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Thursday, September 21, 2006

Guest Commentary: Jesus Camp

*This week, a documentary about a Pentecostal kids' camp hits the silver screen--and blogs, news sites, and message boards are already buzzing. Blogger/writer/preacher [Rich Tatum](#) had a chance to see a pre-release of the film and gives us a sneak peek of **Jesus Camp**. Check out a trailer of the film in a previous [post](#) here at The Ministry Report.*

This week, a documentary about a Pentecostal kids' camp hits the silver screen--and the weblogs, news sites, and message boards are already buzzing. Unfortunately, most of the commentary is inspired by a film that strives for objectivity but fails so miserably that unbelievers, Evangelicals and Pentecostals alike will leave the movie feeling angry, embarrassed or both. I'm here to help.

Just to illustrate how polarizing a supposedly objective film can be, check out a few headlines from online news portals. Think of these as a sort of "controversy barometer":

- "Is *Jesus Camp* camp objective? Or unfair?"
- "*Jesus Camp* mocks evangelical Christianity."
- "Evangelicals run away from *Jesus Camp*."
- "Little terrors on rampage in *Jesus Camp*."
- "*Jesus Camp* will leave no viewer on the fence."
- "Film shows youths training to fight for Jesus."

And my favorite:

- "The most chilling horror movie of the year isn't *Hostel* or *The Descent*: it's *Jesus Camp*."

The film's directors insist they made every effort to remain objective and unbiased in this documentary featuring three typical pre-teens attending a simple family camp in Devils Lake, North Dakota. But the headlines alone highlight the truth: a balanced documentary of that "old time religion" simply wouldn't make decent folk run for the hills. Something else is going on here: either there's something truly fishy at the kids' camp, or the film is simply misrepresenting its subject. So, I offer a few bullet-points to put the film in perspective:

- Becky Fischer, the camp director, is a fourth-generation Pentecostal minister with roots in the Word of Faith movement. For her, this film is the neatest thing since wireless mics--it's a direct fulfillment of prophecy. She is an effective children's evangelist, but she does not represent me. She doesn't represent all Evangelicals, all kids' ministers, or even all Pentecostals. Becky represents ... well, Becky--and nobody else.
- The film misleads by simply portraying this as an Evangelical camp. But you don't usually find, say, Southern Baptist guest ministers wielding a "big ole Holy Ghost hammer" while laying waste to the "power of the enemy over government."
- In the film, "Pentecostal" is synonymous with "Evangelical," which is synonymous with "Fundamentalist," which is, not surprisingly, synonymous with "Taliban," "terrorist," "psychopath" and "illiterate buffoon." (Fortunately, nobody uttered the word "Charismatic" for the entire film, so you guys are off the hook.)
- Liberal sneers have been generously sprinkled throughout the entire film, with running commentary by Air America talk show host Mike Papantonio and his Greek chorus of call-in guests. Papantonio's straw-man arguments against Evangelicalism would be funny if he weren't so paranoid. Apparently, Evangelicals are laying waste to the earth, waging war against the innocent and destroying democracy, liberty and the American way.

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Seriously.

- You will hear creepy music whenever the directors want you to be disturbed. Note: Be sure to act appropriately mortified when they cue the music or your fellow moviegoers will sniff you out as an Evangelical and strip-search you for belt-bombs. When a kid is speaking in tongues, the music alerts you to be afraid--very afraid. Unless, of course, you realize the film makers are intentionally manipulating the emotional content of what the camera recorded.
- You will hear kids say the darnedest things. But, somehow the fact that these are kids escapes the attention of **everybody** in the film. (When, I ask, did we elect children to be our spokesman for faith?) But the filmmakers capture every oddball statement with glee. For example, we learn from Rachael that "Churches that God likes to go to are churches where they're jumpin' up and down, shouting his name, and just praising him." Presumably, then God wouldn't be found dead in a hospice chapel.
- You will not see the exorcism the filmmakers graciously left out. But you will hear tongues, and see shaking "falling out" and "hookin' up with the Spirit." You will see crying, weeping and wailing. You will see Ted Haggard (minus the wailing). In fact, you will see a very humorous and endearing Ted Haggard--until he *seemingly* closes a prayer with the battle-cry, "It's *massive* warfare every day. Let the battle begin!" (Note to self: Never let anyone who promises to be "fair" edit my altar calls, my sermons, or my prayers.)

Not surprisingly, Haggard isn't feeling too light-hearted about things now. He's distanced himself from the movie, saying that the directors portrayed their subjects in a "sinister light" and that the directors misrepresent Evangelicals. I agree. While there may be a little fishiness at the campground, as Haggard says, one could learn as much about Roman Catholics from watching *Nacho Libre* as one could learn about Evangelicals by watching *Jesus Camp*.

Liberals are angry about the "brainwashed" children inducted into a new Taliban--all that's missing is the bomb-belt and an AK-47. Unbelievers are convinced the tongues, the shaking and the supernatural-talk are just plain madness. Evangelicals are upset because this is simply not church as they know it. And Pentecostals are put-out because the documentary makes us look like unwitting fools who have lost our minds.

Just remember, this documentary focuses on one unique children's pastor, three unusual children, and the vanishingly narrow Evangelical sub-culture they belong to.

This isn't "Jesus Camp," it's "Becky Fischer's Camp."

But nobody would've paid to see that movie.

- **Rich Tatum**

posted by Matt Green : 7:55 PM

Comments:

Rich:

I've been "in the mix" with the Pentecostal camp for more than thirty years now, though my roots are Baptist - fundamental, conservative Baptist.

I become more and more convinced with every passing season (I'm now forty-something), that God's heart breaks when He sees his kids painted in a "negative" light. Remember - He's a " ... jealous God ...", and He will have the final say.

Over the past thirty years, the North American "church" has come through a supernatural transition of both prosperity and poverty -- depending on which "camp" you choose to hang out in.

The film trailer that you refer to does in fact leave the viewer "wondering" just what it is that we "Jesus people" are really up to in America, and the world.

Thus, the "bait" to make you want to see the film.

I have not viewed the film in its entirety -- not sure I want to. I suppose Becky Fischer does a fine job in the ministry that she is called to. I'm just not so interested anymore in "marketing" the church to the world.

I've done that for more than 15 years now; and, quite frankly, my "prospective believer" friends (in the lost world) ... are quite confused, and really "over" the whole hyper-overdrive marketing techniques of my church.

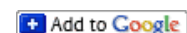
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They just want REAL. Not, "reality church", like the junk we see on TV -- but, REAL LIFE.

They could really care less how "high" I get on Jesus when I'm in my Sunday cocoon with other believers. They wanna know what I'm gonna do with the crap the world throws at me on Monday morning. That's the "proof" that I'm really "saved", in their opinion.

I don't know Becky Fischer, and I've never heard of "Jesus Camp", until I watched this clip. Again, I'm sure her intentions, purposes, and agenda are purely motivated by God. I did not see anything in the clip that makes me uncomfortable with how Christianity is portrayed ... because "I am one".

I simply believe that we are going to have to come to the realization that there are segments of our society -- especially in westernized, Americanized culture -- who have been indoctrinated by humanistic, atheist, hedonist ideologies, that the "Christian-right" in America is just as dangerous as the cultures we see typified in the Middle East. End of story.

Therefore, my conviction is that we must "shed" as much of our religious "dogma" and "charisma" as possible when confronted with the difficult questions from the [lost] world, so that we might earn some credibility to speak the Truth to them, without our "-ism" or cultish ways getting in the way of their hearing it.

