Introduction

First, before we get into "How to Run a Movie Night" or the recommendations, we need to let you know what movie nights are for, and what they're not for; what they can do, and what they can't do. If you get into doing movie nights with unrealistic expectations, you're going to end up frustrated, discouraged, and you'll drive some potential friends away in the process.

The goals for any movie night are two-fold: To let your guests know that you care for them, and to make them think. That's it: love and reflection, heart and head. If you keep that in mind, you'll be spared from trying to make your movie night do too much.

First, the heart. You want them to know you love them, but it's awkward having somebody come right out and say it. But inviting them over and treating them well demonstrates what would be awkward to say. Your ultimate goal is to initiate relationship, or to deepen relationships that you've already started. God has chosen to work in and through relationships, so consider movie-nights to be primarily relationship-building activities. These relationships could lead to significant one-on-one discussions later, but to begin with, keep it simple and non-threatening.

Second, the head. The great thing about movie nights is that you can begin discussions about really deep issues (truth, beauty, love, death, parents and children, etc.) without folks feeling threatened. You're not targeting them; you're talking about what you've just seen in a movie. Movies are stories that engage us, and by exploring the contours of the movie's story, you can also start exploring wider reality. And in doing that, you might be able to give glimpses of the Christian worldview. Don't feel pressured to give a "gospel presentation." You are not looking for a Philippian jailer-type confession ("What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30). The most you're likely to get at a movie night is a "Hmmmm. I never thought about that before." The best response I've ever gotten during a movie night was a girl who furrowed her brow and exclaimed, "Now you've got me thinking." "Oops. Sorry," I said in an ever-so-slightly sardonic tone of voice (I mean, we wouldn't want to get you thinking now, would we?).

In sum, if you can keep those two goals in mind (get them to think, and show them they're loved), you'll make things a lot easier for yourself.

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