

# SHORT FILM USER'S GUIDE



*The most powerful way to insert an idea into the world is through story.*  
-- Robert McKee

## **Intro to Short Films**

Everyone loves a good story, and today's master storytellers share their narratives through film. Global Short Film Network provides 24 powerful stories you can share through film--short stories that allow you to enter and explore the lives of people around you. When you watch a film, you connect with the characters and you identify with their lives. You find yourself drawn in because you've had similar hopes and dreams, disappointments and hurts, relationships and experiences.

Everyone is on a journey, living out their own life story. After showing a film, you can come alongside someone in their journey by hearing their responses to the film's story, and by exploring their story. Asking questions and genuinely listening can open a door to significant spiritual conversations. As a result of hearing their responses, God may just open a door for you to share a bit of your story, and even His story.

*The typical high school or college student watches an average of 120 films per year.*  
-- Barna Research Group

## **Experiencing a Short Film for Yourself**

1. Before using a Short Film with others, watch it with a friend, and discuss the following questions:
  - What was your initial reaction or first impression? What did you think? How did the film make you feel?
  - What was your favorite scene?
  - What was the main character trying to accomplish?
  - What was getting in his or her way?
  - What was at stake if the main character didn't succeed?
2. Discuss with your friend specific questions found in the i-Pod Short Film Sample Questions Guide.
3. Write down the questions you would like to ask when discussing this film with others or create your own.
4. Think about stories and parables from the Gospels. What story or parable from the life of Jesus connects well with this film?
5. Pray for God to open doors for significant conversations.
6. Ask a friend to go with you. (They can pray and provide moral support as you approach people, show the film, and engage in dialogue afterwards.)

## **Inviting Someone to Watch with You**

When you're approaching someone you know, be yourself. You might say:

*"Hey, I just watched a great short film. I'd love to see what you think about it."*

*"Wanna watch a cool vid?"*

With someone you don't know you might say:

*"Wanna watch a short film and tell me what you think of the story?"*

*"I'm part of CRU here on campus, and we're getting people's responses to some short films from Global Short Film Network. Could you watch one of them and tell me what you think of it?"*

If they ask, "Why are you doing this?" or "Who is this with?" reply by saying:

*"I've gotten connected with Global Short Film Network through my involvement with CRU here on campus. Global Short Film Network is a group of people around the world who love short films and like talking about them."*

*"Through my involvement with CRU here on campus I've gotten connected with Global Short Film Network. We've found that short films provide a great way for people to talk about their life desires and spiritual interests."*

## **Watching a Film Together**

1. Queue the film and hand them your i-Pod and earphone(s). (You can use a splitter to make use of 2 sets of earphones.)
2. As the film is queuing, introduce yourself and find out their names.
3. Watch the film with them, and pray silently for them and yourself as you watch.
4. Let the credits roll until they look up at you. This gives them some time to process. Remember, it's their first time seeing the film.

## **Talking Together After a Film**

Don't worry about whether you ask the "right" questions in the "right" order. The big idea is to gently move the discussion toward deeper, spiritual conversations by exploring the film's story, their story, your story, and making connections to God's story.

With the big picture in mind, here are some suggestions for the flow of your post-film discussion:

1. First talk about the **film's story** and **their story**.

You can ask universal questions that apply to almost every film:

- What was your initial reaction or first impression? What did you think? How did the film make you feel?
- What was your favorite scene?
- What was the main character trying to accomplish? What was getting in his or her way?
- What was at stake if the main character didn't succeed?
- Describe a time when you have had a similar experience.

You can also ask film-specific questions. Take a look at the i-Pod Short Film Sample Questions Guide to get sample questions for each film.

Remember to ask questions and listen well. Don't think in terms of using their responses as a "quick way to get to the gospel," but, rather, follow up their responses by seeking to learn more. If you don't know what to ask, you can always say, "Wow, that's interesting! Tell me more about that."

2. Talk briefly about **your story**.

You can start by connecting something they've shared with a similar thought, emotion, or experience of your own.

- Thanks for talking about your experience of \_\_\_\_\_. I had a similar experience when \_\_\_\_\_, and as a result I felt \_\_\_\_\_.

As you share about your own life, here are a couple things to keep in mind:

- Be authentic. Talk about your own hopes, dreams, hurt, and pain. The more genuine you are, the more likely others are to be honest.
- Be brief. Better to share a 30 second snippet about your own experience than trying to communicate your entire faith story.

3. You may also be able to talk about **God's story**.

You might say something like:

*"The story of this film is based in part upon an ancient story. Jesus told a story like this 2000 years ago. Do you know the story I'm referring to?"*

Then, simply ask permission to tell this ancient story:

*"Would you mind if I told you this story?"*

Tell the story in your own words, wrapping it up by connecting the ancient story back to the story of the film.

4. Finally, they might also give you permission to share **your own faith story**.

You might say something like:

*“Would you mind if I told you how the story of this film relates to my own faith journey?”*

If they give you permission, share briefly how you came to know Jesus personally.

If you don't get this far in the discussion, don't worry. Your objective is to use the film to engage in meaningful dialogue and see where God takes you. Perhaps in the discussion of one film, or over the course of several discussions of various films, you'll unpack more and more of your relationship with God and how He makes a difference along certain themes brought out in the films (forgiveness, trust, truth, brokenness, rescue). Regardless of how far your discussion goes, you can consider your efforts a success whenever you trust God to take the initiative with those around you.

5. Next Steps

- Thank them for taking the time to watch and discuss the film.
- If they have expressed a desire to know God, ask if they'd allow you to explain how they can begin a relationship with Him.
- If the answer is “yes,” then of course, take the time to clearly articulate the gospel using ***Knowing God Personally*** or some similar resource.

**Live Episode . . . Taking it to the Streets**

In this final episode, watch Marcus & Sarah use the short film strategy in a live situation. Once you've watched them, you're ready to go!