

# Cybercolumn for 1/26 by Berry D. Simpson: What movies say about a guy\_12604

January 23, 2004

Posted: 1/23/04

## CYBERCOLUMN: What movies say about a guy

**By Berry D. Simpson**

I was discussing favorite movies with a bunch of guys and wondering what our movies say about those of us who loved them.

I like the movie "Gods and Generals."

I like the portrayal of Stonewall Jackson-his open faith, his struggle with the big issues of slavery and loyalty to his homeland, his fearlessness in the face of danger and his absolute trust in the grace of God. But most of all, I like the way he fought his battles. He wanted total destruction; to sweep the field clean of his enemies. No enemy left standing. I think he saw himself as a 19th century Joshua, sent by God to dominate the battlefield. He had deep faith in God and absolute courage on the battlefield.

Berry D. Simpson
---------------------

Oddly enough, Stonewall Jackson reminds me of a joke about a man and his wife who watched a tornado destroy their home, their barn, their animal

pens, their cars and trucks and tractors, and their chicken coop. When the man started laughing, his wife was appalled that he could laugh at such catastrophe. “What was so funny?” she asked.

“The completeness of it.”

Stonewall Jackson makes me think of the completeness of it. I don’t know if I’ve ever done anything in my life so completely as the way he fought his battles. I don’t think I’ve ever given 100 percent. I’ve always kept something back in reserve, just in case. In fact, I’m not sure I would even know how to give my all to something.

In that same movie, I also like the portrayal of Joshua Chamberlain, a university professor from Maine turned into a Union officer. Like so many officers in those huge armies, he was awarded his rank because of his education and social standing. He had no military training before he was commissioned. Yet unlike so many officers on both sides of the war who thought their previous place in society or their political office would translate into military success, Chamberlain approached his position as a student, willing to learn, teachable. As a result, he became one of the finest officers in the Union army.

I also appreciate his understanding of the battle and his place in the epic story unfolding around him. There is a scene just before he moved his men onto the field of Fredericksburg when he recites from Pliny’s histories of Caesar: “Hail, Caesar. We who are about to die salute you.” For him, this was more than one more battle in a long and dangerous war; it was The Battle—of good versus evil, right versus wrong, freedom versus slavery—and he was willing to step up and take his place in that big story.

I admire Joshua Chamberlain because of his clarity of vision, his sense of right and wrong, and his willingness to die for what was right. I admire his intellectual approach to warfare and tactics, and I admire his wide-angle

big-picture view of the events of his life.

Another of my favorite movies is "Hunt for Red October."

I like the hero, Jack Ryan. I like him because he succeeds by being smart. He doesn't use weapons or physical strength to solve the problems. He uses his cleverness.

Ryan has the capacity to see bits of data scattered all around, pull a fact from one place and another fact from another seemingly unrelated place and continue doing this until he pieces together something new and original and creative, and in the case of the movie, correct. I find it much easier to envision myself as a Jack Ryan problem solver than as a Stonewall Jackson or Joshua Chamberlain warrior.

And while I am at it, I must say that I like the "Braveheart."

I saw it for the first time at a weekday matinee in the summer of 1995; Cyndi went with me. I came home so full of passion I was ready to paint my face blue and charge the field. I was energized, and I wanted to be close to Cyndi, but she was tired of blood and warfare, and she wanted to move on to something else. So, I went running that evening on Loop 250, on the brand-new overpasses at Midland Drive and Midkiff that were completed but not yet opened to traffic. I ran with passion and determination and energy. I ran up those man-made hills like William Wallace running across Scotland. I was amazing.

So what do these movies say about me? Here's what I think: I long for the epic viewpoint, I want to live my life in big stories, and I want to learn how to give 100 percent. I want to be smart and clever and have absolute trust in the grace of God.

*Berry Simpson, a Sunday School teacher at First Baptist Church in*

*Midland, is a petroleum engineer, writer, runner and member of the city council in Midland.*

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention ( SBC ) and around the world.