

Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if we only take time to look.

So here are some questions you can apply to any film. Sometimes, you may feel that there is nothing much to say—but that itself can be its own message. Other films can be truly life changing! But whatever film you are watching, enjoy the experience!

Questions to ask yourself

What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

What issues did the film raise for you?

What character(s) do you most identify with and why?

Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values? How does the Bible tackle the issues the film raises?

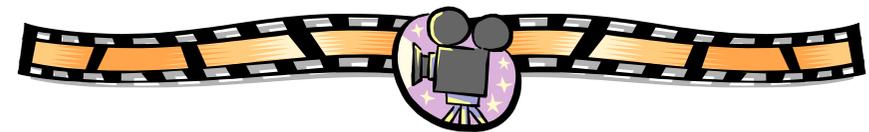
Some facts about the film

The film was shot almost completely with hand-held cameras.

The film was shot in chronological order (even though it's not in chronological order in its final cut).

The title comes from the work of Dr Duncan MacDougall of Haverhill, Massachusetts in the early twentieth century. MacDougall weighed dying subjects, in experiments of extremely dubious scientific value, believing that he was proving that the soul was material and measurable. His results in fact varied wildly, but 21 grams has come to be believed as the accepted measure of a soul's weight.

The Spanish-language dedication to María Eladia at the end, "pues cuando ardió la pérdida, reverdecieron sus maizales," translates to "for when the loss burned, their cornfields became green again."



**A chance to watch films together.
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

9th Jun	<u>21 Grams</u>
2nd Jul	Life Of Brian
6th Aug	Crash
3rd Sep	Bridget Jones' Diary
1st Oct	Dogville
5th Nov	The Man Who Sued God
3rd Dec	Cool Hand Luke

**Films start at 5:30pm
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

**10 Bletchingdon Road
Islip**

**Further details from Jonathan (Ox 842214)
Or email info@spiritualityonscreen.org.uk**



21 Grams

21 Grams tells the story of three people whose lives are inextricably linked through a tragic accident. Their connection affects irreparable change in the lives of all three, and through their experiences they learn harsh truths about love, faith, courage, desire and guilt, and how chance can change our worlds irretrievably, forever. In so doing the film explores several fundamental questions: what is a life, can we place a value on it, and, if so, what is its value?

As a result, the film explores the depth of human feeling in our brief interplay between living and dying. It's about damnation and redemption, despair and hope, revenge and forgiveness, surrender and salvation. It offers no explanations. It merely illustrates the human experience in a trenchant manner that makes us aware that every minute of every day is a precarious drama that we look upon more lightly than we should. For if life is so fragile, then it's also precious, and people need not waste their time on vengeance.

It is not a film for either the faint of heart or lazy of mind. This is because it is told in a fragmentary, non-linear way with past, present and future all becoming jumbled up. Only at the end do all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle come together. This allows the director to focus on why people act as they do, placing their emotions and actions in context in terms of past, and future, events. For some, this method of story telling is inspired. Others find it extremely frustrating! However, if you can stick with it, beneath you will find a powerful and moving film.

Plot outline (spoiler warning!)

For those who might find it helpful, below is a chronological outline of the plot. Those who wish to take the film "as it comes", may want to avoid reading what follows until afterwards.

Jack Jordan is a former convict who is using his faith to recover from drug and alcohol addiction. Christina Peck is a woman who is also recovering from a drug addiction with a supportive husband and children. Paul Rivers is a mathematics professor with a heart condition and only a short time to live. He is badgered by his wife to donate his sperm so she can have a baby, even after his death. These separate stories become tied together when Jack accidentally runs over Christina's husband and children, killing them. Her husband's heart is donated to Paul Rivers, who recovers but remains weak. Paul tracks down the donor of the heart and falls in love with Christina. Hearing her story, the two then plot to kill Jordan. Paul confronts Jordan and holds him at gunpoint but chooses to spare his life. After Jordan flees, Paul informs Christina of Jordan's "death." However, Jordan, his guilt causing him to be suicidal, follows Paul to his motel room and demands to be shot. Paul shoots himself with the gun in order to distract Christina from killing Jordan and Jordan and Christina rush him to the hospital. Paul dies at the end of the movie, with the drama between Christina and Jack unresolved. They meet in the waiting room after Paul's death, but do not speak. While Christina is waiting at the hospital for Paul, she learns that she is pregnant. The final scene sees her tentatively preparing for the child's birth.

"They say we all lose 21 grams at the exact moment of our death... everyone. The weight of a stack of nickels. The weight of a chocolate bar. The weight of a hummingbird..."

Some key issues

Living and dying

It is clear that we are all dying. For some, death would put them out of their misery. There are others who keep on hoping for something more than just existing.

Guilt

Jack Jordan, having found Jesus as the way to put his life back together, then finds everything falls apart because of the accident. Torn apart by guilt and by a desire to do "the right thing", he struggles to find the release that the gospel should bring.

Bereavement

Each character has a journey through feelings of hate, revenge, hopelessness and bewilderment. Faith does not necessarily bring comfort.

Relating it to the Bible

The characters in the movie are either close to dying themselves or have had people close to them die. It is death that pushes things forward in their lives. Through death, they discover life.

2 Corinthians 4: 7—12

Paul describes himself and certain others' experience as being like earthenware pots containing an infinite treasure which comes from a transcendent power. This potential lies in each of us, waiting to be graced by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the character in the film find a strength within and beyond themselves by which to continue.

Matthew 16: 24—28

We must leave an inappropriate or inadequate sense of ourselves behind, take up our cross and follow Christ. Accruing earthly power and wealth is not the same as discovering our soul—and that choice is always there, even in the face of adversity.

Job 42

We are usually out of our depth, hardly knowing what is going on in ourselves, let alone the world. We agonise and rant over things we simply cannot understand, yet wisdom is to be found, even in the depths. What wisdom is discovered by the characters in the film, how does it come about and where might God be in all their strivings?