



RISEN

UNCOVER THE MYSTERY

Discussion Guide

Provided by Download Youth Ministry 

RISEN

ABOUT RISEN

RISEN is the epic Biblical story of the Resurrection, as told through the eyes of a non-believer. Clavius (Joseph Fiennes), a powerful Roman military tribune, and his aide, Lucius (Tom Felton), are tasked with solving the mystery of what happened to Jesus (referred to by the Hebrew name Yeshua in the film) in the weeks following the crucifixion, in order to disprove the rumors of a risen Messiah and prevent an uprising in Jerusalem.

RISEN stars Joseph Fiennes (*Shakespeare in Love*), Tom Felton (*Harry Potter*), Peter Firth (*The Hunt for Red October*), and Cliff Curtis (*"Fear the Walking Dead"*).

Columbia Pictures and LD Entertainment present in association with AFFIRM Films, a Liddell Entertainment and Patrick Aiello production, *RISEN*, directed by Kevin Reynolds. Screenplay by Kevin Reynolds and Paul Aiello, and story by Paul Aiello. Mickey Liddell, Patrick Aiello, and Pete Shilaimon produced.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

We live in a world saturated with media, and let's face it, not all of it is positive.

It's not often that a great movie comes along with teachable moments that have direct connections to God's Word. RISEN gives us a chance to move beyond entertainment toward an opportunity for lasting life change. This is why we have created this resource.

"RISEN: CONVERSATION STARTERS" is a tool to help teenagers have meaningful conversations based on the core themes from the movie. Both the film and the Bible have much to say about doubt & faith, God's rules versus culture's rules, as well as our relationship with Jesus.

This resource is designed for youth pastors, small group leaders, and students who want to make an impact. When used together, the movie and "conversation starters" can provide a great evangelistic opportunity. Challenge your ministry, small group, and friends to see the movie together and have a discussion about it afterwards. Take the challenge even farther by inviting students who don't normally attend church.

This resource has five sections with lots of conversation starters. You can use any or all of the sections, in any order. Do what is best for your context. While there is no one right way to use this tool, here are a few ideas for you to consider as you custom tailor this resource to fit your ministry:

1. WATCH THE MOVIE AND HAVE AN INFORMAL DISCUSSION AFTERWARDS

Pick a time for your ministry, small group, or friends to see the movie together. See an earlier showing so you can meet together after the movie to talk about it.

2. USE THIS RESOURCE AS CURRICULUM FOR YOUR SMALL GROUPS

If your ministry meets in small groups, have your students watch the movie and then use this resource as your curriculum the following one to five weeks—again, you decide what's best for your ministry. *A note:* if you start the guide when the movie comes out in theaters, the five sections will lead you up to Easter.

3. ENGAGE FAMILIES

Help parents "win" by encouraging them to have a conversation with their son or daughter about this movie. They could see the movie together as a family and talk about it afterwards. Each discussion includes some questions just for parents.

SPOILER ALERT: This guide has spoilers about the movie, and is intended for use after groups have seen the movie. That's not to say that the questions and topics cannot be used apart from the movie; they just make more sense if you've seen it.

No matter how you decide to use this resource, we're excited about what God is going to do in your ministry.

Praying for your conversations,

Doug Fields & Josh Griffin

Download Youth Ministry

Youth Workers Helping Youth Workers Win



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DOUBT & FAITH

For so many of us, doubt is a huge burden we carry when it comes to our faith. We doubt if God really hears our prayers. We doubt if some parts of the Bible really happened. We doubt whether God really does love us.

Doubt is a big theme of the movie *Risen* as well. The Tribune (Clavius) is haunted by his doubts and questions throughout the movie. But he's not the only one - Pilate, the soldiers guarding the tomb, and the disciples all wrestle with doubt, in different ways.

1. Why do you think it was so hard for Clavius to believe Jesus had risen, even after he saw him? Do some of those things still make it hard for us to believe today?
2. Several times as the disciples and Clavius talk, the disciples freely admit they don't understand everything and have doubts too. Do you feel like it's okay to admit when you have doubts, or do you feel pressure sometimes to be 100% certain about God, or the Bible, or prayer?
3. Jesus tells Clavius, "If it's hard for you to believe, imagine the doubt of those who will never see. That's what they face."
 - Who is Jesus talking about when he says that?
 - In John 20:29, Jesus says something similar: "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me." (NLT) Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus knew there would be people who would never see Him in person and that faith for us would be hard? How does it make you feel to know Jesus knew that doubt and faith for us would be difficult?
4. At one point in the movie when Clavius is asking Peter several questions, Peter responds in frustration, "I don't know! I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. We are followers. We follow to find out."
 - "We are followers. We follow to find out." What do you think that means?

