

From One of the Producers of *Fireproof* & *Facing the Giants*

# Letters to God

**“A MUST SEE FOR ALL FAMILIES!  
...a story of hope and inspiration.”**

– Wendy Griffith, *CBN*



**MOVIE PLANNING GUIDE**

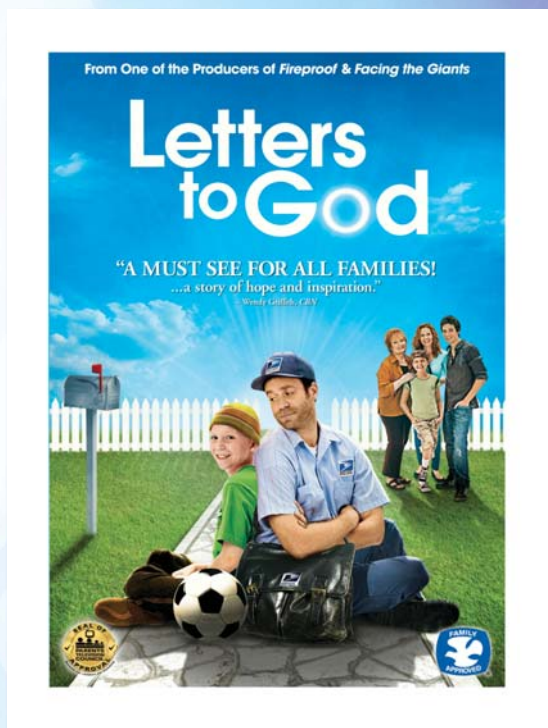
# Letters to God™

## Build **HOPE** in Your Community and Church

*Letters to God*, the movie, is a faith-based film about a young boy fighting cancer who finds strength and hope through writing letters to God. In doing so, he changes the lives of those around him. Cancer touches the life of nearly every individual and family in our churches and community today. In the face of such painful circumstances, we are often left with only our faith. Very few circumstances have greater potential to draw someone closer to God. And while most everyone is empathetic and supportive, many people are left alone and unministered to. The producers and partners of *Letters to God* invite your church to become a beacon of hope and faithful ministry for those touched by cancer and other life challenges, so they might feel the love of God and find peace.

### ***Letters to God* is a movie with a mission:**

To equip individuals, the faith community and community organizations to become Communities of Hope.



Show your *Letters to God* movie. Become a ...

**COMMUNITY  
OF HOPE**



## What's a Community of Hope?

Twenty-first century Good Samaritans who are trained and engaged in caring effectively for the life pain of others.

## What if your church could truly become known as a Community of Hope?

**Imagine** a place where God's people are *trained, equipped and empowered to care effectively for the life pain of others.*

**Imagine** a place where the people of God are known for their *compassion* more than their advice; a place where Ambassadors of Hope reach out to a hurting world with *relevant, life-giving care.*

### We've all been there ...

Life challenges and painful circumstances strike our life, only to encounter irrelevant advice and well-intentioned platitudes.

What we really need is someone's presence, care, acceptance and compassion. What we really need is a ... Community of Hope!

### A Community of Hope is where:

- Christ's followers actually know what to say to those touched by loss and pain, cancer and other personal/family challenges, death and trauma.
- We experience the comfort of God and the comforting compassion of others.
- We are pursued by caring people who simply want to share burdens and help lighten the load.
- We are prayed for and prayed with—by caring people who are committed to “doing life” with us.
- We experience real needs being met within an atmosphere of genuine support.
- We are welcomed and accepted—just where we are—without demand or expectation for change.

The Contagious Hope curriculum (*that was inspired by Letters to God*) will equip your church to live out all these attributes in meaningful ways.

# Step 1

## ***Cast a vision and build excitement!***



### 3-6 months prior to public showing of the movie

Cast a vision for how your church can become better known as a Community of Hope. Show the *Letters to God* movie to your key leadership. Share your part of the vision and begin specific plans for how your church might further become a Community of Hope.