I like the Wesley quote: "... people preach sermons every day; unfortunately, some must use words ..."

posted by [Robby Myrick](#) : 11:41 AM

It's amazing that this article in no way seeks to provide some defense for these kids who are authentically serving Jesus. You ask, "When did kids become spokespersons for Christianity?" My question is, "When did Jesus disqualify them?" You give away your bias toward kids as unusable in ministry, the very thing Becky Fischer is trying to challenge. My children have been to Becky Fischer's events. This woman is filled with integrity and poise. I have also seen the film and seen how out of context statements can be presented, but you are turning your disapproval of the movie against a terrific minister who you know very little about. You attack of Rachel's comments are particularly telling. Here's a 9-year-old girl wonderfully describing that she knows the difference between a dead church and a live church (a really touching scene), and you attack her with a junior-high level argument... "hospice chapels must not have God then" (by the way, I'm a hospice chaplain). What kind of integrity is that? I know Becky to be full of integrity. She was a children's minister with Rick Joyner's ministry for 10 years when God led her to take the principles she was teaching to a wider audience. Jesus lived in the midst of controversy when He spoke truths that could be taken out of context: like "eat my flesh and drink my blood." They accused Him of all sorts of things; just like these kids are being accused of being like Taliban (the farthest thing from the truth.) Many of Jesus' disciples turned tail and ran. I have a feeling you're doing the same.

posted by [Anonymous](#) : 11:51 AM

Having attended the camp last year where part of the film was filmed and then also attending this years also...I am in a quandry. I have not seen the movie but I have seen what was being taught and am in peace with the message.

I went last year after hearing about the belief that God was readying Himself to begin too speak through and too His kids. I believe that scripturally that has historically proven to be true. So I went.

I observed much of the filming (the part done at the camp) and it was free of manipulation or coercion. I have not seen the movie but I having been a small part of last years camp will definately do so. thus I have no opinion as of yet.

I after experiencing last years camp took 14 kids this year to this summers camp which was named Cry for the Nations (including three of my own kids ages 10 to 15)

The movie I cannot comment on as of yet...outside of the ten days in the camp setting I cannot comment on any persons integrity involved. However...in the settings that I was able to experience that Leadership of Kids in Ministry International they were exemplary in their representation of both the gospel and the kids involved.

A person in need of understanding what KIMI beleves and teaches could simply take the time to read Becky Fishers book "Redefining Childrens Ministry". I am not sure if that is the exact title but its pretty close. Every parent or youth/childrens leader that I have shared that book with has been challenged within themselves.

Many children that have been taught by me from her curriculum have acknowledged a heightened awareness of God within their lives.

I will close with this...kids need an opportunity to truly experience God for themselves...and that is the core foundational principle of what Becky Fisher and the curriculum that her ministry Kids In Ministry International offers to the church and the churches kids.

posted by [Brad Herman](#) : 12:22 PM



As a Christian I totally disagree with the premise of your article. You have no biblical foundation to stand on so you quote what the headlines of the world are saying. Since when do we list what the world is saying and use it to define what God is doing?

Anyone knows that when the secular media tries to film what God is doing in and through people who are doers of the word and not hearers only it is going to look foolish. Especially when they edit out anything that would have given credibility.

You don't even know the people involved yet you pass judgement. That is more scary than the movie. Since when did Jesus try to appear credible to this world. At one point he said eat my flesh and drink my blood and lost almost all his followers. He never stopped to explain what he was saying. He was so controversial in his time that he was called the rock of offense and the stone of stumbling. I guess people are still stumbling today over what He is doing.

You can't win the world with the wisdom of this world. If you or I were God I don't think we would have chosen to start the church off with the gift of toungues in the street. They were accused of being drunk and crazy. God does not change for men, men must change to come in alignment with God. God issues no apologies for offending the minds of the wise.

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise. and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Wehre is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? for since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 1 Cor chapter one.

Lets stand up for our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted and misrepresented by the media. They don't need there own attacking them along with the world. Lord help us and forgive us for joining in with the chorus of the world in mocking our own.

In a church world where roughly 70% of the kids will turn their back on God it is refreshing to see kids on fire for Jesus. I guess normal is a bunch of bored pre teens sitting on the back row, chewing gum and goofing off. Maybe we should have a documentary showing that. I guess that would be approved because it is the status quo.

Mark
Prepare the Way Ministries
posted by Anonymous : 2:51 PM

Thanks, all, for your comments, I appreciate you reading my article, and taking the time to post your thoughts and reaction.

Robby Myrick,

I agree with you, children should not be painted in a negative light, and I think the children at Becky Fischer's camp were done a disservice in this regard. Sure, there are some very touching and endearing moments in the documentary, but children are not infallible. Highlighting their quiriness as though what they say necessarily reflects what they've been taught is misleading. As Paul says, when I was a child I thought as a child. When these children grow up, how many of them will hold to the exact same beliefs they have now? Abandoning childhood thought-patterns is a *good* thing, and assuming that what children think reflects what their adults think i simply naive--but this is what the film implies. And then to underscore children's worship with creepy music similarly paints them in a bad light.

You mentioned that you're not interested in "marketing the church to the world." Amen to that. We certainly need less marketing and more transformation. Less selling and more discipleship. Christ in us is more winsome than all the best marketing tactics we could invent, anyhow.

You mentioned, "Therefore, my conviction is that we must 'shed' as much of our religious 'dogma' and 'charisma' as possible when confronted with the difficult questions from the [lost] world, so that we might earn some credibility to speak the Truth to them, without our '-ism' or cultish ways getting in the way of their hearing it."

Though that comment sounds dangerously close to a "marketing" idea, I like it. I think we have become so accustomed to bringing the lost to church in order that the pastor might evangelize them that we've developed an impenetrably insular language and culture missing only the "secret handshake." Frankly the church needs to be out in the world more, hanging out with the unbelievers, rubbing shoulders with them, bowling with them, coaching Little League with them, clearing weeds with them. This was one of the chief criticisms against Jesus: that he spent too much time with the unregenerate. We act like it was simply "the lost" who reviled Jesus and rejected then crucified him, but it was the "religious" who did that.

Dear Anonymous hospice chaplain,

I'm sure you'll once again accuse me of turning tail and running, but talk to me after you sign your name to your post and I'll be happy to continue the discussion.

Brad Herman,

You mentioned you had heard that "God was readying Himself to begin too speak through and to His kids," but I wasn't aware that he had ever stopped. Did he?

Please not, I am not questioning the integrity of anybody in KIMI, Becky Fischer included. And I agree with you that "kids need an opportunity to truly experience God for themselves." I had very similar experiences in my youth camps at Mountainair, New Mexico, and I wouldn't trade them for the world.

Mark,

You say that you disagree with the premise of my article, but can you state the premise? Seriously, I don't think you read the same article I wrote, and if you did, I am not sure you understood it.

Here, let me help you out, this is my premise in simple words that most high-schoolers can understand.

The film does not portray its subjects accurately.

There you have it. Now, go back, please, and re-read what I wrote, perhaps you won't get so lathered up.

I don't list what the world is saying to define what God is doing. I list what the world is saying to ... uh ... list what the world is saying. If the Apostle Paul could quote secular poets and philosophers, maybe you'll grant me the latitude to quote a few newsrags to make a point?

You say that anyone knows that secular media will always get it wrong when filming God's work. I happen to agree with you about secular media always getting it wrong. You're absolutely correct, sir. However, I disagree that this knowledge is universal. For the sake of brevity, allow me to refer you, once more, to the list of headlines I cited. I know you don't believe me, but there are more than a few who think what they see in "Jesus Camp" is nothing less than an all-out call to war with bomb-belts, rifles, and zombified children. But, to risk redundancy for the sake of clarity: "the film does not portray its subjects accurately."