THERE'S AN AMAZING PASSAGE in the Bible, Mark 9:17-27, about doubt and faith. Read that as a group and then answer these questions:

5. Jesus said, "All things are possible if you just believe." (NLT) Have you ever felt like there's a place in your life where it's really hard to "just believe?"
6. How does the father respond to Jesus' statement?
7. What does Jesus do after the father says, "I believe, help me with my unbelief?"
8. In this passage the father admits he is having a hard time believing and asks Jesus for help. Did you know it's okay to admit to God when you're having a hard time believing, and ask him for help?
9. What's one area in your life where you'd like to have more faith?

PARENT GUIDE

1. Who was your favorite character in the movie and why?
2. Mom/Dad, are there areas of your spiritual journey where it's hard to have faith? What are they?
3. When it comes to God-stuff in the family, is it easy to admit areas where you are struggling/doubting or do you sometimes feel like you have to pretend you're okay? If you sometimes feel like pretending, why?



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JESUS' RULES V. CULTURE'S RULES

Risen was very historically accurate in a number of different ways, but especially in how it showed the difference between Jesus and his followers, and the empire of Rome. Let's take a minute to think through some of those differences and what we can learn from them.

1. At the beginning of the movie, Clavius and his soldiers are attacking a group of Jewish rebels. One of them is named Barabbas. The movie is fiction, but Barabbas is a real person from the Bible. Does anyone know who he was and what he did? (ref. Matthew 27:15-26 for more info)
2. Barabbas, like many Jews, believed there was a Messiah coming, and they believed that Messiah would save the Jewish people. But Jesus wasn't the Messiah many were expecting. Jews at the time of Jesus had a variety of beliefs about who the Messiah would be, when he would come, and what he would do. How was Jesus not the Messiah some Jewish rebels were expecting?
 - What did the rebels in the movie expect Jesus to do to the Roman Empire?
3. At one point, one of Jesus' disciples asks Clavius, "Why do you fear him so? Your empire means nothing to him!" Why DO you think the Roman Empire feared Jesus? How did they misunderstand the message of Jesus?
4. Do you think the message of Jesus was dangerous to the Roman Empire? If so, in what way?

300 YEARS AFTER JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. It did this without ever picking up a sword, waging a battle, or fighting back. It simply happened one person at a time, as the followers of Jesus lived out the message of His kingdom.

5. How do you think this happened? How was Jesus' message of peace ultimately more powerful than the entire Roman government?
6. Our culture is built around power, whether that's physical strength, money, jobs, or political power. What are some sources of power you see people at your school trying to get? What makes some people powerful and not others?
 - If Jesus were at your school, how would he act differently? What would his message be as opposed to the message you see at your school?

AS A GROUP READ THROUGH MATTHEW 5:38-48

Note that in this passage, Jesus' reference to pagans, or Gentiles, reminds us that he was a Jew speaking to other Jews.

7. Are there any words or ideas in here you didn't understand? As a group see if you can figure out what they mean.
8. How is this passage different from the way the world works?
9. What would it look like to live that way? What would some of the potential problems be?
10. Towards the end of the movie, one of the disciples says, "It's not just about life eternal, it's about how life is lived. The sword or love."
 - Do you really think God's love can change the world? If so, how?
 - What is one way you can live out God's love this week?

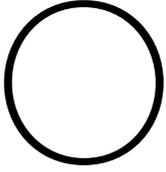
PARENT GUIDE

1. How was Jesus & the disciples' message different from the message of Rome?
2. Rome said that "peace" would come through power; Jesus' disciples said peace would come through love.
 - In your family right now, what are ways that you can let go of fighting for power with each other, and instead find peace through love? (*Parents, lead first on this question.*)



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RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS



One of the powers of movies is to go beyond teaching information and help us FEEL what it would be like to experience something. Because of that, one of the most powerful elements of the movie was seeing how Jesus interacted with people and left them forever changed. In watching that we are able to get a small, imperfect glimpse of what it might have been like to be around Jesus on this earth.