- Do you want to increase your ministry to those affected by cancer and terminal illness?
- Could your church expand your ministry to those struggling with addiction?
- Will you plan to be more intentional about caring for single moms, widows or children in foster care?
- Will you begin or expand ministry to marriages, families or singles?

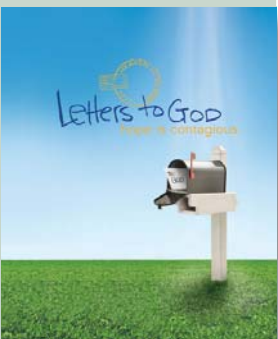
*Consider scheduling a **Community of Hope Vision Workshop** for 50 or more of your key leadership. This training can further equip, empower and expand your leadership towards becoming **Ambassadors of Hope** within your community. We'll help walk you and your leadership through the plans for showing the *Letters to God* movie, implementing the *Contagious Hope* curriculum and maximizing your outreach strategies as a Community of Hope. (email: [lara.hamilton@committed.net](mailto:lara.hamilton@committed.net) for workshop details)*



### 2 months prior to public showing of the movie

**Register your church at [www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com)**

- This national website can help you publicize and expand your Community of Hope ministries
- Order your Movie Event promotional materials at [www.myhopemarket.com](http://www.myhopemarket.com)
- Decide on what venue and to what audience you would like to show the *Letters to God* movie.



*Letters to God* is a faith-based film about how a young boy fighting cancer finds strength and hope through writing letters to God and in doing so changes the lives of those around him. It's the story of what happens when one boy's hope crosses paths with one man's search for meaning.

# Step 2

## Get the word out!

If you ask your small group or congregation if they have a family member, friend or loved one who has been touched by cancer, the tragic reality is that most will answer, "Yes."

If you ask most pastors and church leaders if they have a specific, focused ministry to those impacted by cancer, most will answer, "No."  
Let's see this changed!

Through your intentional plans and outreach strategies, you, your family, small group and church community can engage with the *Letters to God* movie and see HOPE become CONTAGIOUS.

*You can make a positive impact on those touched by cancer and other significant losses.*



### 1 month prior to movie showing

#### Let Your Sermons Help Get the Word Out:

Preach the three free sermons from [www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com) as another strategy to help your congregation catch the vision for becoming a Community of Hope. Sermon outlines and PowerPoints are available for download.

#### Sermon titles include:

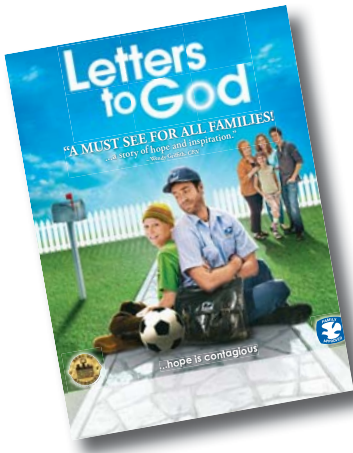
- Our Legacy of Hope Begins at Home
- Looking for Hope in all the Wrong Places
- Love Brings Hope – Startled By Christ's Love

Each sermon outline (with PowerPoint) includes movie clips from *Letters to God*. Preaching these sermons will help engage your congregation in the vision of becoming a Community of Hope where Ambassadors of Hope take the initiative to care effectively for the life pain of others.

Use these vision sermons to enlist Ambassadors of Hope – people who are willing to be God's ambassadors to care for, comfort and love people who are touched by cancer and other losses. Challenge your ambassadors to begin their demonstrations of care by simply inviting others to eat popcorn and see a movie ... *Letters to God!*

## Visitor Outreach:

Give movie tickets for your *Letters to God* movie event to any guest that attends your service during this vision phase. Encourage your greeters and assimilation teams to interact with all guests, inviting them to join them at the movie! Promote your *Letters to God* movie night by using the bulletin inserts, posters and postcards that are available from [www.myhopemarket.com](http://www.myhopemarket.com)



## Let's Go to the Movies:

Encourage your Ambassadors of Hope to give movie tickets to co-workers, friends and family members. Which one of them might need to experience some of God's contagious hope? A first step of care and support could include a simple, but powerful invitation to a movie! Let God use the movie to draw others to Himself!

