

Inside The Oscar Envelope

The buzz in the world for this coming weekend is about the Oscars. Since 1927 America has been observing a ritual that grades the top movies of the previous year. On Friday Joel Seigel predicted *Brokeback Mountain* to be the number one movie of the year and Philip Seymour Hoffman to win best actor of the year award for his portrayal in *Capote*. One is a film about cowboys, the other about an author. One is fictional, one is non-fictional. The one common thread is both are about people choosing alternative lifestyles. It's a crazy year for movies. On one hand you have great family films that deal with the goodness in the icy world of *March of the Penguins* to something that made most all of Christendom pleased, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, in which the Atonement is exemplified in pageantry, horror and results. Don't be surprised at the movies that get the most attention.

In the past couple of years, there has been a gnawing concern over films that we wouldn't mind our kids seeing, even to the point of renting them or buying them to show our family. For instance, one of the biggest oscar winners of all time was *The Lord of The Rings: The Return of The King*, based on the book written by J.R.R. Tolkein, a man very instrumental in guiding C.S. Lewis to Christ. In the book and movie, Gandalf was helping to lead an invasion that, according to many interpreters, can be likened to the return of the King of Kings. The character, Gandalf in the screen presentation was played by Ian McKellen, an openly, unashamed homosexual. At the beginning of this year we have a movie that I was thrilled to hear come out entitled, *End of the Spear*. A film about one of the greatest heroes of the Christian faith of the twentieth century, Nate Saint, a martyr in the truest sense of the word. Leading Christians have supported it and, from everything I have heard, the presentation and facts are both moving and accurate. Chad Allen plays the lead role of Nate Saint. Chad is openly and unapologetically homosexual. In the Larry King interview in January of 2006, he equates Buddhism, Hinduism, and Native American philosophy on an equal plane with Christianity. Allen comes right out and says, "I play a Christian, yes. And they're going to be saying, 'This is the way you be Christian, there's only one way.' Well, you know what? There isn't. I'm a part of a wonderful community church here in Pasadena that has a very different interpretation of those same gospels that they are speaking of. There isn't just one way to do this, there are a lot of paths." Mr. Allen believes contrary to the Gospels, for Jesus said, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). And furthermore, contrary to the comments of a leading talk show hostess, The Apostle Peter said, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

I am concerned that whether we present fiction or non-fiction, our heroes, and those that play them, are not living the lifestyle we need modeled for our kids. We don't need to go too far back in our history to remember that the two young men who committed the Columbine murders were deeply impressed with a Hollywood movie that depicted, even to the way they executed and dressed on the execution day, something they saw and liked. I know we could hear the argument that there were some other psychological and spiritual battles raging in these young men's lives. But would you not agree with me that wouldn't it be nice to have our youth influenced by something wholesome?

Shortly after The horrendous massacre in the Colorado high school, Peggy Noonan wrote these words in her editorial in The Wall Street Journal, "What walked into Columbine High School Tuesday was the culture of death.... The boys who did the killing...inhaled too deep the ocean in which they swam.... Think of it this way. Your child is an intelligent little fish. He swims in deep water. Waves of sound and sight, of thought and fact, come invisibly through that water, like radar; they go through him again and again, from this direction and that. The sound from the television is a wave, and the sound from the radio; the headlines [and pictures] on the newsstands, on the magazines, on the ad on the bus as it whizzes by--all are waves. The fish--your child--is bombarded and barely knows it.... This is the ocean in which our children swim. This is the sound of our culture. It comes from all parts of our culture and reaches all parts of our culture."

As a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and dealing with God's Word and congregants and non-congregants, I am very concerned about the culture in which our kids are being reared. The ocean in which our little fish swim is as scary as the big ocean that Nemo was absconded in. But help was on its way in *Finding Nemo* by a fish named Dory (oh by the way, played by Ellen DeGeneres. And I am not going to go on another diatribe; I enjoyed watching the video of this Disney film.) As your pastor, I am asking you to please guard your kids' environment. Don't take everything at face value; critique entertainment. I am not asking you to go to your entertainment centers and take out everything that misses in some areas. Have the wisdom of a man who eats fish - eat the meat, spit out the bones. Please don't miss the opportunity to answer the hard questions when asked. Don't be so afraid to offend that you embrace every false teaching that comes along.

I would also encourage you to keep heroes before your children. Even the greatest of our Christian heroes had "feet of clay" and were not perfect by any means, except for our Lord Jesus Christ. Tell the whole truth. And don't forget to model before our kids God's servants who utilized the supernatural strength of God to live the Christian life to the max! Lift up those who, when they stand before Jesus and the books are opened, will not be ashamed.

- Pastor Pope -

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