

Lights, Camera, Amen

The new frontiers of Christian content

Over the past two decades, faith-based content has proven it can be a formidable force in the entertainment industry. From *The Passion of the Christ*, which redefined box office expectations for religious media in 2004 with its \$600 million global haul, to more recent successes like *Sound of Freedom* and *The Chosen*, faith-driven narratives have demonstrated their ability to resonate deeply with audiences. These milestones are not just isolated wins; they reflect a growing appetite for content that explores spirituality, meaning, and values, particularly among Christian viewers.

It's no surprise that these successes have captured the attention of mainstream studios and streaming services. In January 2024, Amazon announced a partnership with Wonder Project to develop *House of David*, the first in a slate of upcoming faith-based series and films.¹ More recently, Lionsgate renewed its three-year output deal with Kingdom Story Company, a production studio specializing in Christian-focused content.²

Yet nailing down a precise definition for faith-based content can be challenging. At one end of the spectrum are explicitly religious stories crafted for Christian audiences, often driven by overt theological themes. On the other, we see mainstream narratives that resonate with religiously-minded consumers through redemptive arcs, moral dilemmas, and stories of hope and transformation—even when religious ideas remain implicit. Consider *Ted Lasso*, a show that captivated Christian audiences despite never explicitly addressing religion, thanks to its themes of optimism, redemption, and belief in human goodness.³



Image created with Adobe Firefly

1. Joe Otterson, "Amazon Teams With Wonder Project on Faith-Based Films & Shows, Streamer Orders 'House of David' to Series," *Variety*, January 17th, 2024

2. Rebecca Rubin, "Lionsgate Renews First-Look Deal With Kingdom Story Company," *Variety*, November 12th, 2024

3. Tish Harrison Warren, "Ted Lasso, Holy Fool," *The New York Times*, April 30th, 2023

Today, the evolving cultural and spiritual landscape of America presents new opportunities for faith-based media. While religious affiliation has declined overall, younger generations are redefining what faith means in their lives. Gen Z and Millennial Christians, in particular, are leading this change, expressing a strong appetite for content that reflects their values, addresses their modern struggles, and engages with their preferred platforms and formats. This generational shift

demands that storytellers move beyond traditional boundaries and embrace a more inclusive, innovative, and relatable vision for faith-based content.

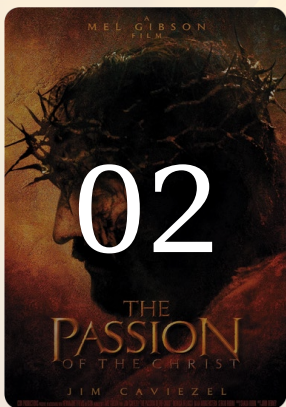
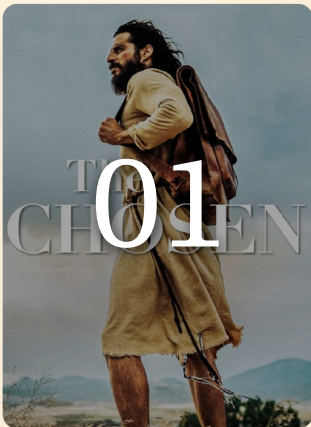
This paper explores the forces shaping the next chapter of faith-driven media. Through insights into audience behaviors, content preferences, and emerging platforms, we examine how studios, creators, and distributors can effectively engage today's Christian viewers—while broadening the reach and cultural impact of faith-based storytelling and breaking down some of the barriers between the Christian content ecosystem and the wider entertainment industry.

IN THIS PAPER, YOU'LL FIND...

- I The evolving tastes of religious audiences—and the role that younger Christians, in particular, are playing in redefining expectations for faith-based content.
- II The key trends that will shape the evolution of faith-based content over the coming years.
- III How studios and streaming services can effectively respond to the demand for new types of faith-based stories.

FAVORITE FAITH-BASED MOVIES AND TV SHOWS AMONG US CHRISTIANS

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES



METHODOLOGY

Unless otherwise specified, data in this report comes from a study of 1,000 US Christians, aged 18 to 74, conducted online in November 2024. All respondents had at least some experience of watching faith-based content. Respondents for this study were selected and weighted to reflect the demographic profile of American Christians in terms of age, gender, and race.

There's an emerging market of younger Christians hungry for meaningful faith-based content

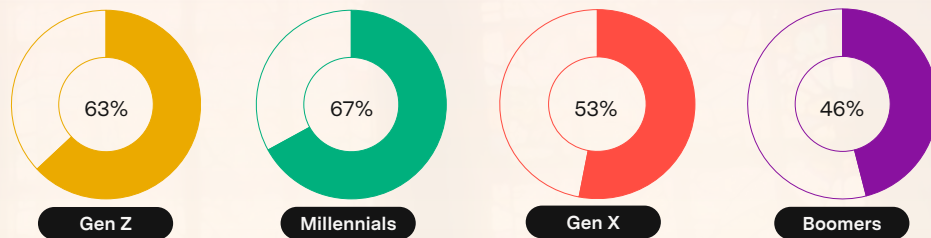
In the minds of mainstream studios and streaming services, the audience for explicitly religious media can at times be characterized as something of a monolith. Faith-based content, they might assume, exists to serve the needs of older, white evangelicals, most of whom hold broadly conservative social and political views.