## Reach out by Mail:

Mail Post Cards that invite each family in your database and surrounding neighborhood to a *Letters to God* movie night and Contagious Hope preaching/teaching series and small group. Order your customized post cards at [www.myhopemarket.com](http://www.myhopemarket.com)



**Encourage your congregation to let others know about your movie outreach event:**

- Share the movie trailer with friends, social networks and other community organizations. ([www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com))
- Add the *Letters to God* banner to websites (go to [www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com) for banners and graphics)
- Share the free downloadable sermons with other churches/pastors in your area. Consider making this a co-sponsored/community-wide effort.

## Community Outreach:

**Encourage others within your community to be a part of the *Letters to God*/Community of Hope vision!**

Forge a partnership between your church and community cancer organizations, then utilize *Letters To God* as a "Loving Your Neighbor" opportunity (Matthew 22:37-40). Fill your movie showing with those who have been challenged with cancer along with their primary caregivers. Challenge your congregation to be Ambassadors of Hope who lovingly serve these individuals and caregivers with the opportunity to view a powerful movie.

These capabilities  
available July 15, 2010

- Register your *Letters to God* movie event (Date, Time and Location) at [www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com) and let this national website promote your event.
- Make plans to start your Contagious Hope preaching/teaching series and small group right after your movie event. Your movie event will bring the guests to your church; the Contagious Hope series can help them stay connected!
- Download your Contagious Hope promotional materials at [www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com)
- Register your Contagious Hope preaching/teaching series and small group schedule at [www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com) and let this national website help you reach seekers and new-comers in your community.

These capabilities  
available July 15, 2010

# Promote Your Church Movie Night

Use your Church Movie Night as a great way to introduce your church to your community. Promote your movie night event with pre-designed products that arrive ready for your event. With our “customized features,” your church resources are ready to use with no special work required by your church staff!

Customize and proof your church movie night promotional products online with date, time, etc., and have them shipped to you ready for use. Eliminate the hassle of having to “personalize” your movie night products by filling in your movie night information in the spaces provided with each customizable products. All orders are shipped within 5 business days (not including weekends) fully customized and ready for your use. T-shirts are printed when ordered and ship within 2 weeks, so allow time for their delivery.

## Banners:

Promote your movie night event with these easy to use banners. Locate them in hallways, entry ways and other high traffic areas to promote your coming movie night event. Choose from several sizes to meet your needs. Available with poles and other supporting hardware and include grommets for hanging. (Pole & hardware are extra.)

## Bulletin Inserts:

Bulletin inserts are a great way to promote your movie night event. Each bulletin insert is beautifully designed and provides a description of the movie. With easy to follow instructions you can customize your bulletin insert order with the dates and time of your event and when they arrive they are ready for inserting into your church bulletin. No further work is required; we do all the hard work for you! Size is 5.5” x 8.5” printed 2 to an 8.5 x 11 page.

## Door Hangers:

Printed 3-up on an 8.5 x 11 page with easy to separate perforations, each door-hanger is an ideal outreach tool that you can use to promote your movie night event. With easy to follow instructions you door-hanger comes printed ready to use with no customization work you have to figure out how to do when you get it. Their ready to use when they arrive!

## Bookmarks/Tickets:

Our bookmark/tickets serve two purposes for your movie night. Promote the date of the event and use the reverse side of the ticket to promote special prayer emphasis to support your movie night event. As a bookmark, constantly remind your church members to continue to pray for your church as you work toward becoming a “Community of Hope” church. Printed on 8.5 x 11 sheets with perforations for easy separation – there are a total of 8 tickets per page. Each ticket is 2” x 5.5”.

