



Watching a movie is more than an opportunity to be entertained. Watching a movie is an opportunity to meet with God. In a few brief chapters, *How to Talk to a Movie* will forever change the way you watch movies by opening your eyes and ears to what movies are saying, how they are saying it, and how God might be speaking to you through them.

HOW TO TALK TO A MOVIE

MOVIE-WATCHING AS A SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

ELIJAH LYNN DAVIDSON

FOREWORD BY KUTTER CALLAWAY



Elijah Lynn Davidson is Codirector of Reel Spirituality, a Brehm Center initiative of faith and film at Fuller Theological Seminary. He covers multiple film festivals, hosts the *Reel Spirituality* podcast, and reviews over one hundred films each year. He also really likes pie.

“The writer Frederick Buechner once said that the most basic lesson that all art teaches us is to stop, look, and listen. When we truly listen, he says, we discover that life is a vastly richer, more mysterious business than we might have initially suspected. Davidson’s book helps us to do just that: to listen to what our neighbor is saying, through a movie, and to discover the mysterious business of God’s voice there, too.”

—W. DAVID O. TAYLOR, Fuller Theological Seminary

“Deceptively brief and simple, *How to Talk to a Movie* is a great read—whether for students taking classes on film, for Christians wanting to lead a film discussion group, or for any and all film lovers who recognize that a film’s presence extends outward beyond its screening to conversations with others and perhaps the Other.”

—ROBERT K. JOHNSTON, Author of *Reel Spirituality*; Coeditor of *God in the Movies*

“Talking at a movie is easy. Talking to it requires a different attitude, and a more refined set of skills. In *How to Talk to a Movie*, Elijah Davidson instructs the reader in that skill set and also makes the persuasive argument that this approach to cinema is one that Christians in particular should embrace. I wholeheartedly agree.”

—JOSH LARSEN, Editor, *Think Christian*; Cohost, *Filmspotting*; Author of *Movies Are Prayers*

“*How to Talk to a Movie* offers thoughtful, spiritual reflection worth considering for anyone who wants to engage with movies beyond the surface. This would be required reading if I were teaching any theological film analysis course. Highly recommended!”

—AVRIL Z. SPEAKS, Film/TV Producer; Director; Educator

“Davidson responds to cinema with both heart and mind, and builds a raft for people of faith to explore something beyond the light on the screen. Asking what shape the meaning in the movies can take in our own lives, his is a warm and enthusiastic invitation to a better way of experiencing art and soul.”

—GARETH HIGGINS, Founder, moviesandmeaning.com and theporchmagazine.com

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Reel Spirituality Monograph Series

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The Reel Spirituality Monograph Series features a collection of theoretically precise yet readable essays on a diverse set of film-related topics, each of which makes a substantive contribution to the academic exploration of Theology and Film. The series consists of two kinds of works: 1) popular-level introductions to key concepts in and practical applications of the Theology and Film discipline, and 2) methodologically rigorous investigations of theologically significant films, filmmakers, film genres, and topics in cinema studies. The first kind of monograph seeks to introduce the world of Theology and Film to a wider audience. The second seeks to expand the academic resources available to scholars and students of Theology and Film. In both cases, these essays explore the various ways in which “the cinema” (broadly understood to include the variety of audio-visual storytelling forms that continues to evolve along with emerging digital technologies) contributes to the overall shape and trajectory of the contemporary cultural imagination. The larger aim of producing both scholarly and popular-level monographs is to generate a number of resources for enthusiasts, undergraduate and graduate students, and scholars. As such, the Reel Spirituality Monograph Series ultimately exists to encourage the enthusiast to become a more thoughtful student of the cinema and the scholar to become a more passionate viewer.

HOW TO TALK TO A MOVIE

Movie-Watching as a Spiritual Exercise

ELIJAH LYNN DAVIDSON
Foreword by Kutter Callaway



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HOW TO TALK TO A MOVIE
Movie-Watching as a Spiritual Exercise

Reel Spirituality Monograph Series 1

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INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, a young projectionist fell asleep at work. Don't hold it against him. He had already worked all morning cleaning up the theater from last night's screening, he was taking a night class to become a detective, his girlfriend had jilted him in favor of a wealthier guy, and to top it all off, earlier that day he'd been falsely accused of burglary by his girlfriend's father and banished from their house forever. He'd had a hard day. A nap was in order.

