

"The Apostle" starring Robert Duvall, Farrah Fawcett, Todd Allen, 1997, PG-13, 134 minutes

Major themes:

- Sin
- Obsession
- Revenge
- Redemption
- Consequences
- Integrity

Major characters:

- Eulis "Sonny" Dewey / Apostle E. F.
- Mrs. "Momma" Dewey, Sr.
- Jessie Dewey
- Horace
- Construction worker
- Brother C. Charles Blackwell
- Toosie
- Sam

Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

Background info:

- Robert Duvall wrote this movie script in the 1980s and was turned down by many studios before he financed the film himself. He used \$4 million of his own money to complete this film. It was first screened at the Toronto International Film Festival. Thirty minutes into the screening, some studio executives left the theater to begin negotiations, which resulted in October Films gaining distribution rights that night. They later reimbursed Duvall for his initial investment.
- Although they play mother and son, June Carter Cash was only 2 years older than Robert Duvall. She passed away 6 years after making this film.
- Pentecostalism is a renewal movement within Christianity that places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. "*Pentecostal*" comes from the word "*Pentecost*," the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, when the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus Christ in Acts chapter 2. As with most evangelical Protestants, Pentecostalism adheres to the inerrancy of Scripture and the necessity of accepting Christ as personal Lord and Savior. It is distinguished by belief in the baptism with the Holy Spirit as an experience separate from conversion that enables a Christian to live a Holy Spirit-filled and empowered life. Because of their commitment to biblical authority, spiritual gifts, and the miraculous, Pentecostals tend to see their movement as reflecting the same kind of spiritual power and teachings that were found in the Apostolic Age of the early church. For this reason, some Pentecostals also use the term "*Apostolic*" or "*full gospel*" to describe their movement.
- The closing credits include the words, "*In memory of Reverend Isham Williams.*" A former assistant to Williams said that Robert Duvall had attended several of Williams's church services in the 1980s.

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Scriptures:

Psalms 62:8 (NIV) – *"Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."*

Lamentations 2:18 – 19a (The Message) – *"Give out heart-cries to the Master, dear repentant Zion. Let the tears roll like a river, day and night, and keep at it—no time-outs. Keep those tears flowing! As each night watch begins, get up and cry out in prayer. Pour your heart out face-to-face with the Master."*

Hebrews 13:4 (NLT) – *"Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery."*

Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) – *"Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall."*

1 John 1:8 – 9 (NIV) – *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

James 5:16 (NLT) – *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."*

1 Corinthians 1:30 – 31 (The Message) – *"Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That's why we have the saying, 'If you're going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God.'"*

Matthew 5:23 – 25 (The Message) – *"If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God. Or say you're out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him."*

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Ephesians 2:7 – 10 (The Message) – *"Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing."*

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Discussion points:

1. This film's tagline is, "*The hardest soul to save was his own.*" The Bible speaks of salvation (i.e. redemption) in past, present, and future terms. As one theologian put it, "*I have been saved, I am being saved, I will be saved.*" Where do we see redemption in this movie?
2. When we sin, is it enough to confess our sin to God alone? Where does confession to one another come in? What about restitution, or making amends?
3. When Sonny was asking Brother Blackwell to embark on a joint ministry venture, Brother Blackwell remarked that if God were leading Sonny to do it, then God would lead him to do it, too. How can this nugget of wisdom help us in both discernment and decision-making?
4. The Psalms contain a wide variety of emotions, including joy, sorrow, anger, and remorse. How can we grow in honesty in the way that we pray, realizing that God already knows how we really feel?
5. Sonny prayed for God's peace. Does "*being at peace*" necessarily mean that all is right in our relationship with God or others?
6. Integrity is more than just adherence to moral principles; it is about being whole. Where did we see Sonny, a man who was clearly flawed (as we all are), grow in wholeness?