You wrote: "You don't even know the people involved yet you pass judgment. That is more scary than the movie."

Are you passing judgment, too? Do you know me? Are you violating your own principle? Just to make things clear for you, I am not judging the state of Becky Fischer's soul, Tory's, Levi's, or Rachael's souls, or even Mike Papantonio's, Rachel Grady's or Heidi Ewing's souls. That judgment is indeed reserved for God.

But in the Bible I read, I am commanded to be discerning, to judge a tree by its fruit and believers by their fruits. If you need me to look it up to prove it to you, don't bother. See Bible Gateway for details.

Your statement, "Since when did Jesus try to appear credible to this world...He never stopped to explain what he was saying." is nonsense. Nevertheless, in order to help you understand your Bible more clearly when you get around to reading it again, you should note that Jesus spent a great deal of time explaining the scriptures to the religious idiots of his day--starting in childhood! He spent a great deal of time patiently explaining his own actions to his disciples. He spent a great deal of time couching deep ideas in simple language called parables so that regular folks would understand what he was about. Christ was constantly explaining himself, explaining his father, and correcting his disciple's misunderstandings. If you believe otherwise, you're simply not getting the premise of the Gospels.

You also noted, "If you or I were God I don't think we would have chosen to start the church off with the gift of tongues in the street. They were accused of being drunk and crazy."

Yes, but this event was also unique for they spoke in tongues that were understandable. The audience knew that the disciples were praising God with intelligible speech--just not in language they were normally accustomed to speaking. They're only explanation was drunkenness. This kind of intelligible speech is not the gift of typically unintelligible tongues usually associated with the Baptism of the Spirit, worship services, prayer language or the kinds of utterances that Paul the Apostle says *must* be accompanied by an interpretation. There are exceptions, of course, where witnesses in a service could understand the tongues being uttered, but for the most part, the "tongues of men and angels" seem to defy interpretation except through Spirit-empowerment.

This is why Paul restricted the use of public tongues without interpretation in the church. The unbeliever will conclude you are mad.

And Paul thought that was a bad thing. If you think otherwise, please re-read 1 Corinthians 12-14. It may be instructive for you.

Mark, you seem to be laboring under the misunderstanding that I am attacking Becky Fischer, these kids, and this camp. I am not.

Re-read my article please, once more, with my premise in mind:

The film does not portray its subjects accurately.

Regards,

Rich

[BlogRodent](#)

posted by [Rich Tatum](#) : 4:44 PM

Rich,

Smooth.

But after you were done with your article or response I bet nobody thought what was happening with Becky and the kids was of God. I wonder if other Christians after reading your article would respect Becky for her ministry or I wonder if your article was encouraging to Becky? I wonder if they would be excited to buy her book and see what God is doing with children today through her. I wonder if you helped bring credibility to one of your own who may have been misrepresented by the media.

I bet she is really going through it right now. If it did not encourage her or the move of God it did the body of Christ a disservice.

You said you did not attack Becky but you said basically Becky's camp was not of Jesus with your last statement in your article. That means Jesus would not want His name associated with her camp. Huh?

Maybe you should have wrote about how the movie misrepresented and did not capture what God is doing with kids but anyone leading kids to experience God and be on fire for him has your vote.

If you want to go to fruit I know many children walking for Jesus today because of Becky Fischer. I know street children who live in terrible situations whose lives hae been turned around. I have seen the joy on a child's face who heard God's voice or felt His presence and love for the first time. I know youth in many nations of the world from Mexico, to India who have come to Know Jesus as Lord and Savior. I know Becky is on her knees crying out to God for the next generation weeping over them. Oh I guess the movie is the fruit. Huh?

I have met Becky, read her book and listened to her tapes. She is on the cutting edge with what God is doing with children today.

By the way I do read my bible. :-)

My point is that Jesus did not explain himself in the statements eat my flesh and drink my blood. It was here he did not explain. He ran off alot of people. If he explained Himself so well as you said why did men who left all to follow Him leave him after hearing these statements by Christ.

My point is if that would happen today the media, including Christian media would have quoted that statement "Eat my flesh and drink my blood" or recorded the statement live. Then Christians could have distanced themselves from Him because of it and talk for hours about how he blew it because he ran people off.

Yes I agree that they spoke with tongues and people understood it(this still happens today by the way) but they still thought they were drunk. How much more if people don't understand what you are saying.

You are also mistaken that I am upset or something. Just sharing what I see to be a presumptuous article with little experience in the trenches of children's ministry.

Mark

posted by [Anonymous](#) : 5:40 PM

I've seen the Pre-release copy of Jesus Camp. I've spoken to one of the producers of the film and I know Becky Fisher. I agree that the movie while trying to appear objective, is anything but. But don't castigate Becky for how the movie came out. She neither initiated the contact with the film producers nor did she have control over how the final product came out. She's a sincere woman who has a passion to see kids do more than memorize Bible verses. She wants them to experience the power of which those verses speak.

In my opinion Jesus Camp attempts to mix politics with spiritual training in a way that came off contrived and confusing.

There are clearly differing opinions about the role Christians have in the political arena. There are certainly theological differences between Christians who define themselves as Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Fundamentalists. There are many Christians who are not exposed to or used to seeing kids experience manifestations of the Spirit or having a passion for evangelism that was evidenced in the movie.

But what makes the movie irritating, and agitating I suspect is the odd way that these elements are tacked together in the movie called "Jesus Camp".

Kids going to camp to be trained in the things of God is not wrong or strange...at least it shouldn't be. But when the movie makers chose to bring in the whole issue of political activism and then combine it with a kids camp, well it makes people nervous. We envision Nazi youth camps where young minds are indoctrinated with the "political correctness" of the Third Reich or Muslim children being coached on how to "Hate the evil American empire" and, worse, how to give their lives to destroy it. This incites non-believers and plays to their worst impressions of what being an "evangelical" is all about. At the same time, it makes charismatics and Pentecostals nervous who see their beliefs in the present day operation of the supernatural connected to politics and don't want to be affiliated with it. Bottom line, the movie gives lots of people reasons to be upset. Hats off to the film makers who understand how to make a provocative movie that incites emotion. Let's face it, a movie about normal kids going to a typical Christian camp is not the stuff that draws people to the theater or creates publicity. Jesus Camp has people talking.

So let's be level headed and constructive in our discussion and ask the Holy Spirit to use Jesus Camp to open up hearts to the fact that maybe we all should be doing more to train our young people to be active, passionate and equipped followers of Christ, comfortable in their ability to experience the Spirit's power to witness and in signs and wonders. Go ahead, and debate the believer's role in the political process. But let's not throw Becky or even the movie producers under the bus in the process. Hey, the movie makers didn't set out to make a "Christian film". But let's pray that this film will be used by God to draw people to Himself.

posted by David Welday : 6:34 PM

The clip that I saw bothered me. Considering the effect that looks like it possibly will have upon the unsaved is one that I don't believe any Christian would want an unbeliever to have, let alone a child of a Christian. I would hope that any non-believers that see this film do not think that such is the normal approach to their child if they were even considering sending their child to a Christian camp.

The trailer made the whole camp experience look anything but REAL LIFE. The approach doesn't take into consideration the effect of similar actions away from the camp in day to day life. A fact missed I believe is the fact that these are children. Children are impressionable. Guide a child in living a life that reflects the love of God.

The war comments within the trailer bothered me greatly. It seems that those at this camp haven't gotten to the part within scripture that God won and believers are to share that Good News with all we come in contact. So simple that a child indeed can and will understand such.