These assumptions, however, are increasingly out of step with the reality of America's cultural and spiritual landscape. Despite the gradual decline in religious worship and church attendance that has taken place over the past half-century,⁴ around 7 in 10 Americans still identify with some form of Christianity, and almost half describe religion as "very important" in their day-to-day lives.⁵ In a country as diverse as the United States, any group that large is bound to contain a broad range of racial, cultural, and generational perspectives.

And while it's true that Christians do skew older than the general population, that pendulum may be starting to shift. Recent data suggests that there's been a sharp uptick in religiosity among Gen Z over the past two to three years; one 2023 study found that a third of 18-25 year-olds feel "certain" in their belief in God or a Higher Power, up from just a quarter back in 2021.⁶

While there are, no doubt, many factors that have played a role in the religious awakening of younger Americans, it's impossible to deny the impact of the social upheavals and crises these generations have already lived through. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, had a devastating impact on the mental health and the socialization of Gen Z and Millennial consumers.⁷ For many of them, religion has provided both a means of reconnecting with a larger community, and a forum for processing the loss of loved ones.

Percentage of Christians who watch faith-based movies and TV shows at least once per month

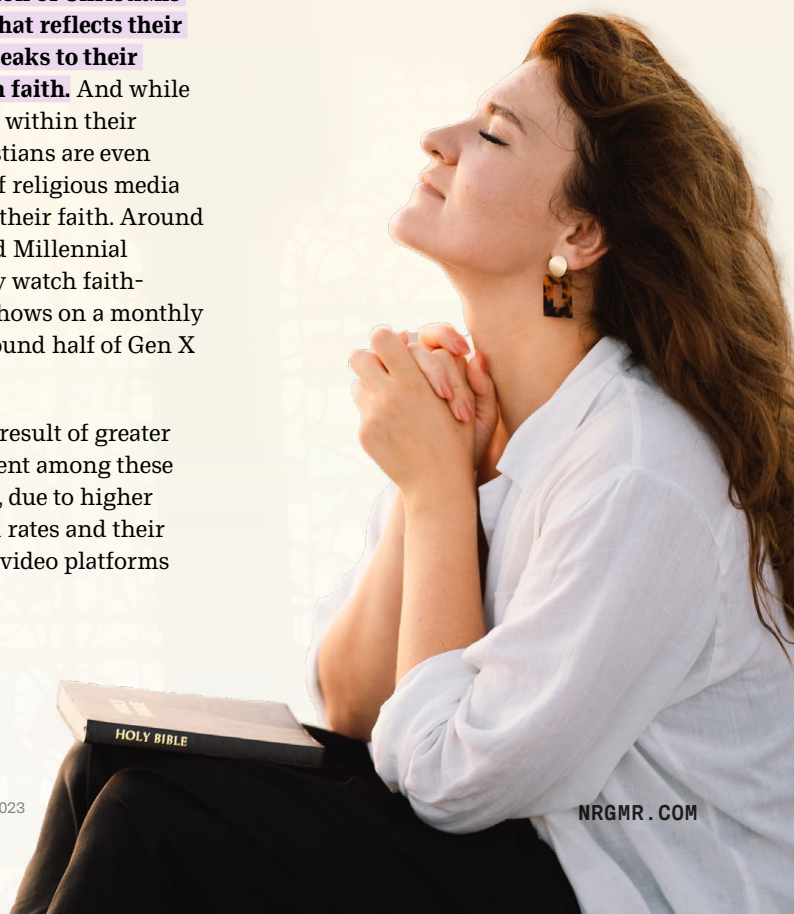


Since the pandemic, ongoing coverage of the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, combined with the looming climate crisis, have only exacerbated this general sense of unease and anxiety among Gen Z. It's easy to see, then, why so many would turn to faith to help provide meaning to and make sense of a world that increasingly feels like it's on fire.

Now, this new generation of Christians are hungry for media that reflects their religious values and speaks to their personal journeys with faith. And while they may be a minority within their religion, younger Christians are even more avid consumers of religious media than older members of their faith. Around two-thirds of Gen Z and Millennial Christians say that they watch faith-based movies and TV shows on a monthly basis—compared to around half of Gen X and Boomers.

This may partly be the result of greater access to religious content among these younger demographics, due to higher streaming subscription rates and their greater usage of online video platforms

like YouTube. But it also reflects the fact that many of these Gen Z and Millennial Christians see their consumption of entertainment media and their religious identity as deeply entwined. Indeed, compared to Boomers and Gen X, they're more likely to say that their faith is an important factor when choosing what content to consume.



4. Jeffrey M. Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time," Gallup, March 29th, 2021

5. "How Religious Are Americans?," Gallup, March 29th, 2024

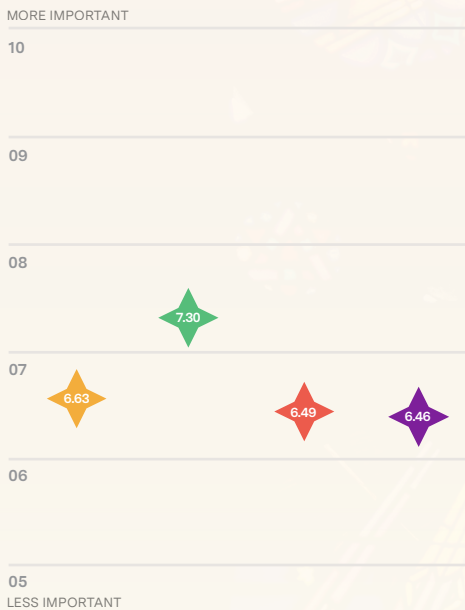
6. Clare Ansberry, "The Surprising Surge of Faith Among Young People," The Wall Street Journal, April 24th, 2023

7. Erica Pandey, "The loneliest generation: Inside the Gen Z mental health crisis," Axios, February 17th, 2024

Moreover, the appetite for faith-based content among these generations only seems to be increasing over time. Almost half (46%) of Millennial Christians, as well as 39% of Gen Z, report that their consumption of faith-based media has increased over the past 12 months.

