

Here are 15 films that touch your themes (faith & doubt, science & the modern world, justice & the "other," suffering, vocation & formation), each with a discussion angle.

Faith, doubt & the honest questions

1. **Silence** (2016, Scorsese) — faith under persecution, the hiddenness of God, apostasy vs. mercy. Pairs beautifully with Enns' *The Sin of Certainty*.
2. **A Hidden Life** (2019, Malick) — conscience, obedience, and the cost of discipleship against a hostile culture.
3. **Calvary** (2014) — a good priest bearing the sins of a community; grace, forgiveness, and the church's credibility.
4. **Doubt** (2008) — certainty vs. uncertainty, authority, and moral judgment. A direct echo of your McLaren "Authority Question."

Science, technology & what it means to be human

5. **Arrival** (2016) — language, time, providence, and how we understand "the other"; wonderful for your AI/personhood interests.
6. **Ex Machina** (2014) — AI, consciousness, and the image of God. A natural companion to Doug's AI studies.
7. **Gattaca** (1997) — genetics, human worth, and determinism; ties to *The Sacred Chain* and creation themes.
8. **Contact** (1997) — faith and science in dialogue, the limits of proof, wonder before the cosmos.

Justice, race & the "other"

9. **Just Mercy** (2019) — justice, mercy, and human dignity; extends your race-relations and hospitality threads.
10. **Babette's Feast** (1987) — grace, hospitality, and abundance as a picture of the gospel. Rich with Amos Yong's *Hospitality and the Other*.
11. **Gran Torino** (2008) — prejudice, sacrifice, and unexpected redemption across cultural lines.
12. **Delicious** (2020) — like Babette's Feast set in the time of the French Revolution.

Suffering, grace & vocation

13. **Of Gods and Men** (2010) — monks choosing to stay amid danger; community, calling, and love of neighbor.
14. **Tender Mercies** (1983) — quiet redemption, conversion, and grace in ordinary life.
15. **The Tree of Life** (2011, Malick) — creation, suffering, grace vs. nature, and the problem of pain; visually a "Genesis" meditation.

16. **Chariots of Fire** (1981) — vocation, conviction, and running "for God's pleasure"; a gentler, well-loved option.

17. **The Fountain** (2007) — Darren Aronofsky's epic sci-fi adventure chronicling a man's struggle to save the woman he loves.

A few facilitation notes:

- Members watch on their own; the week's lead comes with 4–5 questions and a short intro.
- Most stream on major platforms, though a couple of the foreign/older titles (*Of Gods and Men*, *Babette's Feast*) may need a rental — worth checking availability before assigning.
- Content varies: *Silence* and *Calvary* are intense/mature; *Chariots of Fire*, *Contact*, and *Babette's Feast* are gentle entry points if you want to start soft.

Want me to build a **sample discussion guide** (intro + questions) for one or two of these so members can see the format before you propose it tonight?

3 Films

Film 1 — *Arrival* (2016)

One-line intro for the lead to read: *A linguist is asked to communicate with newly arrived aliens before fear turns to war. Beneath the sci-fi is a meditation on how we understand "the other," how language shapes reality, and whether we'd still choose love if we knew the pain ahead.*

Opening / warm-up

- What did you feel walking away from this film — hope, grief, wonder, unease?
- Whose "arrival" unsettles us most in real life — and why do we default to fear?

Digging in (theme questions)

- Louise says "*language is the foundation of civilization... it's also the first weapon drawn in a conflict.*" How does language both build bridges and start wars — in the film and in the church?
- The film suggests that learning a new language rewired how Louise experienced time. Where has learning something new (a person, a text, a tradition) changed how you *see*?

- The nations nearly go to war out of fear of what they don't understand. When has the Christian community done the same? (Connects to your studies on Islam, hospitality, and the "other.")
- Louise chooses to embrace a future she knows will bring loss. Is that faith, folly, or love? How does this mirror the way God relates to us?

Faith bridge

- Where do you see providence, foreknowledge, and free will wrestling in this story? How does it compare to how Scripture holds those together?
- If you could "see the whole" of your life like Louise, would you want to? What does that reveal about trust?

Closing

- One sentence: what is this film asking *you* to do differently?