Then, something strange happened. While his body slept, the young man's spirit awoke. Bewildered at first, his spirit saw the movie flickering on the screen at the other end of the theater. The actors in the movie looked like the young man's girlfriend, her father, and the cuckolding other man. The plot of the movie resembled the events of earlier that afternoon. The young man's spirit stepped over the frame into the movie, and before the movie ended, his real-life problems were solved.

Once upon another time, some sixty-one years later, though it seems as if only a decade or so has gone by, a young woman living a life very similar to the young projectionist's found herself going to the same movie again and again and again to escape the stresses of her terrible,

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thankless job and her terrible, philandering husband. She didn't fall asleep, certainly not, for she was enthralled by what she saw on the screen. The characters' lives were so glamorous, so full of adventure. The good people prospered (in time), and the bad people didn't (in time). Everyone who deserved it found true love in the end. Everything on screen made sense, and it all happened exactly the same way every time. Life on the screen was always beautiful, predictable, and full of meaning.

Well, almost always. This time as the young woman watched the actors, she noticed one of the actors watching her. "My god, you must really love this picture," the actor in the movie said, looking directly at the young woman, "You've been here all day, and I've seen you here twice before." "Me? You mean me?" she stammered. Suddenly, the actor stepped off the screen and walked right up to her. He wanted to talk to her, because she seemed to take such delight in the movie. They left the theater together and talked into the wee hours of the night. He was a simple man—he was only a movie character, after all—and he had much to learn about the real world. She was more than happy to answer all his questions and respond with a few of her own.

Neither one of those "once upon a times" really happened, of course. They only happened in the movies—Buster Keaton's immortal *Sherlock Jr.* and Woody Allen's sublime *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, to be precise. But just as the fantastic, fourth-wall-breaking events in each film feel real to the characters, so those movies and many others feel "real" to me. I've never literally stepped across the frame into the movie, but I *have* seen semblances of myself and my friends and family on the screen. I *have* made use of the larger than life events in movies to help me make sense of the more mundane problems in my own life. I *have* looked to the movies for guidance on how I ought to behave in

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analogous situations. I've never had a movie character walk out into the night air holding my hand—though every time I watch a movie starring Marion Cotillard or Anne Hathaway, I wish one would—but I have felt like movies were asking me questions about the world, inviting my response, and puzzling over me as much as I puzzled over them.

So, I learned how to talk to a movie. I learned how to better understand *what* a movie is saying by learning *how* it says what it says, and I learned how to respond in a way that is consistent with the key principals of my Christian faith—without fear and with humility, generosity, and love. Along the way, I discovered that the conversations I was having with movies were having a deep impact on my life. Talking to movies made movie-watching become more than mere distraction. Watching movies became a kind of devotional practice in which God meets with me in the space between the silver screen, my day-to-day life, and God's word.

I want you to have this experience too, and I don't see any reason why you shouldn't. This book will help you do that. In it, I will teach you how to talk to a movie.

To do this, we will first briefly explore why talking to a movie matters whether you agree with the movie or not. Very often, Christians love movies that they agree with and lambast movies they don't. So much good can come of talking to a movie even if you and the movie disagree. Then, we will figure out exactly what "talking to a movie" is and how it is a way to interact with movies that is, perhaps, prescribed by the book of James. After that, we'll learn about the basic story forms commonly found in movies, the methods movies use to tell those stories, and what those stories accomplish in and through their characters. Finally, we will consider how to make talking to a movie an actual, two-way dialogue that can change your life.

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I'll be referencing a lot of movies throughout this book. I'll almost always do so without spoiling any of them. When I'm going to spoil something, I'll warn you first. However, we will be discussing *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in depth. If you haven't seen it, you should watch it before you read this book. Near the end of the book, I include an exercise where you'll get to apply what you've learned to *Toy Story*. You'll need to watch that movie before you do the exercise.

Let's begin.

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WHY TALKING TO A MOVIE MATTERS WHETHER YOU AGREE WITH THE MOVIE OR NOT

Almost everyone watches movies, though people watch movies for different reasons and with different attitudes. Some people watch movies suspiciously, expecting the movie to persuade them to believe something that is not true. Others watch movies mindlessly, expecting only to be entertained, or rather, distracted from whatever is causing them stress in their life. Others watch movies academically, examining the cinematic techniques being utilized by the filmmakers and criticizing how well those techniques have been applied. Still others watch movies devotionally, expecting the Holy Spirit to meet with them in the dark of the theater via the cinematic medium. Many flit from attitude to attitude while watching a single movie, trying to engage with the movie as completely as possible. However you watch movies, you are engaging with what you are watching at some level.