## Postcards:

Choose from two different sizes and fully customize your movie event with all the details including date, location, map and other important detail so that your community knows about your movie event. With easy to follow instructions, your postcards can come to you ready to mail or if you like, upload your church database in an Excel or database type format and we will mail it for you.

All Movie Event promotional items are available at [www.myhopemarket.com](http://www.myhopemarket.com)



# Step 3

## Show the movie!

Letters to God movie night is here!

Challenge your entire congregation to invite friends and family, co-workers and neighbors for popcorn and movie night at your church.

### Your movie event might look like this:

**Take it Outside** – Consider using an outdoor projection system and LED screen for a movie in the park.

**Take it to the Theater** – Partner with a local theater on costs, options and policies; theaters are often grateful to have increased movie attendance on slow movie nights.

**Take it to a Neutral Location** – Partner with a cancer organization, local college or university, community center, YMCA or hotel to share this touching film with the community.

### During your movie night:



**Easily identify your staff, greeters and ushers** during your *Letters to God* movie event: Order *Letters to God* t-shirts at [www.myhopemarket.com](http://www.myhopemarket.com)

**Encourage your congregation to bring their guests**, and introduce them to others within the church. Encourage your church members to look out for attendees who are new and engage them in conversation. Make them feel welcome!

**Consider offering a time of sharing and ministry** immediately after the movie.

The movie's impact will touch people well beyond the pain of cancer. Be prepared for this movie to touch the hearts of anyone who has suffered through lingering illness, death of a loved one and similar tragedies. Therefore, small group sharing and times of prayer will be very appropriate.

Make the discussion/ministry guide (on page 10) available for your small group facilitators, Ambassadors of Hope or ministry teams before your movie night begins.





- Make sure to promote your *Contagious Hope* preaching/teaching and small group series to everyone who attends the *Letters to God* movie night. Provide flyers with details of topics, location, times etc. Download posters and flyers from [www.BeACommunityofHope.com](http://www.BeACommunityofHope.com)
- Sign up small group participants on the spot – encourage all who attend your movie night to be a part of the Contagious Hope series.

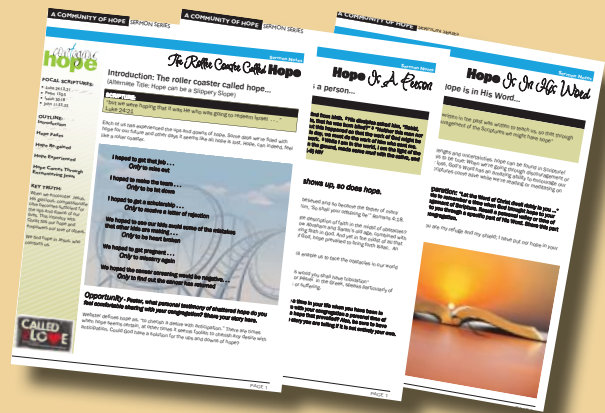
# Step 4

## Begin your Contagious Hope Preaching/Teaching Series and Small Groups!



Share sermon messages of hope that convey powerful, hope-filled truths. The Contagious Hope preaching/teaching series is based upon the *Letters to God* movie and reminds us all that:

- Life can be a rollercoaster called, “Hope”
- Hope is a Person ... and His name is Jesus!
- Hope is found in His Word
- We find hope through God’s people
- Our hope in God produces growth in us
- Hope is contagious – His hope empowers us to reach out to others



The Contagious Hope teaching/preaching notes and PowerPoint files include clips from *Letters to God*.

Members of your congregation could offer special invitations to those who have been touched by cancer, encouraging them to be a part of the six-week preaching/teaching series and/or small group experiences.

**All preaching/teaching materials are available on the WordSearch9 Bible software platform – making preparation more effective!**

The Contagious Hope small group course includes both leaders' and participant materials, plus supportive music videos from artists like Michael W. Smith, Graham Kendrick, Wintley Phipps, Bob Carlisle and others. Each week’s session leads to encounters with Jesus, deepened community, a true experience of Scripture and an opportunity for participants to practice the discipline of writing their own letter to God.