Camp should bring about a positive change within the day to day life of the child that is attending. Laying the foundation of biblical understanding that one lives in day to day life. It appears from the trailer such is not the case at this particular camp.

People in general are looking for the 'real'. Sad to say this, but if the movie trailer is any indication, the children at the camp in question are not going to leave better suited to living and being an active force in their day to day life - just confrontational to those that do not agree nor understand or want to understand because of the approach if taken as suggested within the movie trailer.

posted by Anonymous : 7:53 PM

Rich,

You seem intent on arguing "your" point based on your feelings...I feel that we must allow "that" its due attention. I have had adults state that by allowing the young people an opportunity to become spirit filled when God chose more than based upon them being of an "appropriate" age; that I was taking advantage of their emotions. They also said that I was possibly "convincing" them.

I say that the answer to both of the suppositions that the answer is yes...yes it is probably the most emotional moment that they will ever experience upon this earth and...they were persuaded or convinced in the Gospel...yes.

You are basing this largely on feelings and then hammering KIMI in regards to kids influencability and emotions...are we as adults so different than kids. The typical answer to that is...we are adults and we are...you finish that statement.

Doctrine is what we believe...period.

What we believe is subject to the people that taught us...so we typically believe what the people believed that God allowed into our lives. Therin lies the problem of change...I was not taught that so I do not believe it.

I believe that the kids coming up right now are going to do more than me...or you. I believe that they are going to hear from God better than me...or you.

I believe that if they are taught to believe in hearing from God in a clear and distinguishable manner...they will...do you?

I...you...were served by the pioneers in our faith. Read Becky Fishers book...she is a pioneer.

Change is hard...accepting these things to be true may simply be subject to you attending (silently) one of Becky Fishers meetings?

Read the book...experience God through one of these young people possibly "calling you out of the crowd" and then reassess and maybe...maybe not...your view will change.

As I stated before I was at the camp and the representation of the Gospel...and the kids...at that camp was exemplary...I was there as an observer to assess whether or not this curriculum and the beliefs of its parent ministry were valid enough to teach the kids at our local church.

Since last year i have purchased every one of her curriculums for the young people in our church (she has five). Buy them before you assess them or what she teaches.

The church needs to learn to play better together...if we have ought against one another...we should respect one another enough to sit face to face one on one before we slam them internationally. As i stated yesterday I am in a quandry...

I was there and yet I see so many people that were not...especially you Rich...so quick to fire off and assault the very body that we are a part of.

My quandry...we as christians are the very cancer that destroys the cells...or people...of the very body in which we reside. Sobering!

You say you are not attacking becky but here are some quotes from your article...

So, I offer a few bullet-points to put the film in perspective: Becky Fischer, the camp director, is a fourth-generation Pentecostal minister with roots in the Word of Faith movement. For her, this film is the neatest thing since wireless mics--it's a direct fulfillment of prophecy. She is an effective children's evangelist, but she does not represent me. She doesn't represent all Evangelicals, all kids' ministers, or even all Pentecostals. Becky represents ... well, Becky--and nobody else.

But, somehow the fact that these are kids escapes the attention of everybody in the film. (When, I ask, did we elect children to be our spokesman for faith?)

While there may be a little fishiness at the campground,

Just remember, this documentary focuses on one unique children's pastor, three unusual children, and the vanishingly narrow Evangelical sub-culture they belong to.

This isn't "Jesus Camp," it's "Becky Fischer's Camp."

But nobody would've paid to see that movie.

nice!

posted by Brad Herman : 10:27 AM

We can have confidence in the midst of controversy. Our focus needs to change. We have to stop our unrealistic expectation that someday the world is going to understand us or accept us.

Our goal or motive should be to bring God glory and testify of what we have both seen and heard not to be understood and excepted by men. If we do not change our goal and motive we will not be ready for real persecution when it comes.

We think if we can just communicate better, be perfect, be less wierd, water down the gospel, make sense of the move of God, be seeker sensative, make sense of the power of God then we won't look like fools.

We try to make our message and churches acceptable to men and instead of accetable to God. Maybe if we focused more on being acceptable to God, God would save the people we are trying to reach.

Did God call us to look less wierd to this world. Did He say Go into all the world and preach the Gospel but don't look foolish doing it. Make sure the world is not turned off by the power of God.

It pleased God by the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For you see your calling brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are mighty.

Jesus told us ahead of time if they called me belzebug what are they gonna call you. He said you will be hated by all on account of My name. Praise God if you are persecuted for the glory and spirit of Christ rests upon you.

Do you think we can be more like Jesus, have more of His Spirit and still have the respect of the world? If you say that is possible then you are able to do what Jesus Himself was not able to do nor the prophets before him.
The more of Christ we have the more rejected we will be.

Saints of God. Do not fear the worlds opinion of you! Do not buy into the enemy's lie that if the world is upset at you it was your fault.

While we need to share the truth in love and wisdom our primary motive is not to be understood or accepted. It is to bring God glory by being who God made us to be with no apology.

Don't be afraid of them or ashamed. Don't be afraid of how the world tries to portray Christians in this movie or otherwise. All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. It will become a platform to share the gospel to thousands. God can turn this around and use it despite how we look.

If they misquoted and misrepresented Jesus they will do the same to us.
That will not and never can stop God. To think God could be stopped or hindered by a movie shows we have shrunk Him down to the size of men. God is so big he can even take this movie and use it to bring Christ to thousands even if it makes you and me look bad.

If a movie crew from the secular media was around in Jesus time he would not have forbid them to film him. He would not have been dismayed at how they would have made him look. He would have just been who God called Him to be. He did not come to be accepted but to call those who believe. Can you just see some of the clips of Christ putting mud in people's eye and taking the whip to cleanse the temple?

God can not be stopped and neither can we unless we want respect more than the power of God.

God is raising up a new generation of leadership that desires the respect of God and the acceptance of God. Their zeal will be to give Him glory and they will build churches for him not man. They will not be ashamed of their message or the power of God. They will not compromise to look less foolish. Instead of trying to reach the world with the wisdom and ability of man they will cry out to God on their knees and receive from heaven what they really need to bring in the harvest.

Mark

posted by Anonymous : 11:12 AM

Rich,

I Read your article very carefully. The way the article ends, and the last thing readers are left with makes it sound as if Becky Fischer or Kids In Ministry made this film and are using it for some sort of publicity; and I quote

'This isn't "Jesus Camp," it's "Becky Fischer's Camp." But nobody would've paid to see that movie.'

It's obvious that you forget that these were non-believing producers who made the film because when they saw kids passionate for Jesus, they saw something that drew them, that intrigued them and they wanted to document it. You also write,

" She is an effective children's evangelist, but she does not represent me. She doesn't represent all Evangelicals, all kids' ministers, or even all Pentecostals. Becky represents ... well, Becky--and nobody else."

I have to say you are dead wrong there. I know Becky. Do you know Becky? Do you have any idea the impact her ministry has had on this generation of kids worldwide? She represents much more to many people. Your comments really show your ignorance in the whole matter and display how out of touch you are with where this younger generation is spiritually. I have been to KIMI camp and I have taught Becky's curriculum to kids and teens for the last two and a half years. Kids are hungry for a REAL taste of God and Becky is a pioneer showing them that They can access God and His Spirit and they don't have to be adults to do it!

You are more than welcome to disagree with the film's premise, or content or question the motives of the producers, but when you step beyond that to seemingly criticize a ministry and a movement you don't really understand by calling it , and I quote a "vanishingly narrow Evangelical sub-culture", I'm afraid you truly show your ignorance.

posted by Hilary Smith : 12:13 PM

I remember experiencing Baptism in the the Spirit when I was a kid, maybe 10 years old. I'm now 58, a business owner, minister, and father of four sons.

