

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.

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?

Some trivia about the film

- The drawing on Dwayne's T-shirt is the face of Big Brother from the 1956 film version of George Orwell's "1984".
- All of the girls acting as participants in the "Little Miss Sunshine" beauty pageant, except Abigail Breslin, were veterans of real beauty pageants. They wore the same costumes, including hair and makeup, and performed the same talent routines as they had in their real-life pageants.
- The movie took five years to make, mostly due to financial reasons.
- On July 25, 2006 Fox Searchlight Pictures invited VW bus owners to a screening of Little Miss Sunshine at Vineland Drive-In theater in City of Industry, California. 65 VW buses were present at the event.

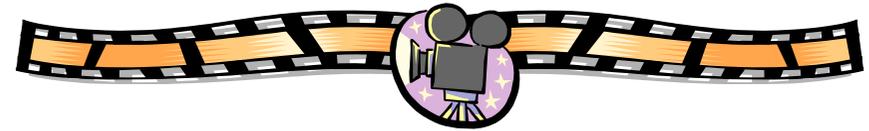
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considering the effect on others, leading us to compete unhealthily with each other. Jesus, on the other hand, calls us to a life of service in which we can be content with what we have, without being driven by materialism. How do we maintain the division between selfish ambition and setting healthy goals that stretch our abilities and benefit others?

Matthew 9:14

Children had no status in Jesus' day, but Jesus used them as examples of the trust and innocence that should characterise those who want to be part of his kingdom. How can we prevent children being pressurised to grow up too soon?

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

1st Jul	<u>Little Miss Sunshine</u>
2nd Sep	The Wind That Shakes The Barley
7th Oct	I, Robot
4th Nov	The Terminal
2nd Dec	Tsotsi

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

**10 Bletchingdon Road
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Little Miss Sunshine

Little Miss Sunshine is a touching comedy which follows a rather dysfunctional family and reminds us that family life is only possible when we reduce our expectations of perfection in each other and learn to accept each other's frailities.

Leaving the comfort zone

Growing up can be a life-long task. *Little Miss Sunshine* opens with a close-up of the eyes of a child, and in many ways it is about how life appears to children: especially the question of what it means to succeed or fail. The catch is that the adults in this film are all, in their various ways, children, too. In what ways do you think our own feelings of failure as children continue to affect us in later life? How can we avoid letting these memories hamper us as adults?

Real families

This film reminds us what family life is often really like: that no one has a perfect family, and that aiming for perfection is likely to produce only disappointment. How can we help each other to be more realistic about our expectations for family life? What aims might it be healthy and realistic for families to have?

The drive to succeed

Richard is obsessed with winning, an obsession he passes on to Olive. As a result, she becomes terrified of failure. Although Edwin soothes her fears by reminding her that a "loser" is someone who doesn't even try, how can we avoid passing on our own brokenness (in this case, Richard's obsession with winning) to others?

Personal ambition

The prevailing values of society suggest that each of us should try to become as wealthy as we can through our own personal ambition and effort. This often leads to stress, the breakdown of relationships, illness and sometimes even death. How can we resist this and encourage a more wholesome view of life, one that avoids selfish ambition or unhealthy competition with others?

Childhood innocence

Little Miss Sunshine focuses on a child whose innocence is being stolen by adults who, for whatever reason, organise public contests to evaluate how children look. The pressure of the "beauty myth" now starts earlier than ever, whether it be child beauty contests, the fashions aimed at pre-teens, or the role models offered by young adult celebrities. The results are scenes like that of Olive in the restaurant feeling bad about ordering ice cream. How can we help ourselves and others avoid such pressures? How can we help restore the innocence of childhood without being patronising or authoritarian?

Forgiveness

The family in *Little Miss Sunshine* have a lot about which to be angry with each other. Yet the film sees them finding reconciliation, not through any explicit repentance/forgiveness, but through bonding together toward a common goal: that of protecting their weakest member from harm. Can you think of ways and situations in our own life where a similar common purpose could be nurtured? How else might we enable forgiveness and reconciliation amongst the people and communities of which we are a part, without resorting to religious language which may alienate or confuse people?

Memorable quotes

Richard Oh my God, I'm getting pulled over. Everyone, just ... pretend to be normal.

Sheryl (*after Frank tried to commit suicide*) I'm so glad you're still here.
Frank Well, that makes one of us.

Frank So who do you hang around with?
Dwayne (*Shakes his head*)
Frank No one?
Dwayne (*writes on a notepad: "I Hate Everyone"*)
Frank What about your family?
Dwayne (*deeply underlines "Everyone"*)

Grandpa Losers are people who are so afraid of not winning, they don't even try.

Olive Do you think there's a Heaven?
Frank Well, it's hard to say, Olive. I don't think anyone knows for sure.
Olive I know, but what do *you* think?
Frank Well ... um ... uh ...
Olive I think there is.
Frank Think I'll get in?
Olive Yeah.
Frank Promise?
Olive Yeah.

Frank Who is that? Nietzsche? So you stopped talking because of Friedrich Nietzsche? Far out.

Richard You know, Olive, Grandpa would have been proud of you today.
Olive Really?
Sheryl You were great.
Frank You were better than great.
Dwayne You were incredible.

Relating it to the Bible

Mark 3: 31—34

Families in the Bible come in all shapes and sizes: from the dysfunctional families of Isaac and Jacob (Gen 27, 33, 37), to the small inter-racial family of Naomi, struck by tragedy (Ruth 1), they are certainly not the nuclear units we think of today. Jesus invites everyone into his family. The fact that there is no "one size fits all" version of family in the Bible should have a positive effect on our own understandings of family because all of us have unique family challenges. Our task then is to resist those external pressures which try to make us conform to other people's visions of what families should be like.

Philippians 2: 2—4

It is almost an unquestioned assumption of our society that people should try to succeed without
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