Q: On a scale from 1 to 10, how important is faith to you when making entertainment choices?

◆ Gen Z ◆ Millennials ◆ Gen X ◆ Boomers

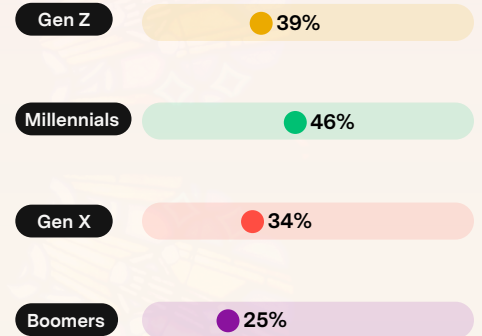


With these younger Christians making up an increasingly large slice of the audience for faith-based media, the time is right for Hollywood to reframe its understanding of the genre—and to revisit possible assumptions about who this content is for. These consumers, after all, have their own unique set of needs and values. Understanding these values will be critical for studios and streaming services that want to deliver faith-based content that truly resonates with modern Christian audiences.

For one thing, younger Christians have proven to be less politically homogeneous than previous generations.⁸ While still more conservative than their non-religious peers, they don't have the same sort of enthusiasm for the kinds of political causes—such as opposition to abortion or same-sex marriage—that once preoccupied the religious right in America. There's a clear need, therefore, for religious content that speaks to the true diversity of political and cultural perspectives among today's Christians, including more liberal and progressive interpretations of the faith.

More generally speaking, there are certain unique themes and topics that younger Christians have a particular interest in seeing represented on screen. **Almost half (46%) of Christians under the age of 35, for example, say**

“I have been watching more faith-based movies and TV shows over the past year”



they're keen to see more faith-based content that specifically addresses the topic of mental health—and which focuses on the role that spirituality can play in helping to tackle issues such as depression and anxiety.

All in all, it's clear that younger audiences will play a key role in shaping the future of faith-based media. With that shift in mind, NRG has identified four key forces that storytellers will need to keep in mind if we want to create content that truly speaks to the needs and wants of today's Christian audiences.

FOUR FORCES SHAPING THE FUTURE OF FAITH-BASED CONTENT

I Grace in the everyday

Prioritizing realistic and grounded storytelling that captures the modern Christian experience in a holistic and nuanced way.

II Keeping it light

Incorporating humor and comedy to engage younger viewers and dispel concerns about content feeling preachy or heavy-handed.

III Faith in new formats

Exploring formats beyond TV and movies, such as social media platforms, podcasts, and other digital spaces—connecting with younger Christian audiences where they already are.

IV Moving beyond the margins

Blending religious themes seamlessly into mainstream genres and challenging the idea that faith-based media has to exist in its own isolated content ecosystem.

8. Dora Mekouar, “Are Young, Less Conservative Evangelicals Parting Political Ways with Their Elders?”, Voice of America, July 14th, 2021

Grace in the everyday

Faith-driven narratives should prioritize realism and relatability.

For the modern Christian, religious content plays a major role in helping them navigate the trials and tribulations of everyday life. Over half (55%) say that they watch faith-based movies to feel inspired and uplifted; 45%, meanwhile, say that watching this type of content helps them to strengthen their personal sense of faith and spirituality.

It's not surprising, therefore, that there's a strong appetite among today's religious consumers for narratives that

authentically capture what it means to be a Christian in our modern world—stories that mirror their personal experiences and challenges, and which demonstrate the role that faith can play in helping overcome them.

There's a strong preference among these consumers, for example, for original stories set in the modern era, as opposed to historical dramas and straightforward adaptations of Biblical narratives. By the same token, Christian audiences say that they're more interested in stories about ordinary people and their relationship with faith than in narratives that focus on senior religious leaders—and that they prefer content that deals with realistic scenarios over stories centering on miraculous or supernatural elements.

Ultimately, today's consumers of faith-based content are looking for stories about ordinary people dealing with

relatable, everyday struggles. And while faith ought to play an important role in helping protagonists overcome these struggles, it needs to be holistically incorporated into their characterization. Audiences say they find it easier to relate to characters where religion is one among many defining elements, rather than those who feel like two-dimensional caricatures defined exclusively by their faith.

However, this need for modern, relatable storytelling doesn't mean that storytellers have to wholly abandon biblical source material. There's certainly still room within the genre for the good old-fashioned biblical epic—and audiences still express strong interest in stories about the life of Jesus and about foundational religious figures such as Noah, Moses, and Job.



It does, however, suggest that writers, producers, and directors ought to rethink how they approach this type of source material. Specifically, they may want to emphasize themes that speak to issues that feel directly relevant to contemporary audiences, or which allow the drawing of parallels with the struggles faced by modern day Christians. What, for example, can the story of Adam and Eve tell us about the perils and pitfalls of dating in the twenty-first century? How could Noah's construction of the ark be read as an allegory for our looming climate crisis?