1. While in the baths at the beginning of the movie, Pilate tells Clavius, “Let’s hope one of the gods hears us.”
 - How is the Roman understanding of God different than the followers of Jesus? How do they see God differently?
2. At one point in the movie Peter says, “He (Jesus) has a body. The same vessel Yahweh gives all men. It’s how he reached out to us. I haven’t every answer. We are astonished too!” Note how Peter references Jesus as “Yahweh.” Jews both at the time of Jesus and today do not pronounce God’s name because of its holiness. The only exception was the High Priest in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Peter would have observed this custom.
 - How is God becoming a human different than every other religion or belief system?
 - Why do you think it matters that God became a human? Why is that important?
3. Mary Magdalene – the woman brought before Clavius – says, “Some resent that he (Jesus) came to a woman. He came to me first. He came to ME.”
 - Why do you think it was so meaningful to Mary that Jesus showed up to her first?
 - (For ladies to answer): Why do you think Jesus showed up to a woman, even though he knew that most men wouldn’t listen to her because women in that culture weren’t listened to? Why would he do that?

ONE OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE ASPECTS of the movie was how kind and loving Jesus was to those he interacted with. Imagine what it would be like to be the following people:

(Leader note: if you’re comfortable doing it, you can have students close their eyes and remember these scenes. You can then have them privately reflect on these questions. If you go this route, after you’re done ask them which person they most identified with and why.)

PETER:

4. What do you think it would be like to betray Jesus, run away at his crucifixion and then see him again? How do you think Peter first felt?
5. Have you ever felt like you’ve let Jesus down or failed him too many times? How do you think he would respond to you if He were here right now?

THE LEPER:

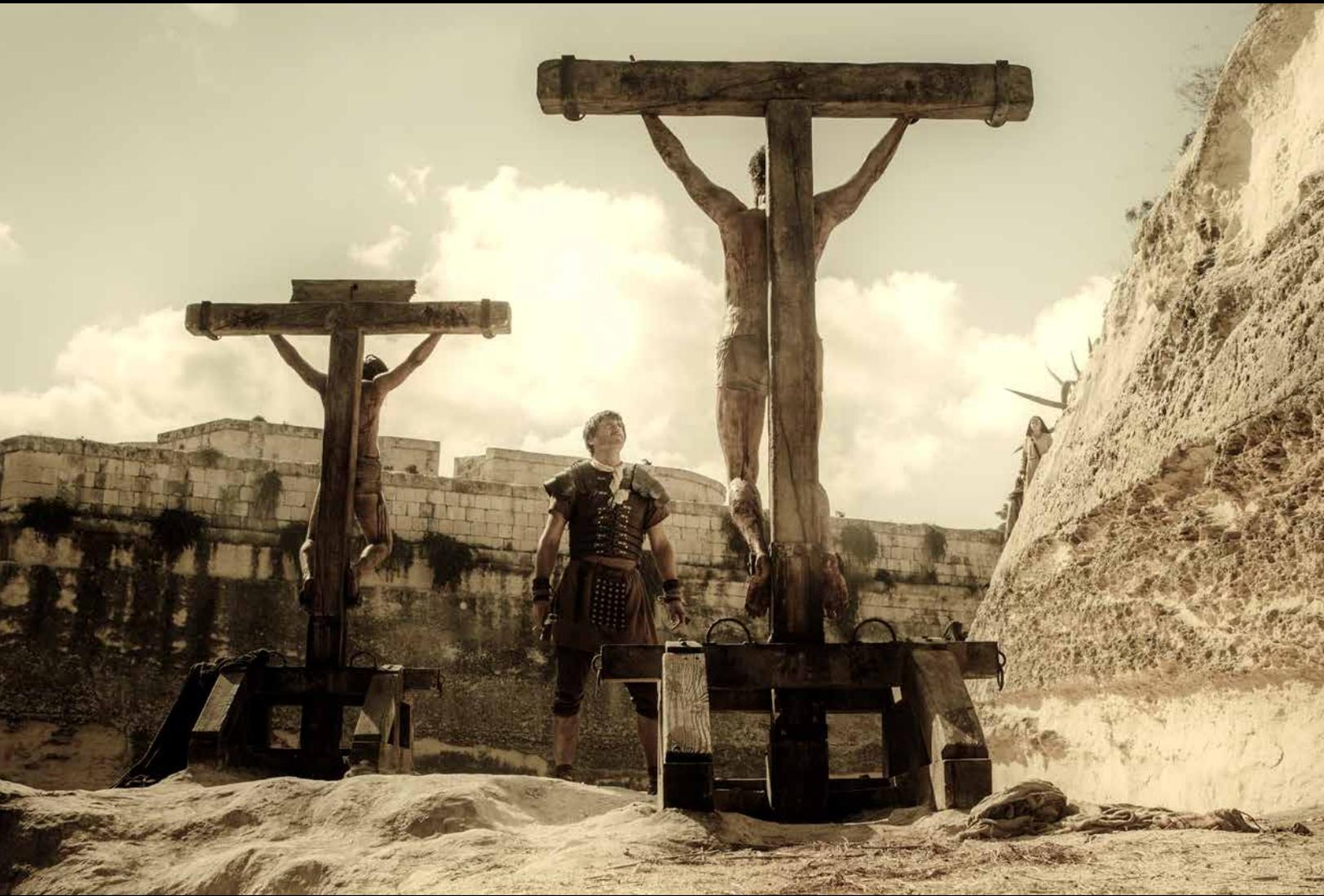
6. Jesus sees a leper being beaten and thrown out of a village. Even though leprosy was then a very contagious and incurable disease, Jesus touched and healed him:
 - Have you ever felt like an outcast or you didn’t fit in?
 - Are there areas of your life where you feel deeply ashamed, guilty, or gross? Based on how Jesus responded to the leper, what do you think Jesus would say or do if he were here right now?

