



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 14, 2014

Americans Embrace Bible-based Films, TV Shows

Recent trends in Americans' movie and television viewing habits reveal that they are drawn to Bible-based shows. It began with the History Channel's *The Bible*, the most-watched television cable TV show of 2013, which paved the way for three biblical movies set to be released in theaters this year.

The *Washington Times* writes,

The first, *Son of God*, is produced by the married couple who brought *The Bible* to the History Channel and into households across the country — producer Mark Burnett and actress Roma Downey.



The couple admits that they were astounded by the popularity of the television show. “We really believed that people would show up in droves, but 100 million people was a big number,” Burnett said of the 10-hour miniseries' total audience. “Before we knew those results, we'd already started on *Son of God*.”

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Son of God, scheduled to be released on February 28, is a two-hour film that begins with a retelling of the Old Testament before depicting the story of Jesus Christ. “We know from the success of *The Bible* series, it encouraged people around the water cooler or around their own kitchen tables to start talking about faith, start talking about God,” Roma Downey said. “We hope when *Son of God* is released that people will be talking about Jesus.”

Additionally, two other Christian-themed films, both with big budgets, are set to be released this year. Darren Aronofsky's *Noah*, due to be released in March, will star Russell Crowe as Noah and Anthony Hopkins as Noah's grandfather Methuselah. And *Exodus*, directed by Ridley Scott, will be released in December, with Christian Bale playing Moses.

The budget for *Son of God* is \$22 million; *Noah* has a \$130-million budget; and while the budget for *Exodus* has not yet been announced, it is expected to be comparable to that of *Noah*.

It is uncertain to what degree *Son of God* will be able to garner audiences beyond those who consider themselves devoutly Christian, but the large budgets of both *Noah* and *Exodus* may help them to access audiences of all varieties.

The *Washington Times* notes that many analysts believe now is the right time for an “influx of faith-based movies.” They state that the opportunity for such films arises every few years. “Hollywood is hungry for good source material, so it reached back to one of the original treasure troves of ancient civilization that still speaks across the centuries definitely more than the average comic book,” said Craig Detweiler, associate professor of communication at Pepperdine University, where he teaches a course on religion and film.



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S. Brent Plate, visiting associate professor of religious studies at New York's Hamilton College, compares the upcoming release of *Noah* and *Exodus* to the 1956 movie *The Ten Commandments* and 1959's *Ben Hur*.

The New American's William Jasper, in his coverage of the 2014 Movieguide Awards last week, [expounded](#) on the fact that average Americans continue to prefer faith-based films to the degenerate and violent movies mostly churned out by Hollywood:

This penchant of the Hollywood elite to honor the most profane and obscene is particularly perverse this year, since some of the most popular films with the movie-going public over the past 12 months not only offered uplifting inspiration and clean entertainment, but also superb film craftsmanship as well. Movie audiences are paying to see wholesome excellence, but the Academy Awards are celebrating banal, sleazy, R-rated, politically-correct tripe.

Dr. Ted Baehr, founder and publisher of *Movieguide*, also observes that box office sales affirm the fact that positive, faith-based, and family-friendly films continue to edge out violent, sexual, inappropriate films.

"This was abundantly true in 2013," said Dr. Baehr. "For the first time ever, 90% of the Top 10 Movies in the United States and overseas were *Movieguide* Award winners, from *Iron Man 3* and *Despicable Me 2* to *Frozen*, *Gravity*, and *Man of Steel*. Also, two-thirds of the Top 10 — sixty percent — had overt references to Jesus Christ."

"Consequently," Dr. Baehr noted, "movies with very strong Christian, redemptive worldviews averaged \$87.07 million at the domestic box office in 2012, but movies with very strong non-Christian worldviews averaged only \$21.64 million." Moreover, he noted, "In fact, movies with humanist/atheist worldviews did the worst, averaging only \$3.66 million!"

Pepperdine's Professor Detweiler asserts that Hollywood "consistently underestimate[s]" the size of the faith-friendly audience:

When we live through a decade of very anxious times, I think we've found that people's interest in ancient and transforming stories endures. New technologies allow for fresh retellings of a powerful, ancient text like the Gospel. Jesus has proven to be a remarkably portable person who's rediscovered by each generation in new ways.

In addition to the big Bible-based films set to be released this year, Downey and Burnett are preparing a 12-hour miniseries sequel to *The Bible* called *A.D.: Beyond the Bible*, scheduled to be aired in the autumn of 2015. The series will tell the story of the early church after Christ's crucifixion.



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