



Can Batman Teach Spiritual Truth?

What is it about Superhero films, like the current blockbuster [The Dark Knight](#), that create such box office success? We know from industry reports that word of mouth is the main difference between a lackluster theatrical run and a smash hit. So the real question is this: why do superhero films engage our culture so much that viewers encourage their peers to also spend their hard-earned cash at the local Cineplex?

If all the top screenwriting gurus are correct, and stories are meant to help us learn how to live, what life lessons are resonating at the subconscious level of a film like the #1 weekend opener, *The Dark Knight*, and the previous record holder [Spider-Man 3](#)? Can we really learn how to live by watching a Superhero film?

Films, like all stories, are built around themes; some call it the Moral Premise or the Big Question. Well then, let's examine what questions drive Superhero films. You may be surprised to learn that God has asked the same questions since He began His revelation to us.

What will we do with our hidden power?

Will you use your great gifts to help others or help yourself to money and power? In *The Dark Knight*, Batman and Gotham's Mob Bosses each chose the opposite answer to this all-important question. But this question is not just for these fictional characters; this question confronts you every day. Will you lie, cheat and manipulate your way to becoming rich or will you work hard and trust the Lord for your prosperity? God challenges us to trust in Him to make our paths straight. He may not make a straight path into the vault of Gotham Bank, but He will create a life full of relationships and meaning.



Will you Serve others or Rule others?

Given their superior powers, every Superhero could instantly become a powerful ruler; but instead, each decides to fight the injustices in our wicked world. Will you rescue people or ignore them as they cry out for help in your city? The reason Commissioner Gordon built the Bat Signal is because Batman was willing to respond when the city was in trouble. Do people call you when evil rears its ugly head, or do they already know that you're probably too busy?

What will you use to fight evil?

It is a great temptation to use any necessary means to bring about control. How far can we go to fight evil? In *The Dark Knight*, Batman becomes the target of the people he's trying to protect, because he uses illegal force to stop injustices. Is it okay to break the law to do good? Batman felt compelled enough to invade the city's privacy and establish a sonar system that could trace The Joker; and that one decision pushed him toward a dark destiny. God tells us that nothing good can happen apart from Him. But the temptation is to do whatever it takes to battle the evil aggression. What will you do?



Will you fight against evil or stand on the sidelines?

The superhero genre challenges our rosy hopes for peaceful coexistence with evil by showing us that the world will always have its nemesis — those who don't want peace, but rather control. Do we fight, or do we cower and hide in the safety and comfort of our homes? In *The Dark Knight*, we watch Batman overcome his fears and confront the scariest of all villains, The Joker, which reminds us that it takes great courage to make a difference.



When trials become intense, will you give in or endure?

When The Joker devises a plan to murder one significant person in Gotham every day that Batman doesn't reveal his identity, Batman feels responsible for the deaths of good people. So Bruce Wayne decides to give in to evil in the clip "[Endure](#)". Pastors quit all the time when they don't see growth or feel under-appreciated. Mission's leaders fold up their tents when the first few years of their enterprise don't yield fruit. The rest of us stop ministering in

the marketplace when we encounter pushback or rejection. But God challenges us to persevere and pray for the Lord of the harvest to send forth workers. Endurance in the face of defeat is great part of our legacy. "He never gave up" would be a worthy engraving on your headstone.

Will you do the right thing even when the cost seems too much to bear?

The major theme of The Dark Knight is whether we have the fortitude do the right thing, regardless of the cost. The Joker is determined to push people into anarchy. He feels everyone will become murderers if it means saving their own lives. So he places people in terrifying situations and watches in delight. In the clip "[The Dawn Is Coming](#)" we see Harvey Dent challenging the community to do the right thing, promising them that Batman will be held accountable to the law.

Our Adversary functions very much like the Joker. God tells us the Devil is focused on killing, stealing and destroying, and that the only weapons that truly work against this terrorist of our soul are spiritual. There is a code that sets us free from sin and death. We are to turn the other cheek, forgive the offense, love the unlovable, pray with all manner of prayer, and walk in peace. This code of Jesus will break down the strongholds and deliver us from evil.

The reason that these themes resonate with us is because they are also the great themes of the Bible. Our creator placed in our DNA the need for a hero. Just as our thirst proves the existence of water, our hunger for the hero proves, in a small way, the existence of Jesus. People all around the world, since the beginning of story, have told of a hero who fought dragons, monsters or some giant evil force. We want, at the core level,



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a Superhero who fights on the side of good. We need someone who has the power to stand against the powerful evil opponent who threatens our lives.

We too have a superhero that came to rescue us from evil and an eternity apart from Him. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. And our Superhero shows us that life is only found by using our great gifts and power to serve others and rescue the desperate. We need to become Robin to His Batman. We are part of the team and He's counting on us to respond.

Do you notice that the same questions that drive the Superhero genre also apply to our everyday life? Will we overcome our fears and make the choice to serve others by fighting against evil? God has been asking us that same question for a long time.