CLAVIUS:

7. Even after everything he’s seen, Clavius still has doubts and questions:
 - Do you sometimes doubt or have a hard time having enough faith? Where is an area you struggle with doubt?
 - How did Jesus respond to Clavius’ questions and doubts? How do you think he’d respond to you?

PARENT GUIDE

1. What is the one characteristic of Jesus that most stood out to you?
2. Even after everything they did, Jesus forgave both the disciples and Clavius. Why is forgiveness so hard? How can you as a family work on forgiving each other more? *(Parents: if you can lead with a confession and asking for forgiveness, it could create a great moment for you as a family to discuss this.)*
3. Which character do you identify most with right now? Peter, Pilate, the leper, or Clavius? Why?



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CRUCIFIXION

For anyone born in the United States – or many parts of the world – the symbol of Jesus’ crucifixion is everywhere: from churches to art to jewelry. Because of this it’s easy for a powerful, disturbing and beautiful moment to become a bullet point we believe.

In the movie *Risen*, as we see the violence and sadness of crucifixions, we’re given the chance to reflect on what Jesus’ death really means.

1. As you watched the crucifixions occurring at the beginning of the film what stood out to you? What did it make you feel?

READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE FROM PHILIPPIANS 2 TOGETHER: ⁵“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. ⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.” (NLT)

2. Two different times in this passage it describes Jesus as being “humble.” What do you think that word means? How does it describe what Jesus did on the cross?
3. This verse says Jesus gave up his rights as God to become human and die on a cross. Why do you think he did that?

READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE FROM ROMANS 5 TOGETHER: ⁶“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. ⁷ Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. ⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹ And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. ¹⁰ For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. ¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.” (NLT)

4. According to v. 8 why did God send Jesus to die for us?
5. According to v. 6 what were WE like before Jesus came and died for us? What do you think that means?
6. According to v. 11 what was accomplished through Jesus’ death?

STOP AND THINK ABOUT THE CRUCIFIXION SCENES FROM THE MOVIE. Think about the pain. Think about the sacrifice. Jesus voluntarily did that for you. And he did it because he loved you. Imagine how much love it would take to voluntarily die for someone like that.

7. How easy is it for you to believe that God loves and likes you? If it’s hard for you to believe that, why?
8. Reread v. 11. According to this verse, what is our relationship to God now? How does it describe how God sees us?

PRAYER

Through Jesus’ death all the bad things we’ve ever done were cleared and we were given an opportunity to become friends with a God that loves us so much he did everything to be with us.