I was praying, worshipping Jesus, at a camp in central Florida, when I was Spirit-baptized. I spoke in tongues for over an hour, and though I did not know what I was saying, I knew I was saying it to Jesus. Afterwards, I was so drunk, the cabin counselor carried me to the cabin due my walking into a tree. In the cabin, the other kids and me all prayed more, until we fell asleep early that morning.

What happened to me and many others who have been Spirit-baptized would not have been pretty on camera. But it changed my life. I have had a life-long Advocate and friend that continues to equip me. I was raised in a home with an alcoholic father, but now teach on fathering and leadership and have owned several businesses.

Thank God for the Spirit of Encouragement that equipped me as a child for the challenges yet to come as an adult. I would never have made it on sheer intellectual faith alone.

Don Wood

posted by [Don Wood](#) : 12:30 PM

Oh my, this does not bode well, this is a website probably read mostly by committed conservative Christians and here we are already at each other's throats. First point. Has anyone yet seen the film except the guest commentator, Rich Tatum? I was taught never to make a judgement until I had seen something first hand. May be we should unload our guns until we actually see it.

Second point. Take a look at the Loki films website: <http://lokifilms.com/site/about.html>. Here is why they do what they do in their own words: "Our collaboration is dedicated to making films that evoke a deeper understanding of the human experience with all its complexities, high stakes and humor" Somehow this does not sound like the kind of wording that gives me that warm, cozy kind of "I'm going to be fairly understood and represented as a Christian" kind of feel. If you take a look at their films, you can understand why "Jesus Camp" is just a commodity born of its time. This is not a negative comment against the film-makers, they are just seeing what they see based on their worldview and uh, mission. It is just "where they are coming from." I have a feeling that they are not coming from where most of us are coming from and so, right off, you can see trouble looming on the horizon.

Our church camp Christian subculture, (probably known and loved to most of us, but yes, undoubtedly filled with out of the ordinary spiritual experiences), which, if taken out of their context, can seem might strange. Now put that explaining in the hands of folk who were never there and did not experience it firsthand as children, and then put that commentary into mainstream society at a particularly volatile time. Edit it just right (for they taught me in film school, that the camera doesn't see, it is we, the film-maker, who picks and chooses random moments of reality, restringing them together, to create a message) and you have what one reviewer said in the trailer, "a lightning rod."

If that were me, as a child, and it very well could have been, looking back on this film as an adult, I would indeed be 90% angry for not being portrayed honestly and in context, 10% glad that I was radical enough to be seen as radical even by the cold, cruel world, and 100% more determined to follow Jesus and not expect the world to understand. We all know they won't and never will.

We need to find a way to rally around these kids, and our brothers and sisters portrayed there, in a way that shows our solidarity with all who belong to Him, yet still making mention of that which is not a correctly interpreted picture of reality.

posted by [pen-of-the-wayfarer](#) : 2:47 PM

I haven't had the opportunity to view the movie Jesus Camp; however I have known Becky Fischer for over thirty years and have attended the camps that Kids in Ministry International have put on in N.D. It's my opinion that Becky has a heart for equipping young people to share God's love with a searching, hurting world. I admire Becky's character and the integrity that she operates her ministry with. "Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." In a culture that sometimes judges on snapshots of information I would encourage people to look deeper into this lady's ministry. I believe you will see a life and ministry of obedience and servant hood to our Lord.

Tom Barber Gillette Wyoming

posted by [Tom Barber](#) : 7:54 PM

This makes my heart break.

I am the kind of parent that wants to be involved with my children as much as I can. I love them, and want to do my best to make sure of what is being put in their heads and their hearts. I want my children to be strong with their relationship with God, to love Him always and trust Him enough to follow Him completely. Ever since our children have been going to church, we have been involved in what they have been taught. I have been to children's camps with them. I have helped at teen camps, led Children's Church, and small groups for children. I truly want God's best for them. I have not seen the film, (I don't even really expect it to come to Wyoming), but I have been to Becky Fischer's Children's Ministers training and workshops, and have had Becky speak at our Church. She not only spoke to the children, but to the adults also. She knows that without the support of the parents, it is much harder for the children to live out what they have learned. My husband, our 2 children, and I have been to the camp she has started three years in a row. The first year we went with about 13 kids from our church. When we all came back from camp, the

church was so excited about what they saw in the children. Our children had boldness to pray for each other, they had boldness to pray for anyone. They wanted to come to church. They wanted to share Jesus with the kids at school. They were excited about being a Christian (a follower of Christ). They were not embarrassed about it. They commented on how they were definitely going to that camp again next year. Each year, more kids and adults wanted to go this camp. While at camp, I experienced the oddest thing that first year. This camp was different. The kids were still "kids" and had a ton of fun. There were games and free time like the other camps and even "junk" food. But at this camp, the kids got to the church services EARLY. They wanted to be in the front row and couldn't wait for the services to start. The evening services were the highlight of camp. Not the games, not the food, they wanted Jesus! It was incredible. Not only did they come early, but they didn't want to leave. They stayed up late, some finally left to meet their friends at the snack shack, but many stayed, they prayed, they danced, they cried, they just allowed the Lord to work on their minds, hearts, or what ever it was they were in need of right then. They were learning to let God be in control of their lives. That is what is meant by the statement "Giving up your life for Jesus." Letting Jesus be in control of your life. The kids with paint on their face and long sticks in their hands, they were putting on a drama. It was amazing. It has nothing to do with "flesh and blood" war, but everything to do with the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms". (Check out Ephesians 4:10-20) As far as I can see, every Christian is at "war" with evil. This camp is full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. I was there, I know what I saw. The faces and the words in the trailer look familiar, but the way it is put together in that clip, that was NOT the camp that I went to. It is good to be on the watch for the "wolf in sheep's clothing", but please remember to seek God for His truth, so as not to be deceived. Trust that He will reveal the truth to you.

posted by Robin : 11:09 PM

Folks, here are som points you can rake me over the coals with:

Becky Fischer is a fine Christian woman, a fine example of Pentecostal faith, and an exemplary Children's pastor. I in no way intend to malign her.

Debate my own Christianity and Pentecostal background or my experience with kids culture all you want, but Becky Fischer and I do share one thing in common for certain: **we are not infallible**.

Therefore, I suspect we can disagree on minor points of theology and practice without either one of us going to Hell, or insulting each other, or condemning each other. Though my article was not about Becky Fischer, what points I did make about her are not *ad hominem*, they are about practice and doctrine.

So please, you who are offended on Becky's behalf, lighten up. Discuss the issues, not the person.

Something that seemed to offend most who are writing here, was my last line or two. I wrote this:

This isn't "Jesus Camp," it's "Becky Fischer's Camp." But nobody would've paid to see that movie.

Perhaps that's too tongue-in-check to easily communicate what I mean, but let me unpack that for you ... Becky Fischer, by all accounts--especially by the testimonies on this forum--is **unique** in her style, her approach, her methods, and the camp culture she creates. This film is about **her** and **her camp** far more than it is about "**evangelical children's camps**." The title could well have been "Becky Fischer's camp" because that's exactly what and who the film focuses on. But, as I said, that simply wouldn't market.

Titles are important in marketing things, whether it's a blog title, an article title, a book title, or a film title. Titles are perhaps as important if not more important than the actual content, because people won't even pay to see a movie when the title alone sounds unappealing.

However, since the film misrepresents Becky, misrepresents her faith, misrepresents her camp, and misrepresents Evangelicals, why not start out with a misleading title as well? Besides, fewer people know who Becky Fischer is than knows who Jesus is.