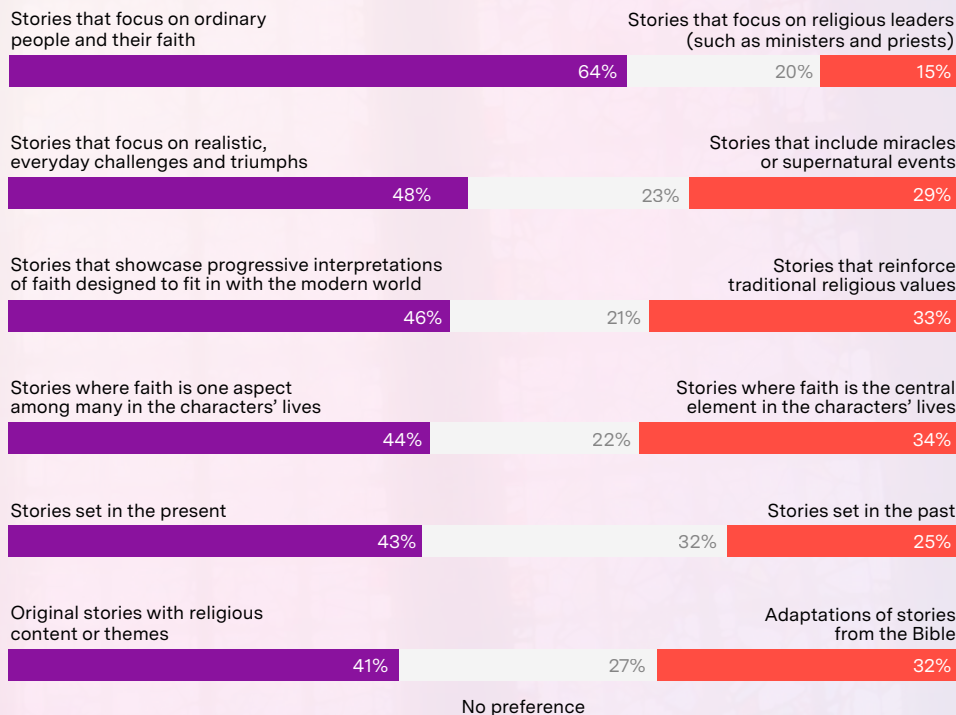
In some cases, this may mean literally transposing these stories into a modern-day setting—but that certainly isn't a prerequisite. *The Chosen* is a particularly strong example of how historical religious dramas can still create space for relatable and grounded storytelling. While the show focuses on the life of Jesus and his followers in 1st century Galilee, many of its characters grapple with challenges that will feel highly relevant to modern audiences.⁹

Mary Magdalene, for example, is portrayed as struggling with issues of alcoholism and addiction—a striking choice at a time when opioid addiction has ravaged so many of America's rural and more religious communities.¹⁰ Economic inequality and racial tensions are recurring themes throughout the series; it's easy to read the tensions between Jews and Samaritans as emblematic of ethnic divisions within our own society.

In short, the show treats its characters as humans rather than simply objects of worship, taking liberties with its source material where necessary to paint a picture of realistic men and women with realistic motivations and failings.

Faith-based content preferences

All Christian Viewers



Of course, these types of adaptational changes need to be approached tactfully. Given the spiritual significance of these stories, straying too far from the source material risks provoking heavy backlash—as demonstrated by the criticism in Catholic media outlets of perceived historical inaccuracies in Netflix's recent retelling of the life of Mary.¹¹

Ultimately, the challenge for storytellers is to build on biblical source material in a way that feels organic and additive. Where new character details need to be introduced, this should be done with the intent of fleshing out what's already there and making it easier for modern audiences to connect with them—rather than modifying essential details of their stories or introducing changes for change's sake.

Jonathan Roumie,
Elizabeth Tabish,
The Chosen,
TBN Films

9. Aja Romano, "The Chosen, the Christian megahit about Jesus, explained," Vox, August 2nd, 2023

10. Staff writer, "Poll: Drug/opioid abuse and economic concerns cited as biggest problems facing rural communities," Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, October 16th, 2018

11. Amy Welborn, "Netflix's 'Mary' is a survival thriller that loses the script," Angelus, December 5th, 2024

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Keeping it light

There's a growing appetite for faith-based content that doesn't take itself too seriously.

Given the general sense of precarity and uncertainty that does so much to define our current cultural moment, it's understandable that so many believers—especially Gen Z and Millennial Christians—would turn to faith-based media for a sense of comfort and respite. In times when hope feels scarce, the need for inspirational and uplifting content is more pronounced than ever.

Laughter can go a long way towards offering some respite from these serious times. That may be why so many Christian consumers say they're keen to see more faith-based content within the comedy genre. This need is particularly pronounced among under 35s: 62% of them say they'd like to see more faith-based comedies, compared to just 46% of older Christians.




Explicitly religious comedies are few and far between—although there have been a few examples of comedies and comedy dramas with religious themes that have found success on TV in recent years.

NBC's *The Good Place*, for example, tackles weighty topics like the afterlife, personal ethics, and spirituality. While not targeted towards a specifically religious audience, the show's nuanced exploration of these themes—drawing on concepts from a wide range of religious traditions as well as secular philosophy—has earned it praise from many Christian reviewers.¹²

HBO's *The Righteous Gemstones*, meanwhile, takes a more cynical look at the practices of contemporary megachurches. Despite the show's ruthless skewering of its central characters, some Christian viewers have nonetheless found much to relate to in its underlying treatment of religion.¹³ Series creator Danny McBride and star John Goodman have made it clear that they see the show as satirizing a specific brand of religious hypocrisy, rather than making fun of Christians in general.¹⁴

These shows may not typically be thought of as examples of faith-based content, but they both speak to the potential for mining comedy from religious or spiritual subject matter. Christian studios may want to take inspiration from some of these secular success stories to craft comedies that speak more specifically to the experiences of today's believers.

