

**“Hoosiers” starring Gene Hackman, Barbara Hershey, Dennis Hopper,
1986, PG, 114 minutes**

Major themes:

- Basketball
- Redemption
- Negotiation
- Commitment
- Perseverance
- Speaking truth
- Change
- Teamwork
- David vs. Goliath

Major characters:

- Coach Norman Dale
- Myra Fleener, Opal Fleener
- Shooter Flatch, Everett Flatch
- Jimmy Chitwood
- Cletus Summers
- Buddy Walker
- Rade Butcher, Whit Butcher, Rollin Butcher
- Merle Webb
- Strap Purl
- Ollie McLellan

Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

Background info:

- This film ranks #4 on the American Film Institute's Top 10 sports films of all time, and #13 on AFI's Top 100 most inspirational films of all time.
- The tagline for this film is, *"They needed a second chance to finish first."*
- Most of the cast playing the Hickory basketball team and the extras were hired from the local community in the main filming location.
- *"Hoosiers"* was inspired by the true story of a small-town Indiana team (the Milan Indians) that made the state finals in 1954. (Milan High School had a total enrolment of 150 students at the time.) Milan beat Muncie Central, and the heroes returned to a crowd of tens of thousands, despite the town's population being only 1,000. Upon returning, Coach Wood's wife told the team, *"It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice."* This saying is still repeated by players to this day. Coach Wood often said, *"God was coaching that team, not me."*
- *"Hoosier Hysteria"* is defined as the state of excitement surrounding the Indiana high school basketball tournament. In part, the excitement stemmed from the inclusion of all tournament entrants into the same tournament, where a small town's David might knock off a large city's Goliath.
- One fan of this film from Indiana, whose uncle played on the team upon which this film is based, had this to say about the movie: *"Where I think the movie succeeds the most is in portraying Indiana's unique love for high school basketball. Many non-Hoosiers who see the movie probably think that the residents criticizing the coach on the street, the caravan of cars traveling to away games, the emotional town meeting on the coach's fate and the general hysteria are an exaggeration. That is not the case. High school basketball in Indiana was an obsession for several decades and still is, though to a lesser extent. Many small towns passionately embraced the local high school team, which was often a point of unity, identity and pride."*

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Scriptures:

Hebrews 12:11 (NLT) – *“No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening--it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.”*

James 3:13 – 18 (The Message) – *“Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here's what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It's the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn't wisdom. It's the furthest thing from wisdom—it's animal cunning, devilish conniving. Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others' throats. Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.”*

Galatians 6:9 – 10 (NASB) – *“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”*

1 Samuel 17:45 – 46 (The Message) – *“The whole earth will know that there's an extraordinary God in Israel. And everyone gathered here will learn that God doesn't save by means of sword or spear. The battle belongs to God.”*

Proverbs 14:23 (The Message) – *“Hard work always pays off; mere talk puts no bread on the table.”*

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Discussion points:

1. *“My practices aren’t designed for your enjoyment.”* (Coach Dale) What practices have you experienced (from parents / teachers / coaches) that you didn’t enjoy at the time but later realized were beneficial to you?
2. *“If you put your effort and concentration into playing to your potential, to be the best that you can be, I don’t care what the scoreboard says at the end of the game, in my book we’re gonna be winners.”* (Coach Dale) What are some of the things that help us to make the choice to be the best that we can be?
3. We see teamwork in this film, on and off the court. Where in our community is more teamwork needed to accomplish something good?
4. Where do we see redemption and second chances in this film?
5. Sometimes a leader’s rough edges make it hard to see their good qualities. What helped other people to see past Coach Dale’s imperfections to really see him and what he was trying to accomplish?
6. What “David vs. Goliath” scenario do you see in your life / community / country / world? What is God calling you to do?