So, labelling the film "Jesus Camp" attaches all this misrepresentation to the very name that strikes fear into the heart of every Jesus-hating liberal out there. "Pentecostal Camp" wouldn't work for obvious reason. And neither would "Evangelical camp." But "Jesus Camp," yeah--it polarizes the subject into Jesus Freaks vs. Islamic Freaks. It inflates the misrepresentation in the film so that all the politics and so-called brainwashing Grady and Ewing filmed become a threat to the very nature of society itself because *all these Evangelicals are about to ruin our country*.

The film paints its subjects as freaks--whether you see it or not, that's how its being received almost everywhere--including among Evangelicals. So, "Jesus Camp," like the pejorative, "Jesus Freaks," is far more evocative and fits with the films fearful theme more than any other title I could imagine.

I don't know what I have to say to help you folks understand: This film misrepresents virtually everybody in it. The reason I wrote this and other articles is because I want to make that point abundantly clear. If you see past the misrepresentation to the truth of what's actually going on, good for you. I do, too, but I'm also aware of how the spin is generating fear and anger by those who believe the lies.

Perhaps I let too many of my disagreements with Becky Fischer shine through, but I also wanted to make it clear that the practices I disagree with are also not common to all Pentecostals and Charismatics. If you or Becky Fischer take that personally, I'm sorry to have offended you, but I don't recant my thoughts on the matter. I've made it clear elsewhere ([at my blog](#)) what some of my problems are with what I saw in this film, and that's all I have to say about it here.

Becky Fischer is a professional and very capable of defending herself, her practices, and her theology. And she's certainly capable of carrying on her ministry without worrying about the little speed-bump called Rich Tatum. I'm fully confident that in all her years of ministry I am the very **least** of the critics she or the Word of Faith movement has ever had to worry about.

Regards,

Rich
[BlogRodent](#)

posted by [Rich Tatum](#) : 1:06 AM

Rich,

I do not know you...and based on just this serious of interacting moments with you I am fine with that.

It might be something as simple as...Becky I am sorry for anything said, implied, or misunderstood. Amen

posted by [Brad Herman](#) : 5:49 PM

What an awesome movie! I just saw it. I have read blogs, listened to interviews, etc. and was somewhat concerned just what was going to happen in the movie. I kept waiting for the "content" that has evoked so much negative emotion and response, especially in the camp of believers. Number one-if you haven't seen the movie how can you even comment? Have you ever seen a movie trailer that made you think, "I have got to see this movie, it looks like the funniest show ever." Then you see the movie and apparently they showed the one and only funny line in the whole show on the trailer. I myself did not want to comment until I had seen it.

I am not a writer or a speaker, but I would like to share with you what my thoughts were about the movie. I am a mother of three, 16, 13 and 8. The main children in the movie were awesome. They were honest and genuine. They were bold and strong in their faith, yet they knew they weren't perfect. Their passion for Jesus is what they want to share with everyone. It seems it's okay to be passionate about sports, dancing, music, etc. but we draw the line at Christ. It's okay for kids to scream, cry, etc. for their favorite stars in music, film and sports, but not Jesus. I pray all children (1-100) would be so passionate about their love for Christ. I pray that these kids would not be just 3 "unusual" kids, but that they would be the "norm" for christian children and adults. I would like to applaud the parents of these three and say "Good Job", God is pleased with you. There is no reason to cast a negative light on these children in any way. Sure the world doesn't understand us, but is that anything unusual. We are to lift each other up with encouraging words and psalms. When we all love each other, we will shock the world. Some remarks have been made about "they're just children". I wonder if they said the same thing about, David, Samuel, King Josiah, and Jesus at the age of 12 in the temple teaching. We as adults, "good decent folk"-maybe should run for the hills! Have we fulfilled our job description in training our children up in the way they should go, so they will not depart from it. The movie may not have been done "perfectly". But let's look at what the message is. I believe the message is about not looking down on our youth, but seeing what God sees in them and helping them develop eyes that see and ears that hear what the Lord would say. There are more than 3 "unusual children" out there that are wanting more of God than they are seeing in churches today. These kids are also living their christianity in every aspect of their daily lives, not always perfect, but working on it. It is more than your "Sunday morning cocoon".

For those in the movie that were obviously against Becky's camp, conferences, and training, I guess that's your choice. Aren't we glad we live in America, where we have the privilege to make "a choice." Don't forget that word "tolerance" that we love to use for those who don't agree with us. I hope this movie does stir us up and make us take a look at what we all truly believe in and what our job is in all of this. And let's love each other as Christ told us to love each other, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. (me included)

posted by [passionate mom](#) : 7:34 PM

Rich,

I read your review and the first thing that ran through my mind was, "oh great...like some in the animal kingdom, we're **eating our own young** here."

After reading some of the comments, though, I think the intentions of your heart are shining through a bit more.

As the dad of one of the boys shown in the movie [Andrew -- the blonde!], I can tell you that this whole experience has been a wild ride for friends of Becky's ministry. We had no idea how the film would turn out in the final cut, but I can tell you that it has been **significantly tweaked** since its first film-festival run at Tribeca. The pre-release version we saw as parents was **exactly** as you described when you said...

...You will hear creepy music whenever the directors want you to be disturbed.

But guess what? Heidi and Rachel must have agreed, and hired a new composer to come up with music that wasn't so creepy.

I really hope you will take the time to see the actual, **theatrically-released version of the film** and post an addendum to your blog article once you've done so. I believe it's much better in its final form. Gripping, yes. Embarrassing, no!

Remember this: the filmmakers were "flies on the wall" during more than a year of shooting. They followed these kids (and Becky's ministry) everywhere. When the simplicity of children learning more about Jesus, praying for our nation and just being kids wasn't controversial enough, they went out and found Mike Papantonio to provide a "voice of dissent" for the movie. His disconnected ranting is only in the final film for a total of SIX minutes, while Becky and kids take up other 78!

Have you never seen a young boy or girl cry or shake when fervently praying for their friends who are lost...for nations, for the homeless and abused, for the unborn?

Yes, it can be seen as pretty sensational when you add a touch of camo paint during the [four-minute Todd Ganovski song "Breathe/Prophesy"](#) and then drop in a few seconds of [Lou Engle's](#) hoarse voice leading the kids in crying out for "righteous judges" as a voice for the unborn.

But you know what? That's reality, and Loki films wisely chose to cut out the scenes of our son Andrew playing with his gecko, or getting on the school bus, or playing in the swimming pool at camp.

That doesn't sell movie tickets.

I'm agreeing with your assertion that not everything was accurately portrayed -- but if you were an independent film producer with a couple hundred hours of footage, and you had to cut it down to 84 minutes while hoping it succeeds commercially, what would **you** do?

My wife and I have talked many times about the reality of this film. Sure, it can be seen as controversial. Yes, the original music sucked, because we were portrayed as scary, evil people whenever the synth pad in a minor key kicked in...("run for the hills, theater-goers, a young girl is about to cry out for her generation!")

:)

Becky Fischer did an excellent job this morning on ["Good Morning America"](#) alongside Mike Papantonio. Diane Sawyer was taken aback when Becky explained that she simply didn't "check her beliefs at the door" when it came to mixing her Christian beliefs and her politics.

Rich, I hope you understand that Becky's intentions in training children are **more in line with what you and the other Strang Communications writers believe** than you apparently think. She is absolutely passionate about helping these children learn about Jesus.

So when you say...

...She is an effective children's evangelist, but she does not represent me. She doesn't represent all Evangelicals, all kids' ministers, or even all Pentecostals. Becky represents ... well, Becky--and nobody else...