Top drivers for watching faith-based content

-  To feel inspired and uplifted
-  To strengthen my own faith and spirituality
-  To find comfort
-  To be entertained
-  To experience stories of redemption and transformation



12. Cort Gatliff, "The Secular Heaven of NBC's *The Good Place*," The Gospel Coalition, April 28th, 2018

13. Jillian Cheney, "The *Righteous Gemstones*' laughs with Christians, not at them," Religion News, February 11th, 2022

14. Emily St. James, "Danny McBride and John Goodman on God, capitalism, and wearing cool pinkie rings," Vox, August 16th, 2019



This desire for faith-based comedies speaks to a deeper need among younger Christians for content that takes a more light-hearted approach to religious themes. For these consumers, there's a place for humor even in media that tackles relatively weighty issues of faith and spirituality; they'd rather engage with content that feels light and comedic over content that feels needlessly serious and dramatic.

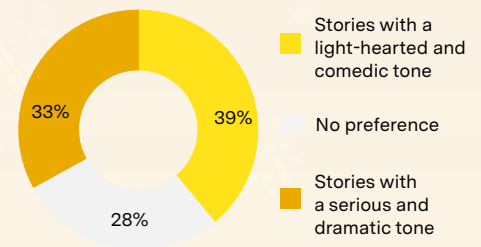
In a sense, this may represent a backlash against some of the perceived stereotypes surrounding Christian media. In the minds of non-believers—and, indeed, many Christians as well—religious movies are often assumed to be inherently preachy and dogmatic: dry biblical epics or modern day morality

tales where the focus is on imparting some kind of lesson rather than providing entertainment value.

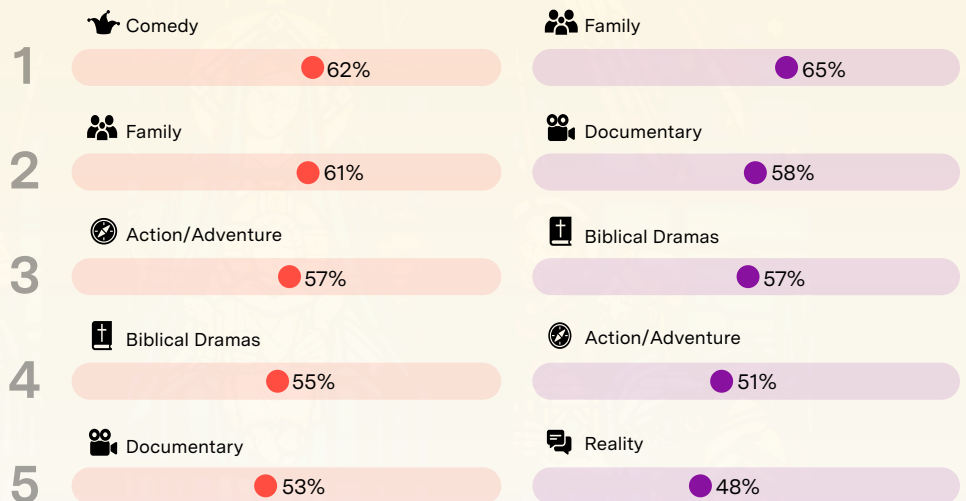
For younger Christians, it's important that faith-based studios and production houses do their bit to push back against these stereotypes—and show that there's room for religious media that takes a lighter, perhaps even self-effacing, approach to its subject matter.

Faith-based content preferences

Christian Viewers under 35



Top genres where viewers would like to see *more* faith-based content



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Faith in new formats

Modern audiences are keen to engage with faith-based content outside of traditional media channels.

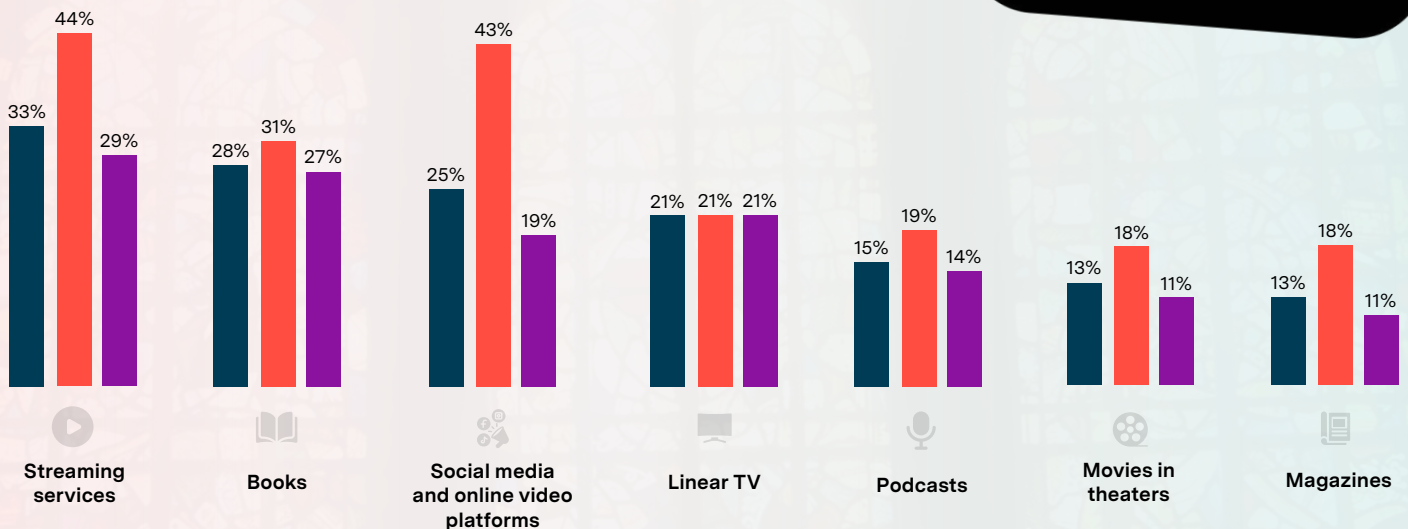
Younger Christians aren't just expanding their appetite for faith-based media; they're looking to engage with this type of content in formats that go well beyond TV and film. It's vital, therefore, that storytellers looking to create content for these consumers meet them where they already are, on their own terms.

