

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?

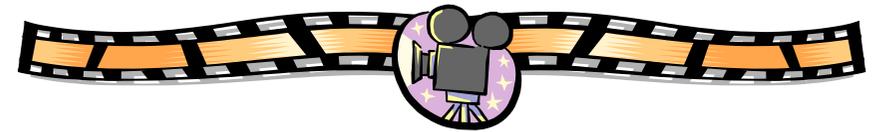
Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

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?

Has the director taken a distinctive approach to filming or telling the story? If so, how does the film benefit from being made in this way?



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

15th Jan*	<u>Bruce Almighty</u>
5th Feb*	The Mission
12th Mar	Shrek
9th Apr	The Last Temptation of Christ
14th May	Bagdad Cafe
11th Jun	21 Grams

**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**

*Please note change of date



Bruce Almighty

Bruce is an ambitious reporter at a local TV station. When things seem to go against him, he ends up blaming God for making his life a misery. After all, if God is all powerful, why doesn't God make Bruce's life better? The result of all this is a meeting with God in which, as Bruce thinks God is making such a mess of things, God gives Bruce his powers to see if he can do any better. There are just two conditions: Bruce cannot tell anyone that he has God's powers and neither can he interfere with free will. The results are both hilarious and illuminating as Bruce discovers playing God is not as easy as he first thought. There are always consequences to thoughts, words and actions, something Bruce has to learn the hard way.

Some key issues

Resentment / blaming others

When things do not run to plan in our lives it is easy to be angry with everybody except ourselves.

Selfishness

A life obsessed with self hurts those around us—the ones we love and need, but also those in our community and broader society.

Responsibility

Sometimes it is possible to miss the opportunity to serve the common good. How do we use the gifts we have—wealth, health, intelligence, humour?

Freewill

It is impossible to buy love or respect. People respond to what they see and experience in others.

Questions to ponder

What sort of God do people believe in? What sort of God do you believe in? What would you want God to be like and why?

When Bruce first explores his new-found powers, he thinks only of himself. Is power generally negative or positive? If you were God for a day, what would you do?

Bruce responds to people's prayer requests by giving them all what they want. But is this really what prayer is all about—getting what you want? Why do people pray? Why do you pray? How do you think God responds to prayer?

Some quotes

Bruce: God could sort out my life in five minutes if he wanted, but he is too busy giving things to Evan. (*his rival at the TV station*)

Bruce: God is a mean kid with a magnifying glass.

Bruce: Smite me, oh mighty smiter!

God: There are just two conditions. You can't tell anyone you're God and you can't mess with free will.

Bruce: Can I ask why?

God: Yes—that's the beauty of it!

Bruce: How do you make someone love you without affecting free will?

God: Welcome to my world. When you come up with an answer to that one, you let me know.

God: It doesn't matter how filthy something gets, you can always clean it up.

Bruce: I just gave them all what they wanted.

God: Yeah—but when did anyone have a clue about what they want?

God: That's the trouble—people want God to do everything.

What they don't realise is that they have the power themselves.

Bruce: I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to be God. I want you to decide what is right for me. I surrender to your will.

Bruce: No, I don't want her back. I just want Grace to be happy.

God: Now, that's a prayer—that's good!

Relating it to the Bible

Psalms 139

The psalmist declares the amazing intimacy between the creator of all and the created. How does Bruce's understanding of God develop in the film?

Psalms 90

The psalms cover the full range of emotions, including anger and frustration towards God. How much could this psalm be an expression of Bruce's frustration?

Luke 19: 1– 10

Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus shows how even the wealthiest, and even corrupt, can be transformed.