

Everywhere you go, people are talking about “The Passion of the Christ.” We wrote questions from different perspectives, then asked five Holston members to answer. Here are their responses.

## Bill Skeen

Former conference lay leader  
Wise, Va.

**Q.** How would the movie affect a person who has no relationship with the Christian faith?



**A.** They would probably have trouble understanding exactly what was going on. I would hope, though, that they would feel the compassion in somebody that would be willing to suffer like Christ

did for them. I think the movie could plant the seed that would lead them to ask questions and seek answers. But I don't see that a person with no prior teaching or knowledge of the Bible would suddenly confess their faith in Christ. The film is going to have more effect on a believer. It would make them more passionate about their living, walking out their faith.

## Steve Sallee

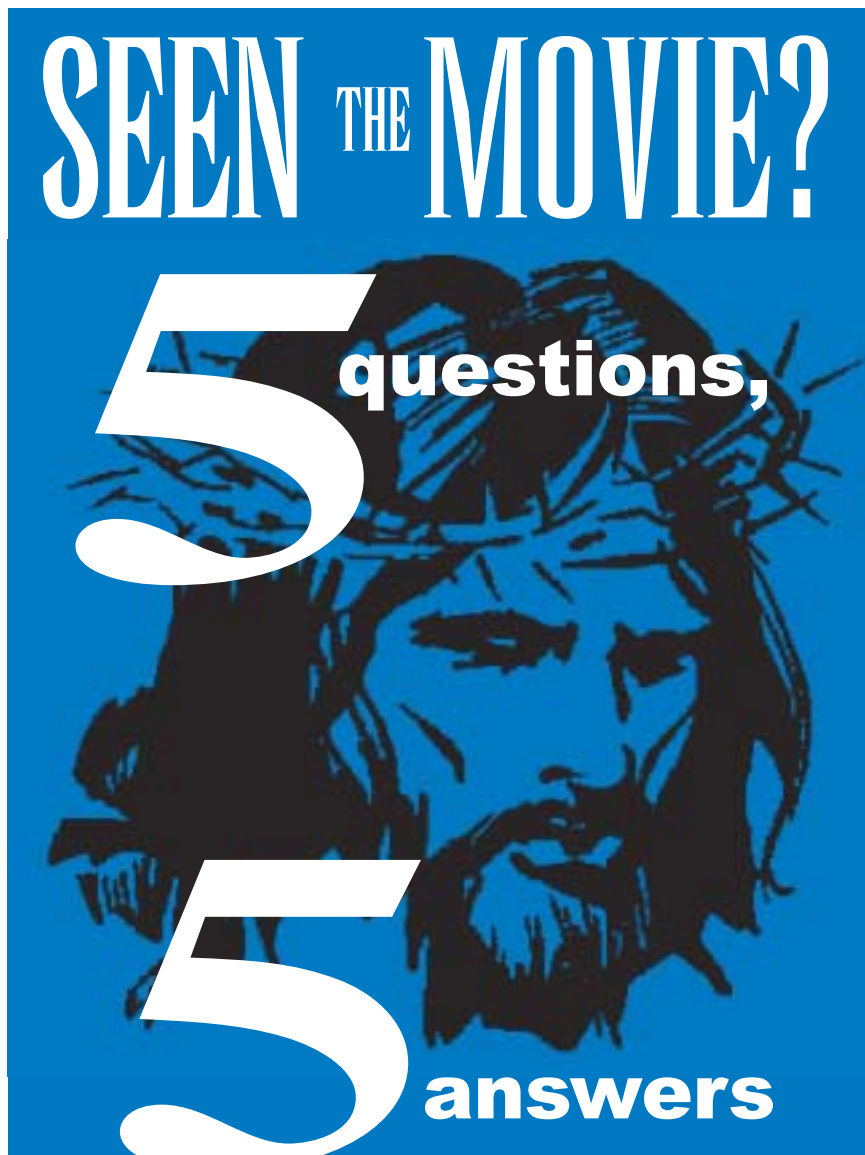
Senior pastor, Cokesbury UMC  
Knoxville, Tenn.

**Q.** Did any characterization in the movie change your own mental or emotional image of any character? Who and in what way?



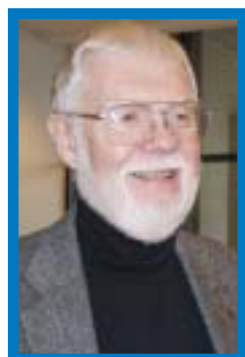
**A.** One of the most moving parts of that whole movie was Mary's relationship to Jesus. The movie brought that out in a way that I've never really thought about, even though I've

seen her role in scripture. But if Jesus was a real person – which we know he was – then he had a real mother with the same thoughts and feelings that any mother today would have toward her child. That got me to thinking about my relationship with my son; if he were going through



something horrible, where would I be? Mary was where she had to be, which was with her son.

There is a scene in the movie when Jesus is carrying the cross, and he falls for the first time under the weight of the cross. Mary moves toward him – and then the film flashes back to a time when Jesus is a little boy, and he's running, and he falls, and the young mother Mary runs toward her baby to pick him up. To me, that was such an artistic way to say that Jesus was a real man, who had a real mother, who loved him in such a powerful way. I can just feel and sense that humanness, more than before.



## Bill Mooney

Retired pastor  
Oak Ridge, Tenn.

**Q.** Is there enough evil in human nature to account for the death of Christ or is it necessary to posit the devil?

**A.** I think there's enough evil in human nature. I didn't need the film to help me come to that conclusion.

## Bernice Kirkland

Associate pastor, First Farragut UMC  
Farragut, Tenn.

**Q.** Do you agree with the statement that Christ was crucified because he spoke truth to power, both secular and religious?

**A.** I do not agree. I believe that Christ was crucified because God chose Christ as a sacrifice of redemption for our sins, to restore us in a right relationship with him. God chose this method of



sacrifice for us. Christ came to die. In the meantime, he taught us the way. He spoke truth to authorities in a religious and secular way in order to show us the way. As it relates to the movie, I feel “The Passion” was both a vivid and visceral account of the crucifixion that causes us to respond. It is not a movie for watching. It is an encounter to which we must respond or choose not to respond. Even in choosing not to, that is the response to Christ.

## Darlene Saunders Ousley

Jurisdictional  
Conference lay delegate  
Lake Junaluska, N.C.

**Q.** In what way is Christ crucified afresh in our day, and do you see signs of resurrection?

**A.** We crucify Christ when we don't live up to our full potential. Christ came not to start a movement of Christianity or to collect a group of believers. His purpose, in my opinion, was to say, “You can live here and keep an open, honest communication with the Creator.” We have to reconnect daily. And I think the movie for me said, “Gee, I personally am re-crucifying Christ daily when I don't spend that time



in communication with God so that I can stay focused on whatever my purpose for being here today is.” We get lost in the big call, the big vision, the big argument for and against Christianity, and it all needs to be boiled down to simple stuff. The simple stuff is, “What am I doing today to not crucify Christ?”

I see signs of resurrection in daily ways that human beings remind me that I'm a child of God. Like, the compliment you don't expect to hear, the phone call you don't expect to get, the note that was a surprise – that's when I see Christ's resurrection. In simple ways that human beings engage and encounter each other as reminders of ways that we can engage and encounter God. There are continued miracles of resurrection when we resurrect each other, daily. ■

– Interviews by Annette Bender.  
Concept and questions by Jim Green.