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TALKING TO A MOVIE WILL HELP YOU
ENJOY THE MOVIE MORE

Some like to use the word “engagement” to describe the overall attitude of actually paying attention to cultural objects like movies. Engagement isn’t passive. It is active. It takes work. Engaged viewers learn the language of cinema in order to better understand what a movie is saying. Then the engaged viewer responds to the movie. If you are an engaged viewer, you will benefit from learning to talk to a movie, because talking to a movie will make you more efficient by helping you better understand and respond to movies. Your engaging work will become better and more fulfilling.

People who do not want to do the work of engaging with movies often say they just watch movies to be “entertained.” In this case, engagement is still technically happening. The “entertained” viewer is just letting the movie do all the engaging work. The entertained viewer is going wherever the movie takes her or him. The entertained viewer is in conversation with the movie, because the movie is still talking. The entertained viewer simply isn’t saying anything back. If you are an entertained viewer, you will benefit from what you read here as well. You will learn to better understand the language of cinema. You may decide you want to start talking back to the movie. I’m going to try to persuade you to do that. You may remain committed to being entertained throughout. In either case, your movie watching experience will be enhanced.

WHY TALKING TO A MOVIE MATTERS

TALKING TO A MOVIE WILL HELP YOU
UNDERSTAND WHAT A CULTURE CARES ABOUT

A good story is fueled by a question. It is a way of exploring “what happens when . . .” Those questions are sometimes unique to a particular culture—Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables* explores what happens when a nation revolts against both political and church authorities, which was a question particular to France in the nineteenth century. Those questions are sometimes more universal—Homer’s *The Odyssey* explores what happens when a man leaves his family to go fight in a war and tries to come home again, which is a question humanity has been asking for as long as we have been fighting in wars. Of course, a story need not ask a particular or a universal question. A story can ask both at once. *Les Misérables* also explores universal questions of law and grace; *The Odyssey* also explores the particular religious beliefs of eighth century BC Peloponnesian warriors.

Movies are the dominant storytelling method of our time. Movies are the way we tell stories, the main way we ask “what happens when. . .” *Shane* explores what happens when the wilderness begins to be civilized, which was a particularly American question in the first part of the twentieth century; *Timbuktu* explores what happens when a foreign, radical, Muslim sect takes over an indigenous, moderate Muslim community, which is a particularly North African question in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Those questions reveal what our culture and other cultures care about. Talking to a movie then is a way of listening to the questions a particular culture is asking.

It is important to remember, however, that movies are not always topical. When we start looking for easy analogies to current events in movies, we miss what the movies are saying. Making a movie takes a lot of time, and the

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hot topics of today likely weren't the hot topics of the day when the movie was written, financed, and filmed. For example, when Pixar's *WALL•E* was released in theaters in 2008, many people saw it as blatant propaganda for the environmental movement. After all, *WALL•E*'s story centers around saving the planet from over-pollution via a tiny plant growing in a work boot, *An Inconvenient Truth* had recently won the Oscar for Best Documentary in 2007, and the environment was a consistent issue in the 2008 presidential election. However, writer/director Andrew Stanton first conceived of the movie—including the fact that the earth is covered in garbage and that our robot hero finds a single living plant—in 1994, long before the current environmental movement was winning Oscars and being debated by presidential candidates.

Talking to a movie helps us understand what a culture cares about in the broad sense on the thematic and philosophical level. Rarely is a movie talking about current events. Current events might resonate thematically with movies, but it's the themes that matter, not the events themselves. Both *WALL•E* and the environmental movement are concerned with how we should best care for what we love, be that a friend, a romantic partner, or the planet.

TALKING TO A MOVIE PREPARES YOU TO TALK TO OTHER PEOPLE ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER

Because movies are concerned with the questions that concern cultures, it is likely that your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers are concerned about those things too. Talking to a movie prepares you to talk to other people about those questions, and talking to each other has the potential to effect real change in our relationships and our world.

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Movies are a safe subject of conversation that can lead to weightier matters. Here are two examples of this dynamic from my own life.