Film 2 — *Babette's Feast* (1987)

One-line intro for the lead to read: *In a severe, pious Danish village, a mysterious French refugee spends her entire fortune preparing one extravagant meal for people who have vowed not to enjoy it. It's one of the purest pictures of grace ever put on film.*

Opening / warm-up

- What was your first reaction to Babette spending *everything* on a single meal? Extravagant? Wasteful? Holy?
- Describe a meal that felt like more than food to you.

Digging in (theme questions)

- The sisters' community is devout but joyless and fracturing. How can right belief still miss the heart of the gospel? (A quiet echo of your "certainty" and formation studies.)
- The guests agree to eat but *not* to enjoy it — then grace breaks through anyway. Where have you resisted a gift only to be undone by it?
- The General says, "*Grace is infinite... grace makes no conditions.*" How does Babette's feast embody grace that is unearned and lavish?
- Babette is an artist who gives her whole self away in secret. How does this reflect vocation and calling — using one's gift as worship? (Ties to your *You Are What You Love* and *Calling* studies.)

Faith bridge

- Compare Babette's feast to Communion and to the wedding feast of the Lamb. What is the film saying about hospitality as gospel? (Direct link to Amos Yong's *Hospitality and the Other*.)
- Old grievances dissolve around the table. Where might a shared meal do reconciling work in your own relationships?

Closing

- One sentence: after this feast, what "gift" do you want to give — or finally receive?
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Film 3 — *Silence* (2016, Scorsese)

A note the lead should give up front: *This is a hard, beautiful, unsettling film — depicting torture, martyrdom, and a priest's crisis of faith in 17th-century Japan. Please watch when you have space to sit with it afterward. There are no tidy answers here, and that's the point. Come ready to wrestle, not to resolve.*

One-line intro for the lead to read: *Two Jesuit priests travel to Japan to find their missing mentor amid brutal persecution of Christians. What follows is an agonizing question: when God seems silent while people suffer, what does faithfulness actually require?*

Opening / warm-up

- What did this film do to you? (Give people permission to name discomfort, anger, or grief.)
- Where did you find yourself most resisting — and where most moved?

Digging in (theme questions)

- The title is *Silence*. When in your own life has God seemed most silent? What did you do with that silence?
- Rodrigues equates his suffering with Christ's and finds meaning in it — until the suffering of *others* becomes the price of his faithfulness. How does that shift change everything?
- The Japanese officials argue Christianity simply "cannot grow" in their soil. Is the gospel bound to culture, or does it transcend it? (Connects to your studies on Islam, the "other," and McLaren's questions.)
- Kichijiro betrays and returns, betrays and returns, always seeking forgiveness. Is he the villain of the film — or the most honest disciple in it?

Faith bridge

- The climactic moment asks whether apostasy *to save others* could itself be an act of love. How do you hold that against Jesus' words about denying him? Is there a faithful answer? (A direct echo of *The Sin of Certainty*.)
- The film distinguishes between public act and inner faith. Can they be separated? Should they be?
- Where is Christ actually *present* in this story — in the martyrs, in the silence, in the mud, in Kichijiro?

Handling the hard part (for the lead)

- Explicitly invite disagreement: *"You may land in very different places on what Rodrigues did — that's welcome here."*
- Watch the emotional temperature; this film can surface real grief about personal seasons of God's silence. Leave room for that, don't rush past it.
- Resist forcing consensus. The gift of this film is the honest question, not a settled verdict.

Closing

- One sentence — or a moment of silence: *Where do you most need to trust God's presence in what feels like his silence?*
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What this shows the group:

- Same four-movement format, but with a **pastoral pre-frame, an explicit invitation to disagree, and a lead who tends the emotional room** — not just the ideas.
 - Heavier films work best when the lead sets expectations up front and protects space for wrestling rather than resolution.
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Format takeaways to show the group tonight:

- Each guide is ~10 questions in four movements: **warm-up** → **theme** → **faith bridge** → **one-sentence close**.
- The lead adds a one-line intro and picks the 4–5 questions that fit the night's flow.
- Guides deliberately tie each film back to studies you've already done — so it feels continuous, not a detour.

Want me to do one more as a contrasting "intense" example (*Silence* or *A Hidden Life*) so members see how heavier films would be handled?