

Jeff's

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SPECIAL ISSUE

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Insider Notes, News, Trends, and Resources from the President's Office

MEL GIBSON – HOLLYWOOD EVANGELIST

www.thepassionoutreach.com

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When Christian evangelism happens, it does so for only one reason: **obedience** to the Great Commission of Christ. Given the stark absence of evangelism in the life and practice of the Western Church (North America, Western Europe, Australia, etc.), it follows there is great **disobedience** among us.

And disobedience is sin. I confess it personally and publicly, though for 16 years I have earnestly prayed about the condition of my heart specific to loving lost people, and have attempted to model a lighthouse lifestyle in my neighborhood and circle of influence. It is always an uphill battle. I am still crying out to God.

New believers, radically changed by the blood of Jesus and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, probably don't know they are "**obeying**" (in a scriptural sense) when they trumpet the good news of their changed lives to friends. Their spontaneity and fervor is contagious and refreshing. Absent discipleship training, they just tell their stories – and the Holy Spirit honors their witness.

Mature believers have a different challenge. Poisoned by materialism, comfort and the "cares of this life," followers of Christ must break out of their routines in raw,

naked **obedience**, and commit to intentional outreach. Mel Gibson, Oscar winning actor and director from inside Hollywood, is doing just that. I know...I heard him tell his story.

Mr. Gibson admits his soon-to-be-released film, *The Passion of The Christ*, may be a career-ending event (because of Hollywood's disdain of Christianity). And he acknowledges the \$25 million he invested to produce it is "a hunk of change"...a huge risk. But for twelve

years the story of Christ's mission, suffering and crucifixion have percolated inside of him. Making the movie was something he had to do: "like a festering splinter, it had to come out," he

explained. It was, in fact, **obedience** to the press of the Holy Spirit within.

Without question, Mel Gibson's motivation for producing *The Passion* is to change people's lives. That truth profoundly marked me!! I listened carefully. He said it clearly and unmistakably! Not once or twice, but multiple times. It is now a matter of public record on a taped interview. I arranged with Outreach, Inc. to send every one of our pastors that interview on DVD, which also includes a trailer of the film, a brief message from Lee Strobel to congregations (designed to show in public worship services), and multiple outreach ideas and resources.

(continued on page 2)

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MEL GIBSON ON THE MAKING OF THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Directed and co-written by Mel Gibson, one of Hollywood's most respected actors and directors, **The Passion of The Christ** dramatically and graphically captures the last 12 hours of Christ's life on Earth, based on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The film—a project in which Gibson invested 12 years of his life and \$25 million of his own funds—became the Oscar-winning actor's unique passion as he researched the details of the story that, in his words, "heals me."

"Making this film has been the most difficult thing I've ever done," Gibson told Outreach Magazine. *"And watching it is not easy to do. It's difficult, because Christ's passion was difficult. But in watching it, I've found it has actually purged me. It somehow heals me to watch it. It's a strange thing. I've never experienced a film like it."*

QUOTES

"The Passion tells the story of the 12 hours surrounding the Crucifixion. While The Passion is only the latest in a series of films about Jesus, it stands out...[because] it is unsparing and unsentimental. In Gibson's opinion, previous cinematic efforts had failed to capture the enormity of Jesus' suffering on our behalf."

-Chuck Colson, Break Point

"Brilliant, biblical - a masterpiece."

-Rick Warren, Pastor, Saddleback Church and Author of The Purpose Driven Life



"Every time I preach or speak about the Cross, the things I saw on the screen will be on my heart and mind."

-Billy Graham, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

"It is deeply moving, powerful, and disturbing. A film that must be seen - although the graphic scenes of the scourging of Jesus are emotionally wrenching."

(From an e-mail to Icon)
-James Dobson, Chairman, Focus on the Family

"I found it deeply moving, factually accurate and unprejudiced in its presentation."

-Jack Hayford, Chancellor, The King's Seminary

"It's a monumental accomplishment. It continues to impact me in ways I couldn't have imagined."

(From a letter to Icon)

-Pat Boone, Singer/Actor

I believe The Passion of The Christ may well be one of the most powerful evangelistic tools of the last 100 years, because you have never seen the story of Jesus portrayed this vividly before.

-Greg Laurie, Harvest Crusades

Where to go for FREE materials and ticket information

Official Icon Web Site:
www.thepassionofchrist.com

Oncore: (free materials)
www.passionmaterials.com

Outreach: (free & fee-based materials)
www.thepassionoutreach.com
1.800.991.6011

Passion2004: www.passion2004.us

(continued from page 1)

There is consensus among Christian leaders in America that God may be at work through Mel Gibson's film. Many have met with him and prayed for him. He has sought counsel and advice from us. Most agree, "This may be the best outreach opportunity for the Church in 2000 years."

For over a decade the Church has been mobilized in intercessory prayer, crying out for a "healing of our land" and a harvest of great awakening proportion. Though we have yet to see the outbreak of God in our cities and neighborhoods as we know is possible, there are encouraging signs. One of them is Hollywood actor-turned-evangelist Mel Gibson.