Once during dinner at a work function, I began talking to a recent acquaintance about *Skyfall*, the James Bond movie from 2012. We were discussing the ways *Skyfall* represents a reset on the James Bond franchise, bringing it back, in many ways, to where it was in 1963. We also discussed the subtle ways it develops the James Bond character, particularly in suggesting that Bond's sexual history—something essential to the Bond mystique—extends beyond heterosexual norms. This led to a discussion of the ways heterosexuality has been normative throughout Western history and how a more LGBTQ-friendly ethic seems to be spreading throughout contemporary society.

Another time, I was talking to a friend about *Space Jam*, the Michael Jordan/Bugs Bunny mash-up from 1996. We were mainly talking about how much we loved that movie when we were kids and how bad an actor Michael Jordan is in that movie. Then we started talking about how all the characters in the film, heroes and villains alike, are struggling with their vocations or callings, and that led into a deeper discussion about the ways we too struggle with those same questions.

In both cases, the movie began the conversation and, because both my conversation partner and I were skilled in understanding films, the conversation deepened to something more.

TALKING TO A MOVIE POSITIONS YOU TO HEAR GOD SPEAKING TO YOU

Talking to a movie is not simply a process to figure out what a movie means. We're not trying to simplify the films we

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watch. Talking to a movie is an approach to movies that makes us more aware of the many ways a movie is speaking. Talking to a movie makes us more sensitive to the emotional, intuitive affect of the movie. Talking to a movie makes us more open to irrational realities, including the movement of the Spirit of God in our lives.

God's Spirit often speaks to us through aesthetic experiences such as shared meals, the awesome beauty of nature, or a work of art. Those kinds of experiences go beyond the rational, awakening the intuitive aspects of our being, and the Spirit of God is a being beyond our rational capacities.

Watching a movie passively, suspiciously, or especially with hostility closes you off to these kinds of encounters with God's Spirit. (Though God might still get to you through a movie! After all, the Spirit of God cannot be corralled.) Being willing to listen to what a movie is saying and responding humbly opens you up to these kinds of experiences.

General Revelation is a theological concept that seeks to explain the ways God speaks to people in other forms besides scripture and Christian tradition. Robert Johnston, in his book *God's Wider Presence: Reevaluating General Revelation*, writes:

When five persons see a sunset and only one of the five experiences God, it is not that the other four are sinfully blocking out the divine from their view, but that the one has been graced serendipitously with the Spirit's revelatory Presence. . . Moreover, when general revelation is described phenomenologically, it is seldom understood as the work chiefly of human reason, but more often as the experience of our imagination. Revelation is something. . . that is primarily located not in reasoning or ethics but in our intuition and feeling. It is not that we by our own

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effort conclude or project by rational inference that God is a reality, but that we receive God's revelatory Presence in the midst of our lives.¹

Or, as Jesus says to Nicodemus in John 3:8, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

Certainly, we cannot command the Spirit of God to speak to us when and where we please. The Spirit moves as the Spirit wills. We can only be sensitive to the Spirit's movements, like a boy scout feeling for the breeze with a spit-soaked finger. As Johnston writes clearly and as Jesus implies, detecting the Spirit is a matter of feeling more than it is a matter of right-thinking. Even "right-thinking" about a movie cannot guarantee God will speak to you. However, we can "wet our fingers and hold them in the air" to feel for the Spirit's wind. Aesthetic experiences can be a great way to feel for the breeze.

Johnston's book is packed with examples of the ways God has spoken to people through films. I, myself, have encountered God many times in a theater and at home while watching a movie. Most recently, I was watching *Babette's Feast*, a charming, challenging Swedish film about a French cook who gives a great gift to her pious Danish hosts. I had seen the film before, but this recent time, the Spirit quickened my heart to repent of the ways I've squandered my gifts and been ungrateful for the opportunities God has given me to use them. Then, the Spirit extended grace to me, great comfort and forgiveness, and all within the span of a two-hour foreign film about French cooking. This is just one example of a time when God has spoken to me through a movie.

1. Johnston, *God's Wider Presence*, 23.

TALKING TO A MOVIE WILL MAKE YOU MORE
HOSPITABLE

Talking to a movie is a more Christian way to watch movies because it is a more hospitable way to watch movies. *Hospitality* understood most simply is the act of being friendly to strangers—not only to your friends and family—but to people you do not yet know. A work of artistry made by a person is a surrogate for that person. In the case of movies, it is a surrogate for many persons. We should be hospitable to them. The spiritual discipline of hospitality is at the core of what it means to be part of the people of God.

