

Silver screen, popcorn enthusiasts

Dan Nelson – pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

When I go to the theaters I usually like to see action films; the kind that keep you on the edge of your seat. Some movies are really meant to be viewed on the big screen and in full surround-sound. If I think it is going to be a “sleeper,” I will skip the whole thing or wait until the DVD comes out. There is one that has recently been released that caught me by surprise. In the trending of Al Gore and Michael Moore where documentaries have come to the silver screen, and popcorn-eating enthusiasts purchase tickets to enjoy being educated, or indoctrinated, depending on the program, Ben Stein has come out with his own that has implications that run deep and wide in culture and the future of religion in America.

Stein is a guy with a unique perspective on the world. His diversified career path from Yale Law School and White House speechwriter, to university educator, comedian and actor, has given him notoriety in diverse corners of our culture. For those of us too young to have tracked his political career, I think he is best known as the droning teacher in “Ferris Beuller’s Day Off” that epitomized the worst of high school for all of us. When I was in Washington, D.C., last fall, I was quite surprised that he was there to talk to us about his upcoming movie. Little did I know at the time how closely this would tie in to my heart.

The movie is called “Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed.” It is a full production recorded sequence of interviews that chronicles a journey in asking good questions to some of upper academia’s elite, from across America and into European universities, to uncover any truth in the supposition that there is genuine suppression of ideas and dialogue regarding intelligent design. It opens with the alleged firing of one scholar from his post at the Smithsonian Institution for allowing a reference to intelligent design to be printed in their journal, while carrying a tone of credence to the hypothesis. While the publisher’s response was merely that this was a fair reporting and honest communication of where that particular research was seemingly pointing, the Smithsonian commended him with a prompt termination of employment. From there, Stein takes us traveling through the twists and turns of academic circles while all along asking the questions that beg genuine answers.

For anyone currently involved in education, having a career pursuit in the sciences, or simply planning to send a child or grandchild to a college or university, I think this is a movie worth seeing. I went to view this with a university professor and a bunch of graduate students. As we grabbed food and drank our coffee after the show, I was able to hear firsthand their perspectives on the assertions made. The overriding theme that I heard coming out was the power of perspective that is gained when one hears from the lips of the power brokers themselves how biased some can be against anything that resembles God in the sciences. But this demands the question: Can someone believe in the existence of God and be a good scientist? Does the evidence really mandate what is being promulgated in school textbooks and in university classrooms? Is there an agenda that is distinctly separate from what science actually is in uncovering facts about the physical universe?

One enlightening part of the movie is an interview with a well-known scientist turned religionist, philosopher, and moralist. He has recast his career, selling myriads of books that try to expel God from the minds of our generation. Having left classical science, he is getting rich with his notoriety and attempting to encourage all to abandon faith. But does his research justify this?

I was back at the Smithsonian last week to

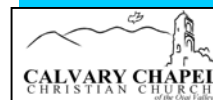
see if there were any changes. You see, six months before I even heard about this movie, I had my own minicontrast with the Smithsonian. After my self-guided tour of the Museum of Natural History, I found myself sitting through their presentation in the Evolution Theater. It was a lesson on the “big family reunion” and was a cute animated story to convince you and your kids that your animalistic behaviors and impulses are more “natural” than you might know. The message was to connect you to Morty, a rat-like creature that lived long ago underground. All mammals evolved from him. No science was presented. No research. No facts, just bright colors and fluffy animation and indoctrination. After all, you are in the Smithsonian Institution, maybe that should be enough credibility on its own that you ask no questions. I responded with letters to each of the board members. I got two replies. Nothing changed.

So why do I invest time in our religion column to talk about a movie that just came out? This normally isn’t that kind of column, after all. The reason is this. We need to be part of a bigger conversation regarding a clash of worldviews that is hitting our culture in a very strong way. It is obvious that some see this more as a war than a mere conflict. And the potential for faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through his gospel is at risk, as well as every faith that humbles oneself under a creator. You see, some very smart people have taken the words of John Lennon and “Imagined a world without religion” and have found a way to get there. It is through the abandonment of the realization of a creator. Without a belief in God, there is no Christianity, no Islam, no anything but humanism and hedonism. But the Bible says that this is not the place of world peace but something much less desirable, an existence much more sinister.

I believe we should heed the words of Jesus, “Let the little children come to me.” Let’s not be part of the destruction of faith and purpose and accountability for life that flows from the abandonment of submission to a creator. Let’s be aware and engage in the conversation that could potentially save a life, and possibly a society.

To read other articles by Pastor Dan visit [Ojai Valley News Articles](#)

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



P.O. Box 1443
Ojai, CA 93024
(805) 640-9498
www.calvaryojai.org

Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View