You see, we in the Church push and pull to make evangelism programs work. They rarely do! But when a man or woman **obeys** God – look out! God moves where we least expect it. In the '50s and early '60s a wealthy Armenian dairyman was used of God to launch a worldwide Pentecostal renewal - the Full Gospel Businessman's movement. He did it with luncheons and testimonies. Unimagined numbers were swept into the kingdom of God and baptized in the Holy Spirit. In the late '60s a young hippie from Haight Ashbury got saved...he was the first seed of the massive Jesus People revival that captured the hearts of our nation's youth. Through the '70s, '80s, and still going strong today, Focus on the Family has rocked the world because a young college professor obeyed the vision of his heart...he started a small radio program. And who could have guessed a University of Colorado coach would launch the Promise Keepers movement in the

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'90s that brought hundreds of thousands of men to Christ and raised the bar of integrity for men in the church?

A dairyman, a hippie, a professor, and a coach! Is it possible God is preparing to act again...this time with an Academy Award winning Hollywood actor and director? Steve Douglass, president of Campus Crusade for Christ, reminds us that "it is much easier to catch a wave than create a wave." Could *The Passion of The Christ* be God's initiative in a man to stir our nation and create a tsunami-sized wave to awaken the Church?

Outreach opportunities preceding and

after the February 25 release of *The Passion* are enormous. **Obey, Church! Obey!** Go to the movie*. Invite unchurched friends. If you don't have any, get some! Tell your pastor and youth leader to go to www.passionmaterials.com and download the

free and/or fee-based resource tools. Take your friends to a coffee shop, or to a home, or to a planned event at church for Q&A after the movie. Do something. Be intentional. **Obey.** Mel Gibson did!

SPECIAL NOTE TO YOUTH PASTORS:

Don't wait on your pastor to mobilize for outreach. Here are four simple steps you can follow:

- 1) Ask your youth to commit to buying two tickets each: one for themselves and one for an unchurched friend.
- 2) Order the tickets in advance.
- 3) Everyone go to the movie together.
- 4) After the movie, hang out at a coke/ coffee shop and discuss it, or go to the church for snacks and Q&A.

Lead us, youth church!

I believe in you.

*The R-rating assigned to the movie will not be for language or sexual content. It is related to the violence of a Roman scourging and crucifixion.

OUTREACH IDEAS

- **Show The *Passion* of the Christ DVD.**
Every Open Bible church in the United States will receive a DVD from Outreach, Inc. This DVD contains a trailer from the movie as well as ideas to help your church share this awesome experience with others. Show the G-rated trailer of the movie to your congregation and equip them to reach their friends and neighbors for Christ.
- **Train your members:**
 1. **Identify** those God wants you to reach.
 2. **Invest** in relationships through prayer, personal contacts, and authentic acts of kindness.
 3. **Invite** them to the movie and to attend a *Passion*-related event at your church.
- **Conduct a *Passion* prayer walk.**
Prayerfully choose a neighborhood you believe God wants you to reach. With multiple prayer teams, walk every street and pray for residents of each home. Leave a door hanger and/or evangelistic booklet at each residence, encourage them to attend the movie, and invite them to a *Passion*-related event at your church.
- **Distribute *Passion*-related door hangers to homes surrounding your church.**
Invite them both to see the movie and to visit a *Passion*-related event at your church.
- **Host a *Passion* Q&A Session at your church or at the theater if allowed.**
Possible questions could include:
 - **Is this actual history or just a myth?**
 - **Did Jesus really die on the cross?**
 - **What does God think about sin?**
 - **Did Jesus really rise from the dead?**
 - **How should I respond?**
- **Host *Passion* small groups.**
Invite movie attendees to participate in a small group or Sunday school class that will discuss themes around *The Passion* topics, such as: suffering, love, sin, forgiveness, guilt, confession, redemption, resurrection, betrayal, commitment, and faith.
- **Distribute Scripture.**
Follow Mel Gibson's suggestion: "You've seen the movie. Now read the book!" Distribute affordable New Testaments or Gospels published by one of the Bible Societies.
- **Purchase a block of tickets.**
Make them available for sale to church members. Follow up the movie with planned events to help attendees process what they've heard and experienced (1.800.332.0965).

SERMON IDEAS

Use these resources to schedule a *Passion*-related sermon series leading up to Easter:

SERIES TITLE: Experience *The Passion*

- Experience Pure Love
- Experience Complete Forgiveness
- Experience Ultimate Wholeness
- Experience Everlasting Life

SERIES TITLE: *The Passion* - True or False?

- Jesus Is the Son of God - True or False?
- Jesus Is the Only Way to God - True or False?
- Jesus Died for You - True or False?
- Jesus Is Alive - True or False?

SERIES TITLE: *The Passion* - Meet the Cast

- Mary: Trusting God in Times of Crisis
- Satan: Resisting Satan in Times of Trial
- Peter: Overcoming Despair in Times of Failure
- Jesus: Following Jesus in Times of Pain

SERIES TITLE: Dying Was His Reason for Living

- The Hero: Who was Jesus?
- The Plot : Why Did Jesus Have to Die?
- The Twist : What Does The Resurrection Mean?
- The Sequel: Where is Jesus Now?

Access these sermon resources exclusively at Sermon Central (www.sermoncentral.com).