The practice of hospitality by God's people dates back to the patriarch of our faith, Abraham, and carries through as a constant theme of the Old and New Testaments. In Genesis 18, Abraham immediately welcomes in three men only to later learn he is entertaining the Lord himself. The writer of Hebrews references this encounter in admonishing believers to welcome in strangers (13:2). Further along in Kingdom history, when David is hiding from Saul in the wilderness, Nabal refuses to offer hospitality to David and his men, and so David prepares to slaughter the foolish man. Nabal's wife, Abigail, steps in to appease David's anger through the practice of hospitality, and after her husband dies, David takes this hospitable, diplomatic woman as his wife (1 Samuel 25). Also, Ezekiel lists being inhospitable to the poor and needy as the cause of the destruction of Sodom, and Jerusalem's similar sin is cited as the cause for its forthcoming destruction (Ezek 16:49).

In the New Testament, Christ is mendicant and spends his ministry enjoying the hospitality of others. In the famous parable of the sheep and the goats, it is hospitality that separates the faithful from the faithless in the final judgment (Matt 25:31–46). Throughout the rest of the New

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Testament, Paul and the other apostolic writers praise those people who extended hospitality to them as they traveled the ancient world declaring the good news of the gospel. Paul and Peter command hospitality in Rom 12:13 and 1 Pet 4:9, and the practice is also held up as a mark of able leadership in 1 Timothy and Titus (3:2 and 1:8, respectively). Furthermore, the book of 3 John consists of a letter commending Gaius for showing hospitality to his Christian brothers. Finally, there are Jesus' words to the church of Laodicea. After chastising them for their inaction and pointing out their complacency in their wealth, Christ says, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Rev 3:20). Christ calls the lukewarm Laodiceans back to hospitality.

The importance of offering hospitality to people we do not know is at the heart of the Word itself. The word "hospitality," as used by the New Testament writers, is created by joining two different words—*philos* and *xenos*. *Philos* refers to friends and being friendly. *Xenos* refers to strangers. *Philoxenos* means literally "being friendly to strangers."

Talking to a movie is a way to transform the consumeristic practice of being entertained by movies into a hospitable practice of entertaining the hopes, fears, ideas, and questions of the people who make the movies. The filmmakers are the strangers we are being friendly toward. In her book *Making Room*, Christine Pohl outlines a phenomenal history of Christian hospitality from the days of the first Christians to today. I suggest, to talk to a movie is to participate in this long tradition of Christian hospitality.

Throughout the New Testament, when the apostles write of showing hospitality, they are exhorting their readers to welcome in people unknown to them. Most often, they seem to be referring directly to traveling Christians

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who were far away from their homes and without means to tend to themselves. In a world where declaring oneself a follower of Christ could very likely mean martyrdom, a hospitable household was the difference between life and death. In addition to opening homes to itinerant preachers, early Christians also welcomed in the poor, marking their communities as exceptional among their contemporaries. Talking to a movie is a similarly exceptional and counter-cultural way to interact with cinema today.

In the Constantinian period, the practice of hospitality gave birth to the establishment of hospitals and was termed “public service.” The leaders of the day urged Christians not to forget that hospitality was an individual discipline as and not just a work of the organized church. It is not only for institutions like Fuller Seminary (whom I work for) to be hospitable to movies. It is a calling that we all must heed individually in our regular movie-watching.

Monasteries and abbeys picked up the practice through the Middle Ages, but hospitality was given in varying degrees of quality depending on a person’s status, a temptation we are prone to as well if we only welcome in movies that we agree with or that make Christians “look good.” The reformers correctly lambasted the established church for using hospitality as a way to welcome in only the rich and powerful, but in response, by relegating hospitality to simply a civic and domestic practice and not a holy one, they stripped hospitality of its status as a common grace due to all people by the people of God.

It wasn’t until the last two centuries that the ancient discipline began to be recovered by the Wesleyan traditions and by more contemporary communities like the Catholic Worker movement and various intentional communities, such as the L’Arche Federation and the New Monasticism movement. Talking to a movie is a hospitable practice in

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step with a similar, new-born insistence on the importance of responding to the arts openly by many Christian arts organizations like Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA), International Arts Movement (IAM), the University of St. Andrews' Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts (ITIA), and Fuller Seminary's Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts. Focused on cinema particularly, there is an ever-growing number of websites and podcasts devoted to this sort of interaction with movies. I curate a regularly updated list of links to many of those websites and podcasts on the "Friends" page at ReelSpirituality.com. To make the spiritual discipline of hospitality the guiding principle of your interaction with movies is to join in this long history of Christian hospitality as it continues to grow and develop around the world.