That's where I pull out the yellow penalty flag and say, **"hey Rich -- we're all in this together, aren't we?"**

Christians may disagree on some minor peripheral or doctrinal issues, but the core of Becky's ministry as seen through the secular lens of A&E Indie Films through an 84-minute film, is best summed up by her statement:

...I am concerned the secular audience will be focusing on the political side of things, and completely miss the power of the living God who is alive and well, and working through the lives of even small children in this film. We want people to see God is real and alive and active in our lives.

Don't you want those same things, Rich?

I hope anyone who wonders about the true intentions will take the time to: **see the film** to make up their own minds, and **read Becky's FAQ** on her web site, www.kidsinministry.com because it provides way more detail than can be accurately put into a two-minute, grab-ya-by-the-throat, Flash-video-encoded movie trailer.

posted by [Buck](#) : 11:44 AM

Hi, Buck, thanks for your thoughtful response.

You mentioned,

« As the dad of one of the boys shown in the movie [Andrew -- the blonde!] »

Is your boy the one who gave his testimony at one of the services? Here's the section of film I'm thinking of ... a blonde boy has the microphone, he's holding his Bible, and as he talks he sits on the floor, as though so burdened by what he has to say he can't stand:

"Uh, I haven't got much to say I just wanted to talk about belief in God and I've had a hard time doing it and ... it's just really hard do this. ... Just to believe in God is really hard because you don't see him, you don't really know him much. Sometimes I don't even believe what the Bible says--it makes me a faker, it makes me feel guilty and bad cause God has always talked to me about that like I rejected him."

I have to say that this was one of the best parts of the film for me, and it's the fly-in-the-ointment for everybody who says these kids are brainwashed. I absolutely loved that part of the documentary, and I was glad the filmmakers left it in. I wish *that* segment was included in the trailers as well.

If this is your child, I want you to know, I completely admire and like this kid. It takes guts to admit you have problems with faith, and yet still have faith. Kudos for him. And it demonstrates you can be a thinking kid, and a thinking Pentecostal at the same time.

You mentioned:

« I can tell you that it has been significantly tweaked since its first film-festival run at Tribeca. The pre-release version we saw as parents was exactly as you described ... I really hope you will take the time to see the actual, theatrically-released version of the film and post an addendum to your blog article once you've done so. I believe it's much better in its final form. Gripping, yes. Embarrassing, no! »

Buck, I hope that's the case. I'll look forward to seeing it when it releases in a theater near me. You may be right: the screening version I saw may be drastically different than the released version of the film, but I hadn't heard that there were any significant differences before now. If there are differences and I can see it for myself, I will add a postscript, both here and at my weblog.

You also mentioned,

« [Mike Papantonio's] disconnected ranting is only in the final film for a total of SIX minutes, while Becky and kids take up other 78! »

That's heartening. I have to say that it's Papantonio's commentary that makes up the bulk of my concerns regarding the spin and the overall point-of-view of the film. By introducing Papantonio in the version I saw as the very first character of the documentary, Grady and Ewing literally set the tone and the interpretive point of view for the rest of the film. In the version I saw, Papantonio is the director's effective "voiceover," providing not only commentary, but a proxy for the audience and a buffer for truly engaging with the real subjects of the film. I think my reaction would have been less dramatic if they had started with Becky Fischer instead. Or Ted Haggard. Or anybody without stakes in the subject matter. But by opening the version I received with Papantonio's rants and then using him as transitional commentary throughout, the film makers (unintentionally or otherwise) sullied their subjects.

If the theatrical version handles Papantonio differently, I'll be interested in seeing that.

« Have you never seen a young boy or girl cry or shake when fervently praying for their friends who are lost...for nations, for the homeless and abused, for the unborn? »

Yes. And I've been that boy. And I went to camps very similar to this when I was a youth in New Mexico. That was the Mountainair A/G Family Campground in Mountainair, NM. I was a camper there as well as, later, a camp counselor for several years.

You wrote:

« I'm agreeing with your assertion that not everything was accurately portrayed -- but if you were an independent film producer with a couple hundred hours of footage, and you had to cut it down to 84 minutes while hoping it succeeds commercially, what would you do? »

Hey, I recognize that sensationalism sells, but Grady and Ewing are documentarians who,

presumably, made this film to document a subculture and that, hopefully, accurately. It was only when Magnolia picked up the film that it became a potentially viable commercial product.

I would hope that a commitment to the subject matter and integrity would win out. But the problem is that despite Grady and Ewing's "fly on the wall status" they had to make decisions. Decisions about what to leave out and what to put in. Decisions about the order and sequence of imagery. Decisions about how to edit the audio. Decisions about who would represent the voice of contention. Decisions about how to portray all of their subjects.

As film makers, Grady and Ewing made a fabulous product. It's amazingly well-shot for hand-held cameras. The sound quality is amazing for a budget field production. Their transitions, and the use of the road-trip imagery and the radio gags are brilliant.

But as unconverted observers, they are still outsiders attempting to explain something they ultimately do not understand. And their choices reflect their ignorance. And their choices also reflect their ultimate rejection of not only the culture they portrayed, but the Jesus who lives behind it, in it, and through it. As a result, their film--again, as I received it--mis-represents. And the teasers and trailers do so on an order of magnitude far higher than even the film does--and that colors everybody's perceptions and judgments long before they even enter the theater.

The film is a reaction piece. It embodies the outsider's instinctive response: "Look how odd these people are. Look how unusual their beliefs. See how oddly they behave? Listen to the strange things they say." There's no crime in that. But what Grady and Ewing did (perhaps unintentionally) went a step further. They enlisted a virtual hit man to sweep aside those probing questions and instead rant, "Look, these people are not only odd, they're evil! They're brainwashed! They're mean! They're bullies! They need to be shut down!"

Yeah. That sells tickets. But at the expense of the integrity of their documentary, I think. As you say, if the released version is different, I'll happily report it. But I wish they'd made those changes before sending out the promotional screening DVD.

« Rich, I hope you understand that Becky's intentions in training children are more in line with what you and the other Strang Communications writers believe than you apparently think. She is absolutely passionate about helping these children learn about Jesus. »

I've never said otherwise. Indeed, I have defended Becky Fischer in the comments sections of several blogs. I fault neither her intentions nor her passion. My so-called attack on Becky Fischer has been greatly exaggerated. Indeed, people are more angry at me for what I've said than they are at Magnolia or Grady and Ewing for what they've done.

You quote me:

« ...She is an effective children's evangelist, but she does not represent me. She doesn't represent all Evangelicals, all kids' ministers, or even all Pentecostals. Becky represents ... well, Becky--and nobody else... »

And you responded,

« That's where I pull out the yellow penalty flag and say, "hey Rich -- we're all in this together, aren't we?" »

Sure, we're all in this together. And we can be unified on common beliefs and practices. But I don't represent you--or anybody else. Why should you expect me to act as though you, Becky Fischer, Ted Haggard, or even Billy Graham represent me? Suppose Dateline NBC interviewed you and implied that I believed and behaved the same way, should I be castigated for pointing out the obvious? You don't represent me. And neither does Becky. Yet this film I saw clearly implies that Becky's philosophy, methods, and theology represent the Evangelical way of raising children (this is not an inference, it's a clear implication). But what if some of us don't agree with her 100%? Are we therefore attacking her by stating so publicly?

It seems, so.

But I prefer clarity.

