

National Treasure

Those Who Founded This Nation Had the Ability to Take Action in a Time of Peril



God Laid on Them the Responsibility to Provide Liberty & Justice for All

Movie Background

In **National Treasure**, Benjamin Franklin Gates (**Nicolas Cage**) has spent his life searching for a treasure based on a story handed down from his great, great grandfather. For six generations, the Gates family has chased after clues left behind from the days of the American Revolution about the treasure of the legendary Knights Templar. And now, he's found the key to where the treasure is hidden – on the back of the Declaration of Independence. You see, there is a line in the Declaration of Independence which states: "But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and provide new guards for their future security."

In the movie, **National Treasure**, Gates reads that phrase and then turns to his sidekick, Riley (**Justin Bartha**) and explains its meaning by saying: "If there's something wrong, those who have the ability to take action have the responsibility to take action." To watch this scene, click here:

<https://youtu.be/wcZK2CF3mZ8>

Digging Deeper

Discovering *Raising Daniels and Esthers* at the Movies

The interpretation of this line from the Declaration of Independence echoes Christ's words in **Luke 12:48**, where He says:

From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

People are looking for leadership. True leadership that has the interests of the people at heart. People can tell when their leaders aren't acting in their best interests. In Daniel Chapter 5, we read that as an old man, Daniel was brought before Nebuchadnezzar's son, Belshazzar. In speaking to the rash young king, Daniel retells the story of how Nebuchadnezzar recognized that (**Daniel 5:21-22**):

The Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven.

As Gates points out in the movie, **National Treasure**, true leaders have a responsibility to act when something's wrong. In **Philippians 1:27 and 2:4**, Paul lays out these two thoughts as to how we as citizens of both Heaven and earth should conduct ourselves.

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ... do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others.

An interesting thing about the word "conduct" is that it's translated from the Greek word "**politeuesthe**". It's from that Greek word we get the English word, "politics." In the context as Paul uses it, it means "to live as a good citizen."

In your comings and goings where you exercise authority and leadership, what kind of person are you? Are you like Belshazzar, using "politics" to exalt yourself and take credit for the blessings in life God has bestowed upon you? Are you treating those around you as though their only purpose in life is to serve you?

Or, are you like the founders of this Republic? Men who willingly gave their lives and their fortunes so that their fellow countrymen, and we their posterity, could know the blessings of liberty and freedom of religion? They conducted themselves "politically", following as God led them **to do the right thing**, in order to stand against "politics as usual". They risked everything to provide the leadership needed by the people they served, and in so doing, preserved *the National Treasure of their liberty and freedoms as endowed by their Creator*.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2:5-7).

Questions for Further Reflection

Discovering *Raising Daniels and Esthers* at the Movies

1. Some people think religion and politics shouldn't mix, yet Daniel mixed them both, seeking to honor God and to serve his fellow man. What are your thoughts about the role of religion and politics in our day?
2. In the movie **National Treasure**, the idea is put forward that "If there's something wrong, those who have the ability to take action have the responsibility to take action." As you read what Paul wrote in Philippians, what do you think Paul would say about Christians taking action?
3. "Doing the right thing" can mean different things to different people in different circumstances. In reading Philippians 2:5-7, what do you think Paul would advise Christians about doing "the right thing?"

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At The Movies & Discovering Raising Daniels and Esthers

In the Old Testament, there were three prophets that arose during a period of crisis when the Jews were carried into exile in Babylon. Their names were Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel. When Daniel was taken to Babylon in the first of three exile groups, he and Ezekiel were most likely in their late teens. If we consider the life and ministry of Daniel, we see that a defining event happens in Daniel Chapter 2, when King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. He told no one what had been in the dream, and demanded that his Wise Men tell him its contents and reveal its meaning - or be executed. No one but Daniel could tell the king what his dream had been, let alone interpret it. Because he was the only person able to meet Nebuchadnezzar's demands, Daniel was appointed the Chief Wise Man. For many years, Daniel remained in that position, and his power and influence grew – so much so that the Babylonian governors and other political officials became jealous of Daniel, and conspired against him.

They convinced the King to pass a law saying that anyone who prayed to a god other than the King himself would be thrown into the lions' den. Yet, in spite of this, Daniel DID pray – and God protected him. The point is that Daniel did not compromise on his beliefs, and God honored the young man for exercising his faith in a culture that sought to force him to submit and conform.

How many times are we asked to compromise on our beliefs? When is it appropriate to “go along to get along,” and when do we stand firm? From the safe distance of a Sunday school class discussion, the answer appears obvious – but it is not as easy when one is caught in the heat of the matter. In this **At the Movies** anthology, I've selected key movie scenes where the story's hero had to exercise faith in order to stand for a fundamental principle.

It is my prayer that in *Discovering Raising Daniels and Esthers At the Movies*, we'll see ways to help our children and grandchildren learn how to have the courage of Daniel and Esther to stand for God's truth in a way that allows them to influence their cultural surroundings. Just as Gideon arose as a “Valiant Warrior” to stand in the gap, we need to help our children seek God's courage to speak His word in love to a culture which desperately needs to hear the truth of the Scriptures.

Please be sure to go to my website at www.wisejargon.com/at-the-movies/ to see *additional e-books I've created based on my newsletter, Conversations with the Culture*. And don't forget to **sign up to receive this free monthly newsletter in the future!**

The screenshot shows a website layout. At the top left is a video player with a red play button and a thumbnail for 'Discovering Truth at the Movies'. To the right of the video is a paragraph of text: 'In 2005, God laid on my heart the concept for a newsletter I've come to call **Conversations with the Culture**, to talk about the truths of the bible with an increasingly secular society. Since starting, I had no idea where the journey of writing it each month would take me. I've written about 150 issues over years. And now, I'm starting to organize them thematically so that you can order/download them as PDF documents. If you are someone who wants to identify trends in society, discuss current events, and see how to reach the culture around us with a biblical world view, I think you'll find this series I'm calling **Discovering Truth At the Movies** a valuable tool – especially if you work in youth/young adult ministry.'

Below the video is a section titled 'David Describes Conversations with the Culture' with a video thumbnail of a man speaking. To the right is a section titled 'Discovering Truth at the Movies:' with text: 'Discovering Mere Christianity at the Movies in his book, **Mere Christianity**, C.S. Lewis dealt with all sorts of questions about God and Jesus. It is a book that has had a profound effect on my life, and I encourage you to buy a copy and read it yourself. I've compiled a series of newsletters based on Lewis' work, using movies from the last 25 years, to illustrate his points.' Below this text is a 'Buy Now' button with a price tag of \$5.99.

At the bottom of the page is a red button that says 'Click to Download'.