Hospitality is a spiritual discipline with great value to the contemporary church as well, particularly to the church here in the United States. Hospitality extended to the stranger is a transformative act for ourselves, for the stranger, and for our society. This transformative potential is there when we watch movies, and it comes through three main areas.

First, the discipline of hospitality affords us the opportunity to meet Christ. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Christ praises and condemns people based on their treatment of the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, and the stranger (Matt 25:31-46). Christ identifies himself as the mendicant among us, and our treatment of the least becomes our treatment of our Lord. Indeed, hosts often find that they are blessed beyond the blessing they provide to others, as should be expected when one is welcoming Christ into one's home. Christine Pohl writes, "[When we are oriented to seeing Jesus in the guest], we are more sensitive to what the guest is bringing to us, to what God might

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be saying or doing through her or him.”² This cannot be overemphasized. The purpose of any spiritual discipline is to put us in contact with and draw us closer to God, and hospitality brings us physically face-to-face with our Lord. Being hospitable to movies prepares us to meet Christ in the movie theater.

Secondly, particularly in the United States, in contrast to the practitioners of hospitality in the early churches and in the church today in much of the rest of the world, we have an abundance of material wealth. Christ’s words to the Laodicean Christians ring especially true in North American Christian ears. “I know your deeds. . . you are lukewarm,” Christ says, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.” After urging them to lay aside their wealth, Christ tells them that he is knocking on their door and offering them the opportunity to host (Rev 3:15–20). Similarly, when the rich young ruler expresses his desire to follow Christ, Jesus tells him to give what he has to the poor and then come and be his follower (Matt 19:16–22).

Wealth so easily becomes our identity. Some of us even root part of our identity in how many movies we’ve watched, as if by watching them, we own them. Practicing hospitality becomes a means of giving ourselves away, humbling ourselves, and expressing gratitude to God for his care for us. Rather than resting in our abundance, we are called to use our wealth to help others that thanksgiving may be brought to God (2 Cor 9:11). Hospitality is a discipline of noticing God’s grace in our lives and offering that grace to others. Hospitality is humbling to the host. It positions us rightly toward God and toward other people whom we are called to love.

2. Pohl, *Making Room*, 68.

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Finally, the discipline of hospitality establishes the kingdom of God in our world today. As stated before, hospitality, at its most fundamental level, as extended to strangers, promotes inclusion and equality. This is why it is so important to welcome in strangers. Friends and family members are, for the most part, already on equal footing with their host. Outsiders are not. As true hospitality humbles the host, it also elevates the guest. Christ's kingdom is one in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal 3:28). All are equal. Also, God has a history of commending the equal treatment of the outsider. In Leviticus, God exhorts the Israelites to love the alien among them as themselves because they were once aliens in Egypt (19:34). Because of Christ's work on the cross and by rising from the grave, love is available to all. Love isn't foreign anymore. Hospitality is how we extend that love to others. Watching movies hospitably is a way of extending love to the people who made them. It establishes the kingdom of God in the movie theater and in our living rooms.

Nowhere is this kingdom-establishing potential more evident than in the Eucharist, in which Christ performs the ultimate act of hospitality—he literally offers himself for our sustenance. Christ invites all to sit at the table as equals and feast on him. As members of the Body of Christ, when we discipline ourselves in hospitality, we become the Eucharist—we offer ourselves to the world.

When you sit down to watch a movie, you are welcoming in a stranger. Again, the entertainment paradigm becomes the most appropriate to call upon, but instead of being entertained *by* the movie, the viewer is the one doing the entertaining. To watch a movie is to entertain it and, by proxy, the people who made it. It is an act of hospitality, or at least it can be if it is done with openness, grace, and a self-sacrificial spirit.

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Once again, read Christine Pohl's book *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* for a thorough exploration of the historical discipline of hospitality if you are interested in learning more about this faith-shaping practice which applies, of course, to much more than movie-watching.

SUMMARY

In summary, talking to a movie will help you enjoy the movie more, clue you in to what a culture cares about, spark interesting conversations with other people, open you to the movements of God's Spirit, and make you more hospitable. So, why wouldn't you want to talk to a movie? Let's learn how.