefly summarize the insights and conclusions of the discussion. Ask if anyone wishes to go more deeply into some aspects of the issues raised. If that desire seems strong, plan for an appropriate follow-up session.