Spend time together praying together to that God. Ask him to help you know that he loves you. Thank him for dying for you. Ask him for help with the things in your life you need help with.

PARENT GUIDE

Some of the imagery from the crucifixion scenes was disturbing. Spend time discussing that with your children, being sensitive to how they may have responded to the violence.

1. As a family, discuss why you think Jesus died on a cross. What does that tell you about who God is?
2. Parents: lead the discussion by telling your children how those scenes made YOU feel, and also what the crucifixion means to you personally.



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RESURRECTION

When God raised Jesus from the dead he conquered death. Death is the #1 enemy of life. It ultimately happens to everyone. It's the reality lingering in the background - that eventually it all ends. But in Jesus' resurrection we see that God is so powerful that he can defeat death!

1. If you had been present during Jesus' resurrection, how would YOU respond?
2. Where is there an area of your life where sin, bad choices, pain, hurt, or hopelessness seem really strong? If God could raise Jesus from the dead, and that same power lives in you, what would you want to ask God to do in YOUR life?

ONE OF THE GREAT THINGS ABOUT THE MOVIE was how REAL Jesus seemed. He wasn't glowing and he didn't have a halo above his head - he was just a real person.

3. How did this movie change the way you see Jesus when you think about him?
4. Think through the different scenes where people saw Jesus alive. How did they respond?
5. There's a scene in the movie where one of the disciples is talking about Jesus coming back to life and he says, "This changes everything!" What do you think that means? How did Jesus' resurrection change everything?
 - After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples seem almost fearless - almost like they could do anything and not be hurt. Why do you think that is?
 - Imagine you could do anything you wanted and not be seriously injured or die. What would you do?

READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE FROM ROMANS 8 TOGETHER: *"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. ¹² Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children."* (NLT)

6. According to v. 11, what power is living in us? What do you think that means?
7. According to v. 12, what do we no longer have an obligation to do?
 - What is a sinful nature?
 - Do you think it's true that we no longer have to be controlled by sin? Why or why not?

PRAYER

Spend time praying for each other's prayer requests, specifically praying that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead would be at work in each other's lives.

PARENT GUIDE

1. Why is Jesus' resurrection important? What does it mean for our lives now?
2. Where as a family have things been hard lately? Pray for the same power that raised Jesus from the dead to be at work in that area.

PRIMARY CAST & CREW

JOSEPH FIENNES (Clavius) is a renowned actor of stage and screen, in both television and film. Fiennes followed his critically praised performances in the Oscar®-nominated films *Elizabeth* and John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* with lead roles in Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Enemy at the Gates*, Eric Till's *Luther*, Rupert Wyatt's *The Escapist*, *The Merchant of Venice* with Al Pacino and Jeremy Irons and Ryan Murphy's *Running with Scissors*.

TOM FELTON (Lucius) began his acting career at the age of 10 when he starred as Peagreen Clock in Peter Hewitt's fantastical tale *The Borrowers*. Since taking on the role of 'Draco Malfoy', *Harry Potter's* nemesis in *Harry Potter And The Sorcerer's Stone* at age 11, he has become a household name and has starred in all eight *Harry Potter* films. In May 2010, Tom received the MTV Movie Award for "Best Villain" for the sixth *Harry Potter* installment, *Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince*, and followed that up in 2011 with a second straight win for *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1*. Tom also received a Teen Choice Award for "Best Villain".

PETER FIRTH (Pontius Pilate) BAFTA Award winner and Academy Award nominated Peter Firth is perhaps best known for his role as 'Sir Harry Pearce' in the BBC One show *Spooks* (2002-2011), in which he is the only actor to have starred in every episode of the show's ten-series lifespan.

CLIFF CURTIS (Yeshua) Cliff Curtis is a successful film and television actor with a varied body of work encompassing a wide range of compelling performances spanning more than two decades. He currently stars in AMC's *Fear the Walking Dead* alongside Kim Dickens. The show premiered on August 23, 2015, and was the most watched series premiere in cable TV history. Set in Los Angeles, Curtis plays English teacher Travis Manawa, who struggles to keep his family together during the onset of a zombie apocalypse.