Social video platforms, in particular, have emerged as essential cultural hubs for younger Christians. On TikTok, for example, there's a thriving community of Catholic influencers who post videos about their beliefs and practices, sharing information about their faith and answering questions from interested non-believers.¹⁵ In total, 43% of young Christians say that they regularly consume faith-based content via social media or social video platforms—putting these channels virtually on par with streaming services as the primary vehicle through which these generations discover and experience religious media.



Percentage of Christians who “regularly” consume faith-based content through these channels

● All Christians ● Under 35 ● 35 and above



15. Natasha Leake, “Gen Z are looking for miracles and angels: How TikTok became the new church for budding Catholics,” The Telegraph, September 4th, 2024

Among Christians under the age of 35, 78% believe that creators should explore new content formats for reaching younger audiences. Video gaming, for example, remains a largely untapped space for Christian content, despite the existence of a small handful of Christian game studios and the critical success of a select few titles such as 2016's *That Dragon, Cancer*.¹⁶ But even

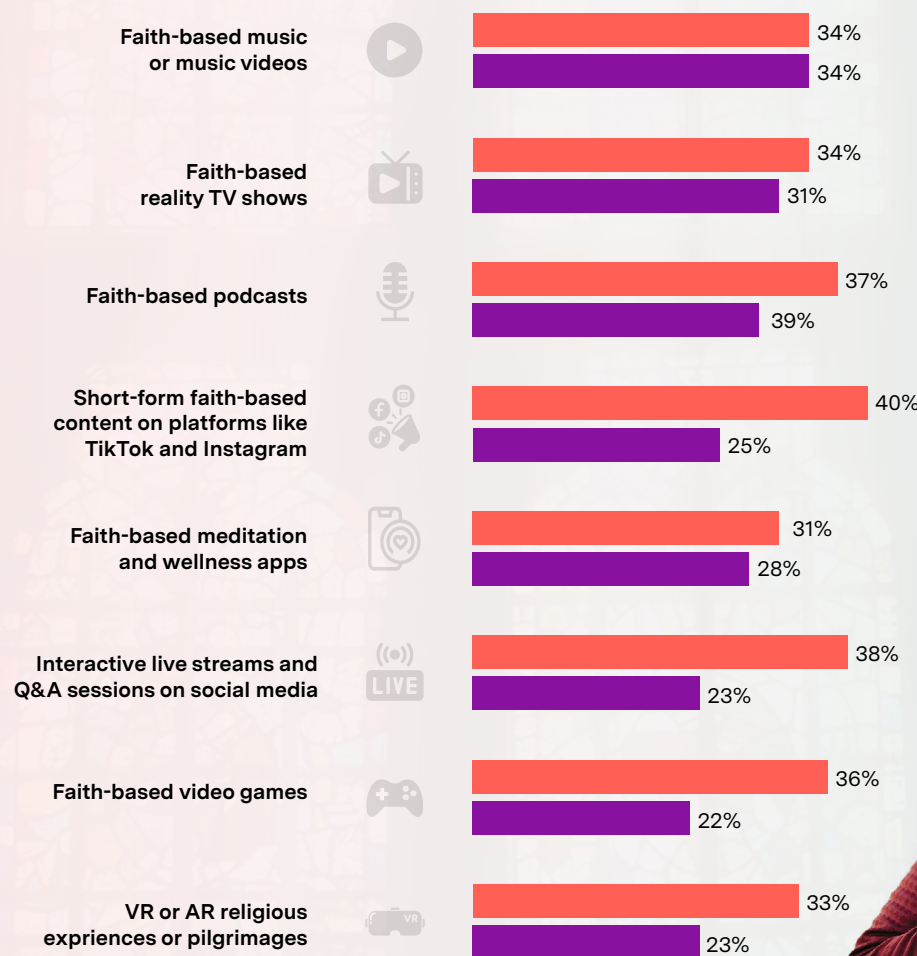
where content is being released in more traditional narrative formats, studios and streaming services may still want to consider marketing activations in a broader range of formats—investing, for example, in supplementary short form content or running interactive live streams or social media Q&A sessions to promote their new releases.

Podcasts are another medium that has emerged as an important component of the Christian content ecosystem—and one that seems primed for further growth over the coming years. Around 1-in-5 young Christians currently listen to podcasts about religion and spirituality on a regular basis, and almost twice that number (37%) say that they'd be highly interested in doing so in the future.

Q: How interested would you be in engaging with these types of faith-based content in the future?