# Continue Your Contagious Hope Preaching/Teaching and Small Group Series

As a result of the *Contagious Hope Small Group* resource, participants will experience:

- The comfort of God and how to express that comforting compassion to others.
- What to say to those touched by loss and pain, cancer and other personal/family challenges, death and trauma.
- How Christ pursues us and how we can demonstrate that same care by taking initiative to pursue hurting people and lighten their load.
- Praying for and prayed with other people – and the importance of knowing the difference.
- Real needs being met within an atmosphere of genuine support and how this can be lived out with others.
- Christ's acceptance and how to demonstrate His welcoming grace to people around us.

## Check out these resources that will enhance your *Contagious Hope Series*.

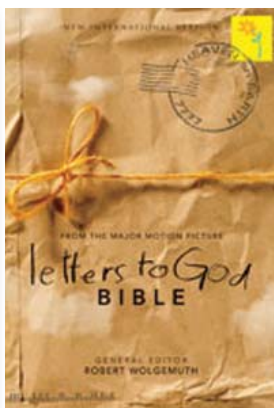
All these resources are available at [www.myhopemarket.com](http://www.myhopemarket.com) (while supplies last)



**Letters to God Journals** can be ordered and utilized in each small group session as members experience a growing faith and sustained hope as they write their own letters to God.



**DaySpring Cards** are perfect for your congregation and small group members to reach out in love to friends, family members, co-workers and neighbors – startling them with a written message of hope and care.



**The Letters to God Bible** includes annotated notes of hope – just like Tyler's father might have written personal notes in the margins for his son.



Make it a priority to allow specific opportunities for church members and guests to write their own letters to God and place them in the *Letters to God* mailbox. Order several for your small groups to use week by week or place a mail box in the church office, church library and common areas.

# Discussion and Ministry Guide

Before the movie begins, let participants know that you will be inviting them to stay around a few minutes after the movie concludes. You will be asking for their feedback about the movie and to talk about any parts that are especially meaningful.

Depending upon the size of your audience, consider breaking up into small groups for the movie debrief and discussion. Encourage your church staff, Ambassadors of Hope and ministry team to distribute themselves around the room in order to be sensitive to needs that may surface during the discussion. If time or staff limitations prevent you from discussing the movie in small groups, encourage attendees to share their responses with one or two others around them. Just make sure that no one is alone during the discussion.

After the movie ends, be sensitive to the tone of the room. For many people, the *Letters to God* movie touches different painful emotions and losses. Some people will have a particular connection with cancer, others may be sensitive to the death or illness of a loved one and still others may simply be touched by the mixture of painful and hopeful emotions of the movie. As necessary, be gentle in your approach as you invite attendees to share their responses to the following:

1. What part of the movie was especially meaningful to you?
2. Is there one character that you most easily identify with?
3. Is there a message for the church in this movie?
4. Is there a message for all of us in this movie?

After participants have the opportunity to share their responses, give all participants the opportunity to receive prayer.

## Options for this time:

- Invite all attendees to the Contagious Hope preaching/teaching.
- Encourage all attendees to sign up for Contagious Hope small groups.
- Invite all attendees to write their own letter to God and place it in the *Letters to God* mail box. Be sure to give the exact location of the mailbox(es).
- Close with a special time of prayer with one another.

# Imagine...

the Kingdom impact as Bible truths are not only taught and believed ... but actually *experienced!*

**Imagine** what could happen if we became *doers of the Word* and not just hearers only?

**What if** the most unlovable people of our community were *welcomed and accepted* just as Christ has accepted us?

**What if** we *truly shared God's comfort* with those who are hurting around us, because the God of all comfort has comforted us?

**Imagine** a place where church ministry arises from the hopes, dreams and needs of the surrounding community, rather than the latest conference or programmatic trend.

**Imagine** a church transformed to become a ...