KEVIN REYNOLDS (Director, Screenplay by) Raised as an Air Force brat, Kevin Reynolds' love for cinema inspired him to forsake his law school degree and move to Los Angeles to enroll in the University of Southern California's legendary film school. Reynolds' graduate thesis film *Proof* became the basis for *Fandango* starring Kevin Costner and was produced by Steve Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment as one of its first productions. During his time at USC, Reynolds also wrote the Cold War cult hit *Red Dawn*, which John Milius directed. Reynolds also directed *The Beast*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *Rapa Nui*, *Waterworld*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Tristan + Isolde*, and *One Eight Seven*, as well as the *You Gotta Believe Me* episode of Spielberg's anthology television series, *Amazing Stories*.

PAUL AIELLO (Screenplay by, Story by) began his career by writing and selling *Bumper to Bumper - the secret life of cars* to 21st Century Fox and has since written on many other projects including a Korean War epic/love story, *The Translator*, and *Flying South* an animated family film about vacationing birds. *Risen* is his first produced feature. A Christian himself, this had made it all the more rewarding.

MICKEY LIDDELL (Producer) has had an extensive career producing a wide variety of highly successful films and television shows, working both independently and for studios. In 2007, he founded LD Entertainment, a film development and production company which has recently expanded into television, theater and digital platforms. The company has also financed and produced such critically-acclaimed films as Joe Carnahan's *The Grey*, starring Liam Neeson; Rodrigo Garcia's *Albert Nobbs*, which garnered Oscar® nominations for Glenn Close and Janet McTeer; William Friedkin's *Killer Joe*, starring Matthew McConaughey and Emile Hirsch; and Alejandro González Iñárritu's Oscar®-nominated *Biutiful*, which starred Javier Bardem.

PATRICK AIELLO (Producer) is a film producer, senior production executive and feature screenwriter with extensive experience in development and creative affairs, talent packaging and film financing, physical production, and worldwide distribution and marketing of mainstream feature films for major studios and independently financed slates. Aiello's produced films to date are *Burn Your Maps* for Warner Brothers Pictures and Cinelou Films (2016); *As Above So Below* for Universal Pictures and Legendary Pictures (2014); *The Double* for Image Entertainment (2011); *Dylan Dog: Dead of Night* for Freestyle Releasing (2010); *Leonie* for Monterey Media (2010); *The Dark Country* for Sony Pictures (2009); *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun Li* for 20th Century Fox (2009); *The Other End of the Line* for MGM Studios (2008); and *Asylum* for MGM Studios (2008).

PETE SHILAIMON (Producer) joined LD Entertainment in 2000 as the EVP of Production. Under this title, Pete has produced and executive produced an array of projects including *Risen*, which was fully financed and produced by LD Entertainment. Pete recently wrapped the WWII thriller *Anthropoid* starring Jamie Dornan and Cillian Murphy, and is currently producing *Leavey* which stars Kate Mara, Edie Falco, Common, Bradley Whitford and Will Patton. He is also an executive producer on *The Zookeeper's Wife* starring Jessica Chastain and Daniel Bruhl, and Jackie featuring Natalie Portman. His past films include *The Devil's Hand* (2014), *In Secret* (2013), *Black Rock* (2012) and *The Collection* (2012).

COLUMBIA PICTURES AND LD ENTERTAINMENT PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH AFFIRM FILMS A LIDDELL ENTERTAINMENT AND PATRICK AIELLO PRODUCTION
"RISEN" JOSEPH FIENNES TOM FELTON PETER FIRTH AND CLIFF CURTIS CASTING BY JOHN HUBBARD ROS HUBBARD MUSIC BY ROQUE BAÑOS VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR RAFA SOLÓRZANO
COSTUME DESIGNER MAURIZIO MILLENOTTI EDITED BY STEVEN MIRKOVICH ACE PRODUCTION DESIGNER STEFANO MARIA ORTOLANI DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LORENZO SENATORE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROBERT HUBERMAN SCOTT HOLROYD
PRODUCED BY MICKEY LIDDELL PATRICK AIELLO PETE SHILAIMON STORY BY PAUL AIELLO SCREENPLAY BY KEVIN REYNOLDS AND PAUL AIELLO DIRECTED BY KEVIN REYNOLDS
LD ENTERTAINMENT PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED BIBLICAL VIOLENCE INCLUDING SOME DISTURBING IMAGES PG-13
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