% "very interested"

● Under 35 ● 35 and above



As technologies like VR and AR become increasingly accessible to the average consumer, this may open up even more space for entirely new forms of religious content. But regardless of what the future may hold, it's clear that connecting with modern audiences will require faith-based creators to continue to embrace emerging platforms and formats—offering content that is both accessible and innovative. By doing so, they can satisfy the demand for faith-based narratives that feel fresh, relevant, and tailored to the consumption habits of younger, digitally native Christians.



16. Richard Clark, "Meet the Christian Video-Game Makers," Christianity Today, May, 2015

CASE STUDY

Good Christian Fun

In the world of podcasting, the lines between faith-based and secular content aren't always clear cut. Take, for example, the *Good Christian Fun* podcast. On the show, hosts Caroline Ely and Kevin T. Porter—of *Gilmore Guys* fame—invite guests to dive into the world of Christian pop culture, reviewing and dissecting Christian movies, songs, novels, and more.

While the hosts and many of the guests are Christian, the show sets out to appeal to both religious and non-religious audiences. Instead of preaching, the show leans heavily into personal narratives, providing a space for guests to freely talk about their experiences, both positive and negative, with Christian media.¹⁷

The show's lighthearted and, at times, reflective and self-critical approach towards religion speaks to the need among Gen Z Christians for a new style of faith-based content. This is an audience that prioritizes humor, honesty, and relatability—and the highly personal nature of podcasting makes it an ideal medium for this type of content, allowing the hosts to speak to listeners in an authentic and vulnerable way.

¹⁷ "The A.V. Club's 2018 podcast superlatives,"
The A.V. Club, December 17th, 2018



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IV

Moving beyond the margins

Today's Christians believe there's room for religious narratives beyond the narrow world of faith-centric entertainment.

If the preceding three forces represent different ways of tailoring faith-based content to more effectively meet the needs of modern audiences, this fourth and final force represents something altogether more radical: a fundamental rethinking of how we define and categorize this genre of content.

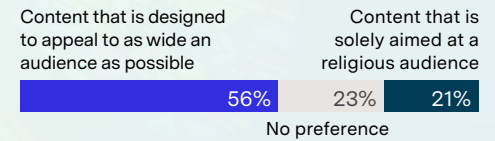
Historically, the entertainment industry has tended to view Christian content as its own unique fiefdom, operating according to its own logic and relatively isolated from America's wider media ecosystem. But increasingly, **religious audiences are calling for content that can reach beyond their immediate community**—stories that focus on universal themes that can appeal to believers and non-believers alike, and which can provide greater mainstream exposure for Christian values and principles.

By a margin of more than 2-to-1, today's Christians say that they prefer to watch mainstream titles that feature religious themes over content solely developed for and marketed towards religious

audiences. Modern Christian consumers, in other words, don't want to feel like Christian media is constantly preaching to the converted; they want their religion to be in dialogue with and responsive to the realities of our wider social and cultural landscape.

Faith-based content preferences

All Christian Viewers



This growing appetite for a more inclusive vision of faith-based content presents a unique opportunity to weave religious themes more seamlessly into mainstream storytelling. Thrillers that explore complex moral dilemmas, romantic comedies that emphasize hope and redemption, or even post-apocalyptic dramas where characters lean on their faith as a source of resilience: all of these can appeal to wider audiences, while still remaining grounded in values and themes that will resonate with Christian consumers.

Of course, there's a danger that steering too heavily into these themes could risk alienating non-believers. But in the past 12 months alone, there have been a number of success stories that demonstrate it is indeed possible to lean on religion as a narrative engine in a way that enhances, rather than undermines, the experiences of non-religious viewers.

Horror movie *Heretic*, for example, won praise from both Christian and atheist reviewers for its sensitive and nuanced portrayal of faith—and the way in which it leveraged religious doubt as a key source of psychological drama. Focus Features' *Conclave*, meanwhile—a taught political thriller about electoral machinations at the Vatican—has now emerged as a leading contender in this year's Best Picture race at the Academy Awards.¹⁸

What these titles have in common is their willingness to tackle Christian themes in a way that feels neither blindly accepting nor patronizingly dismissive. Both of them feature characters grappling with personal religious doubts and turning to God for advice in situations of moral uncertainty; both similarly leave the viewer with substantial room for interpretation as to the “correct” resolution of these uncertainties.

Moreover, both clearly demonstrate attention to detail when it comes to religious beliefs and practices. *Conclave* in particular is a movie almost obsessed

with the minutiae of Vatican processes—and it uses this obsession to great effect. Over the course of the movie, small details of religious iconography—from the red ribbon that seals off the pope's chambers after his death, to the bronze urn into which the papal ballots are deposited—take on deep emotional significance, giving the film its own unique visual language.

71%

of Christians would like to see more blending of faith-based content with other genres of movies and TV shows

69%

think that mainstream movies and TV shows rarely feature Christian values and ethics

The critical and commercial success of these titles suggests that **there is room out there for mainstream content that uses religion as more than just a form of set-dressing**—for movies and shows which engage with religious themes in a serious and respectful way, but which are able to appeal beyond communities of faith. And the majority of American Christians say that they'd like to see mainstream studios and streaming services do more to explore this space: more than 7-in-10 say they'd like to see a breaking down of the barriers between “Christian content” and other entertainment genres.

For secular studios and streaming services, this represents a substantial opportunity: the chance to unlock new types of narratives and to use this enthusiasm among Christian viewers to help promote cross-genre content. For dedicated Christian production companies, meanwhile, it suggests the possibility of breaking out beyond their existing audiences. All in all, the boundaries between Christian and secular content have never been more ambiguous. And in the eyes of Christian consumers, that's certainly a good thing.