To me it seems pretty uncontroversial to say that I don't align with Becky Fischer 100% and to state the obvious truth that she doesn't represent me. I'd like to go on the record and state that my denomination's leadership also don't represent me, and I don't agree with them 100% either. For that matter, the man CTI called the "Pentecostal Golden Standard," Jack Hayford doesn't represent me, either (though I'd be happy to sit at his feet and learn). Matt Green, the editor for this blog, doesn't represent me. Who does? I do. When I stand before God at the Bema seat, it will be *I* who answers for my words. Not Becky, not you, not Jack.

Does that make me the absolute arbiter of truth? No. As I said before, I'm fallible. I could be wrong

on many, many things. And maybe Becky Fischer *is* infallible, but I haven't gotten that memo yet.

You ask if I want to see "the power of the living God who is alive and well, and working through the lives of even small children ... to see God is real and alive and active in our lives"?

What, do you think I'm going to answer no?

My point is, and has been all along, that whether or not God's handiwork is evident in this film, the film itself colors how the audience will perceive those things--whether the audience is secular or sacred--because the film makers don't perceive it themselves.

Regards,

Rich.

posted by [Rich Tatum](#) : 10:50 PM

Y'all, I'm a Canadian Baptist, raised in the church, went to camp every summer for years, and serve (too) many roles in my church. The movie trailer -- I won't see the movie -- was a disservice to Becky, to Pentecostals, to Evangelicals and to the Church as a whole.

Sorry, but Becky's ministry does not represent my church, my denomination or either of the two camps that my church supports. And that is Rick's point. If I were to show this trailer in my church, the churches of my denomination, or in some of the other churches in my area, the feeling would be one of disgust and sadness. To show it to non-believers here at home -- or to my sister-in-law's friends and family in Portugal -- would turn them away from Christ not toward Him, irrespective of the sincerity and doctrinal correctness of Becky's ministry. This isn't an attack on KIMI or the camp; it's an attack on the movie.

Moreover, the movie trailer extends the canard that Christians are Republicans. Guess what? If I was a US citizen, I wouldn't vote...at all. The Republican party doesn't speak for me, and the Democratic/Communist party doesn't speak for me either.

So to preempt a much longer post...I applaud Becky for her approach and her love of kids. The next generation (my kids included) is vital to the ongoing move of Christ's Kingdom -- that's always been true. But the movie as represented by the trailer rates a huge MM in my books (Must Miss).

posted by [comreich](#) : 11:21 AM

Really hoping for a positive experience, my husband and I (who both were raised in this atmosphere -- fighting the enemy with battlezone mentality), went to see Jesus Camp. We were nostalgic in many segments of the movie -- remembering our many times of emotional experiences at Youth Camps, revival meetings -- responding to each altar call with "Here am I -- Send me!" Both raised in pentecostal churches and experiencing as much bigotry toward other religions as we saw in much of this film, my husband and I left saddened and disappointed in the portrayal of this film. You see, God has opened our eyes to the big picture -- that all of His kids, regardless of their "chosen" area of worship -- are to be respected. To that end, today, we are Roman Catholics with an effective ministry to people who are hungry for the word of God, genuinely loving and showing them that God is no respecter of persons and that He desires their worship, in spirit and in truth. We daily fight the "good fight of faith"....and we daily do our part as ambassadors of Christ. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our portrayal of God -- is about His love and compassion as a Father to His beloved children and that He will prevail in this battle against the enemy? Mother Teresa said, "Keep giving Jesus to people, not by words, but by your example, by being in love with Jesus, by radiating His holiness and spreading His fragrance of love everywhere you go. You belong to Him!" Isn't this the "Good News" that we are suppose to give??

posted by [Anonymous](#) : 12:57 PM

I was raised within this same religious atmosphere (this is not new) and I know from experience that the spiritual abuse that takes place within these environments drives youth away from Christ. Dispensationalism, fear-based eschatology, and militant scenarios may expedite whatever warped needs this woman and her kind have to satisfy their ego, but they injure children in a real and irreparable way. The good news is that the fierceness of their message is counteracted within some people by the gentle ferocity of the Holy Spirit and spiritual healing can take place. I am 40 years old and currently a seminary student studying to be a Methodist Pastor. Becky Fischer likes to say, "These ideas are no different from radical Muslim children and how they are being "trained." And in this she is correct. The desperate militarism that is shown at "Jesus Camp" comes from the same place of frustration and inability to control ones surroundings. But just as true Islam and the beauty of the poetry of Yunis Emry, Sufism, and Al Hallaj have nothing to do with the radical Islam, "Jesus Camp" has nothing to do with Christ. "Suffer the little children to come unto me and do not hinder them." Has nothing to do with making children suffer. It is a way of "baptizing" them in the spirit to help them understand that, although it may be difficult -- the path of love to Christ's knee is always open. We need to love our kids and show them that, loving ones enemies as oneself, and praying for those who persecute you is a sometimes difficult struggle but it is a grace-filled part of living out the Kingdom of God. Pax Christi +

posted by [tommyboutell](#) : 3:03 PM

What I know is that we need to be real careful what we say and speak, before we speak and leave an opinion which is what I have read more than anything, we need to go the word of God and see what it says. I know that all through out History the Lord used Children to bring in salvation and

overcome giants in the land. We forget that Moses was a baby that the enemy tried to stop before he could speak, Jesus was a baby that the enemy tried to stop before he could speak, David was a young man who no body believed in but God had ordained victory in this young man, the Lord says to Jeremiah say not I am a child. The Lord says that He will silence the mouth of the enemy and advenger through the mouth of babes.(psalm 8:2,Matthew 21:15-16) When we have gone so long and become complacent in where we are and allowed compramise in the land as we have we need to be careful that we pray about and seek the mind of God in the council of His word before we run out and make an oppinion our belief as we have for so long. The Lord has ways that are not our ways(Isaiah 55:8;1Corinthians 1:27;2:4) and uses that which confounds mans wisdom. I know that God has showed me and confirmed me through His word that He is again wanting to raise His children up. Why are we so shocked that people are scared or against the move of God when the enemy wants us to see a distorted view, by using our very own fears against us to come against the will of God. He has attacked the Savior, the Cross, the church, he bagan by attacking the heavenly kingdom from the start so why should we be surprised that he would attack now? People are talking who in all reality have no altar in their own lives that is pleasing to God and speaking that what they say is truth. Is it really? And if it is so wrong then why is everyone speaking so negatively, is it not the power fo effectual prayer of a righteous man that avails much? Is it not love that covers a multitude of sin and allows the anointing of God to come in and break every yoke that enslaves? We do not go to one another any longer and try to talk bringing in correction, love and allow God to work, instead we argue, split and allow disunity to come in, it seems to me that we are doing a better job helping the enemy than allowing the word of God to flow in our lives and bring in unity. Shame on us. Shame on all of us for every one that we cause to stumble. Of course there are going to be those who will make sure they attack this truth. Okay, well my aim is not to attack but say are we really handiling things as how Jesus wants them handled? Is this what Jesus did? Not what He would do because we already know what He did. He left nothing to presumption. We need to turn, repent, and come together to pray and allow God to move in His power, might and strength, take our hands off and let go of our fears and see just what God could do with that.

posted by **Teruah** : 2:34 PM

What disturbs me about how Jesus Camp is portrayed is that it is suggesting their is a sect of Christianity brain washing their children to believe abortion is wrong, creation is right, etc. In reality, children all over this nation are being brain washed by the media and by schools teaching children that creation is un-scientific, that sex before marriage is fine, that pro-life is being "anti-choice", etc. For those parents who do not want this secular teaching for their children, they are portrayed as intolerant extremists in the film.

posted by **enorth** : 2:24 PM

This post has been removed by the author.

posted by **enorth** : 2:25 PM

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