



STEP-BY-STEP CHURCH SCREENING GUIDE

Stories have a unique way of capturing hearts, sparking conversations and creating opportunities for connection. When thoughtfully planned, a film screening can become a powerful tool for outreach, discipleship and community building.

This guide will help you navigate the practical steps with confidence, from understanding licensing requirements to creating a welcoming experience that leaves a lasting impact.

STEP 1: Secure Your Screening Licence

Before you choose a film, make sure your church has the proper rights to show it.

One of the biggest misconceptions churches have is believing that purchasing a DVD, Blu-ray, digital download or streaming a movie through a personal subscription service allows them to show it publicly. It doesn't.

Under Canadian copyright law, showing a film to a congregation, youth group, Bible study or community audience is considered a public performance, which typically requires permission from the copyright holder.

Obtaining the proper licence protects your church, honours the creators behind the film and ensures your event complies with copyright regulations.

Where can churches obtain a licence?

For many popular films, Canadian churches can obtain an annual [Church Video Licence](#) through [CVLI](#) (Christian Video Licensing International) in partnership with [CCLI Canada](#).

An annual licence allows churches to show thousands of approved titles throughout the year for activities such as:

- Family movie nights
- Youth events
- Children's ministry
- Sunday School
- Small groups
- Special church gatherings
- Ministry events

Already have a Church Video Licence? Great! Before promoting your event, verify that the film you want to show is included under your licence, as not every title is covered.

If your selected film is not included, you may need to obtain permission directly from the film distributor or secure a single-event screening licence.

Important

Every licence has its own terms and conditions regarding advertising, admission fees and eligible audiences. Always review the licensing requirements before planning your event to ensure you're compliant.

STEP 2: Choose the Right Film

A successful screening starts with selecting a film that supports your ministry goals.

Ask yourself:

- Who is this event for?
- What conversation do we hope it will spark?
- Is this outreach or discipleship?
- Is the film appropriate for the intended audience?
- Does it align with our church's values and mission?

Sometimes the right movie isn't the newest release - it's the one that creates the most meaningful discussion.

STEP 3: Build the Experience

Don't just host a movie; create an experience!

Consider adding:

- Welcome bag with church info and a small gift
- Popcorn and refreshments
- Family activities
- Prayer station
- Photo backdrop
- Coffee and dessert afterwards
- Community partner displays
- Children's activities during discussion time

STEP 4: Plan for Conversation

The most impactful part of the evening often happens after the film ends, so build in time for discussion. Invite a pastor, ministry leader or facilitator to guide conversation using questions like:

- What part of the story resonated with you?
- What themes of faith, hope or redemption stood out?
- Where did you see God's grace at work?
- How does this story connect to our lives today?
- What action or response might God be inviting us toward?

Many faith films also provide accompanying discussion guides or Bible studies that can extend the conversation into small groups or sermon series.

STEP 5: Promote Your Event

Invite your congregation to invite someone else. Promote your event through:

- Sunday announcements
- Church bulletin inclusions
- Email newsletter, website, social media
- Ministry groups
- Signage
- Personal invitations

Important

Before publicly advertising your screening, make sure your licensing agreement permits public promotion of the event and the use of the film's title or artwork.

STEP 6: Prepare Your Venue

Before the event day, confirm:

- Screen or projector
- Audio system
- Microphones
- Seating
- Accessibility
- Lighting
- Internet connection (if needed)
- Volunteer team
- Parking
- Washrooms
- Signage
- Run a full technical rehearsal before guests arrive

STEP 7: Create a Warm Welcome

First impressions matter. Assign volunteers to:

- Welcome guests
- Help newcomers find seats
- Answer questions
- Direct families
- Serve refreshments
- Introduce church ministry

STEP 8: Extend the Ministry

A movie night can become much more than a one-time event. Consider inviting guests to:

- Sunday worship
- Small groups
- Alpha or faith exploration classes
- Family ministries
- Youth events
- Volunteer opportunities

STEP 9: Evaluate Your Event

Afterwards, gather your team and ask:

- What worked well?
- What could we improve?
- How many first-time guests attended?
- What conversations emerged?
- What ministry opportunities were created?

Celebrate the impact and begin planning your next event with what you've learned.

Final Thoughts

Some of the most memorable ministry moments happen when people simply gather together and share an experience. A thoughtfully planned film event can create opportunities to build relationships, encourage reflection, and open the door to conversations that might not happen otherwise.

With the practical details taken care of, you can focus on what matters most: creating a welcoming environment where people feel seen, valued and connected. We hope this guide equips you to host an event that leaves a lasting impression and strengthens your church's connection with the community.

- Graf-Martin Team in partnership with FaithFilms.ca