18. Clayton Davis, “Oscar Predictions 2025: Major Shifts in the Race Following Golden Globes and Critics Choice Noms,” Variety December 12th, 2024

CASE STUDY

Heretic

While plenty of horror films, from *The Exorcist* to *The Omen*, have drawn on religious imagery and iconography, *Heretic* is the rare example of a movie within the genre that takes a broadly sympathetic view towards its religious characters—and which seeks to seriously grapple with big picture questions about the nature of faith and belief.

In the movie, the villainous and manipulative Mr. Reed—played by Hugh Grant—sets out to dissuade two young Mormon missionaries of their beliefs, subjecting them to a series of increasingly disturbing tests of faith.

Sister Barnes and Sister Paxton, however, ultimately refuse to turn away from their faith. And while the ending of the film is somewhat ambiguous, it's easy to read it as an affirmation of the value of standing up for one's beliefs in the face of a world

increasingly hostile to religious values. While the Mormon church issued a statement publicly disavowing the film for its graphic violence,¹⁹ many individual Mormon reviewers and social media users have publicly praised the movie for its grounded and realistic depiction of their faith.²⁰

As Sister Barnes herself laments in the film, Mormonism is often reduced in fiction to a series of cheap punchlines about polygamy and magic underwear. To avoid this, the filmmakers consulted closely with LDS communities during the writing and the production of the film, creating characters that many Mormons and ex-Mormons were able to see themselves in.

But the film's message extends well beyond any individual religion. Indeed, screenwriter Bryan Woods was inspired to write the film following the death of his father from esophageal cancer, as he searched for answers and meaning in a wide variety of religious texts.²¹ Ultimately, *Heretic* is a powerful case study for the way in which religious themes can inject fresh ideas into genre movies—and for how secular filmmakers and studios can work with religious communities to ensure that their content will resonate with the consumers it seeks to depict.

19. Tad Walch, "The problem with 'Heretic.' Hugh Grant's new horror movie about Latter-day Saint missionaries," *Deseret News*, October 31st, 2024

20. Adrian Horton, "'I feel like that was me': how have Mormons reacted to Hugh Grant horror *Heretic*?", *The Guardian*, November 12th, 2024

21. Germain Lussier, "New Horror Movie *Heretic* Was Inspired by Robert Zemeckis' *Contact*," *Gizmodo*, November 7th, 2024



We're at a pivotal moment in the trajectory of faith-based content

Faith-based content is entering a dynamic and transformative era, driven by the evolving expectations of younger audiences, emerging storytelling themes, and a renewed appetite for narratives that balance modern relevance with timeless spiritual themes.

At the heart of this shift is a broader cultural trend. Younger generations are, increasingly, turning back to faith to help them navigate a world in crisis. As a result, they're demanding content that speaks authentically to their personal spiritual experiences, and for stories that seamlessly incorporate spirituality alongside contemporary settings and relatable characters.

The future of faith-based content lies in its ability to adapt, innovate, and connect with audiences that are more diverse than ever before. By embracing modern storytelling, addressing contemporary challenges, and expanding into new genres and platforms, creators have a unique opportunity to redefine what faith-based media can achieve. For studios and platforms willing to meet this moment, the rewards are clear: deeper audience engagement, cultural relevance, and stories that can inspire across generations.



AT A GLANCE

Five key takeaways

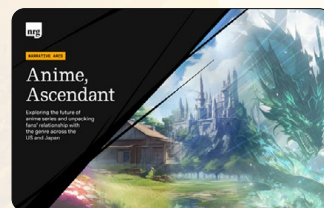
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| <p>I</p> <p>Faith-based content is evolving to meet the demands of younger audiences</p> <p>While still a minority within their faith, Gen Z and Millennial Christians are becoming increasingly important consumers of religious media, and are more likely than older Christians to actively seek out this content.</p> | <p>II</p> <p>These younger audiences are seeking relatable, modern narratives</p> <p>These should align with their lived experiences as young Christians today, and feature characters for whom faith is deeply important, but not their sole defining trait.</p> | <p>III</p> <p>Consumers of faith-based media are prioritizing light-hearted and comedic content</p> <p>With so many young Christians now turning to faith based media to provide respite from a world in crisis, creators need to offer them stories that offer comfort and inspiration through humor.</p> | <p>IV</p> <p>New formats are key to meet younger audiences where they are</p> <p>Social media platforms, short-form videos, podcasts, and video games represent exciting new opportunities to deliver faith-based stories and themes.</p> | <p>V</p> <p>The boundaries between faith-based and secular content are starting to break down</p> <p>Christians today don't want to live in a media bubble. Instead, they'd like to see greater incorporation of religious themes into mainstream entertainment offerings, to create content that can bridge the divide between believers and non-believers.</p> |
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For more on trends shaping the future of entertainment, explore our previous reports, or reach out to us directly at inquiry@nrgmr.com.



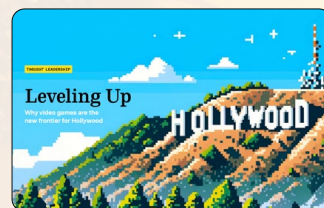
Hero Complex

The role of the entertainment industry in tackling the “crisis of masculinity” afflicting today’s boys and young men



Anime, Ascendant

Why interest in anime is surging, and the four forces that will shape the future of the genre



Leveling Up

Why video game adaptations could be the next frontier for Hollywood

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