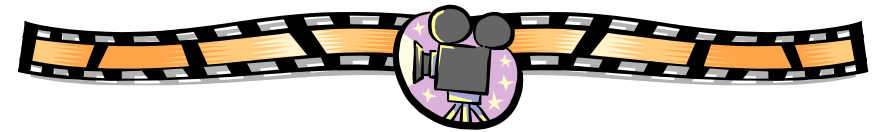


Background to the film

Star Wars has been a phenomenon ever since its first release in 1977. The United States had just been rocked by the Watergate scandal and were still embroiled in Vietnam. Society was undergoing a cultural shift away from acceptance of authority to disillusionment with politicians and political structures. Meanwhile, there was a similar movement away from organized religion, along with confusion about religious teaching and authority. People longed for role models and there was a basic need for storytelling and for the creation of a myth that would stir the imagination, organize existence, and dramatize values in ways that would resonate with people. *Star Wars* neatly fitted the bill, with its cosmic scope, its reliance on the tradition of heroism and chivalry, and its basic struggle between good and evil. It is such themes that continue to appeal to audiences today.

Some facts about the film

- The word "Jedi" is derived from the Japanese words "Jidai Geki" which translate as "period adventure drama." A period adventure drama is a Japanese TV soap opera program set in the samurai days. George Lucas mentioned in an interview that he saw a "Jidai Geki" program on TV while in Japan a year or so before the movie was made and liked the word.
- Darth Vader was the first character that George Lucas created for the story.
- Carrie Fisher found the dialog to be very difficult, later saying, "You can type this stuff, but you can't say it".
- 20th Century Fox was so sure *Star Wars* was going to be a disaster that they came within a matter of days of selling off their stake in the film as a tax shelter. Positive feedback from an advanced screening made them change their minds, and the profits from the film ended up saving the studio from bankruptcy. In the end, it was the first film to make over \$300,000,000.
- At one point in the scripting process, the Force was a large crystal or galactic holy grail.
- The movie opened in May 1977 and by November had dethroned "Jaws" (1975) as the all-time box-office champ. It then was beaten by "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial" (1982), but was back on top when it was re-released in 1997. It held that position until *Titanic* (1997).
- Most of the Stormtroopers are left-handed. That is because of how the weapons are constructed. Their weapons are based on a real weapon, where the magazine is on left side of the weapons. This construction caused it to hit the troopers in the chest. Therefore they have to switch grip of the weapon, which made them look left-handed.
- At one point, George Lucas planned for the characters of Luke Skywalker and his aunt and uncle, to be dwarves.



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Star Wars: A New Hope

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, a tyrannical empire has replaced a benevolent republic. Princess Leia, a republican rebel, is captured stealing plans of the Empire's new Death Star, a weapon able to destroy planets. Via her robot, R2-D2, and with the help of Luke Skywalker, she is able to get a message to Obi-Wan Kenobi, a Jedi knight. Obi-Wan tells Luke that he himself is the son of a Jedi. The Jedi believe in a mystical power, the Force, which binds the universe together. When invaders sent from the renegade Jedi, Darth Vader, kill Luke's uncle and aunt, Luke begins a mission of avenging his family.

Christ-figures

Although the *Star Wars* films are not Christian allegory as such, they do get people thinking about God with many people interpreting Obi-Wan Kenobi as a Christ-like figure and Luke Skywalker as a disciple. Would you agree? If so, why? If not, why not?

“My peace I leave with you”

In John's gospel (14:25—27), Jesus talks of sending an Advocate, an unseen Spirit that is a gift of God but is a power binding the world together. Why? Because this Spirit will remind the followers of Jesus of all the things he taught them. We are invited to live on in Jesus' love and to be one in his Spirit. In a similar way, Obi-Wan Kenobi can say about the Force: “The Force surrounds and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.”

The Force—a force for good or just for revenge?

There is a definite struggle between good and evil throughout all of the *Star War* films. How does that battle mirror your understanding of the conflict between good and evil in the real world? In particular, how much does “The Force” mirror God? Are there similarities, or is the battle simply a battle of strength with little room for love and self-sacrifice?

From heel to hero

Han Solo is a mercenary smuggler who cares little about the battle for freedom against an evil Empire. Instead, money and his own safety are his main concerns. Even after sharing a number of adventures with his companions, he chooses to go his own way rather than risk death by joining the others attacking the Death Star. In the end, though, he returns to save the day.

Such a journey, from self-centred “childhood” to the discovery that others should be at the centre of our lives is a journey we all must make. It is the journey made by Jacob, one of the most self-centred men in the Bible (eg. Gen 28: 20—22). It is the journey Christ came to help us all make. And, in the film, it is just such a journey which sees Han transformed.

Memorable quotes

Han Solo: Damn fool, I knew you were going to say that.

Obi-Wan: Who's the more foolish: The fool, or the fool who follows him?

Darth Vader: Your powers are weak, old man.

Obi-Wan: You can't win, Darth. If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you could possibly imagine.

Obi-Wan: In my experience, there's no such thing as luck.

Obi-Wan: I felt a great disturbance in the Force, as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror and were suddenly silenced. I fear something terrible has happened.

Obi-Wan: The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.

Princess Leia: It's not over yet.

Han Solo: It is for "me", sister. Look, I am not in it for your revolution, and I am not in it for you princess. I expect to be well paid. I'm in it for the money.

Princess Leia: You only worry about your reward. If money is all that you love and "that's" what you will receive.

[gets up and heads out of the cockpit and sees Luke walking in]

Princess Leia: Your friend is quite the mercenary. He doesn't care about anything or anybody.

Obi-Wan: For over a thousand generations, the Jedi knights were the guardians of peace and justice in the old Republic... before the dark times... before the empire.

Princess Leia: This is some rescue. When you came in here, didn't you have a plan for getting out?

Darth Vader: Your powers are weak, old man.

Obi-Wan: You can't win, Darth. If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you could possibly imagine.

Obi-Wan: The Force will be with you, always.