

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

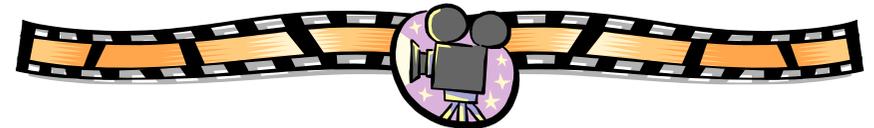
What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

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?



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

7th Jan	Harry Potter & the Prisoner of Azkaban
4th Feb	Pulp Fiction
4th Mar	Pleasantville
1st Apr	<u>Man dancin'</u>
3rd Jun	Sliding Doors
1st Jul	Little Miss Sunshine

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

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Man dancin'

Just released from prison, Jimmy Kerrigan wants to stick to the terms of his parole and stay out of trouble. But no sooner has he arrived back at his front door than his typically erstwhile younger brother Terry is being hounded by a couple of local drug dealers who are unhappy he's been operating on their patch and Jimmy is left to take a beating for him. Also, his mother's at death's door, he's struggling to find work and he's being hounded by an uncompromising local gang boss and a corrupt copper who are both convinced he'll go back to his old ways. The only one who sees any hope for him is the local priest who gives Jimmy a part in a church play. This small act of kindness comes to be something Jimmy really throws himself into and uses as a lynchpin to turn his life around. But this new-found happiness cannot last forever and it's only a matter of time before Jimmy is dragged back into the life he'd vowed to leave behind.

In many ways it is an unobvious film. The real-life parallels to the passion story are all too explicit as, gathering up fellow outcasts, including female prostitutes and a blind John the Baptist-style blues singer, Jimmy spreads this urgent, impassioned gospel to public places around the city, ultimately offering up his own life for the sins of others. There is a priest called Gabriel, a brotherly Judas, plenty of images of Christ on the cross, and the concluding showdown unfolds at the statue of the Angel of the North, south of Gateshead. But death is not the end: the message goes on as "the disciples" continue to do their street theatre. However, although the imagery is there, it stands alone as basically a story about a guy who wants to make the world a better place, inspires others to do so, and collides with the forces who profit from misery. Jimmy's not perfect, but he does his best.

Righteous anger

The overriding image of "Christ" in this film is that of an angry one, pouring condemnation on those who prey on others. But what other images are there to be found? If Jimmy's passion play might seem rather one-sided, how would you have wanted to rewrite the play if it had been your task?

Judas

The motives behind the things we do are often very complex and confused. Bad things happen through misunderstanding, or longing for others to be different, or attempting to manipulate things to be how we want them to be. Why do you think Terry acted in the way he did? What did he mean when he said: "I'm sorry, Jimmy. I did it for you."

Blood money

Near the beginning, Jimmy is offered money from McGlone with "no strings attached". He refuses, saying "There's always strings." Contrast this with God's gift of grace. How difficult do we find it to accept that some things really do have no strings?

Being inspired by the gospel

The story hints that Jimmy initially found God in prison. However, on release that faith is still a very private faith. His ambition is simply to look after his brother, visit his bed-ridden mother in the nursing home, find work, save some money and then move away when his parole is over. It is not until his mother asks him to read the Bible to her that Jimmy is fired up with the gospel message, realising that it is far more radical than the initial version of the passion play portrays. What inspires you about the gospel? How do you get that across to others? And what about the many who remain disillusioned with the church precisely because the church does so often seem to portray an insipid, "teletubby" gospel rather than the radical version Jesus preached?

Memorable quotes

- Young thug:** He was due a slapping.
Jimmy: I'll take it for him. Have you got a problem with that?
Young thug: No. No problem.
- McGlone:** It's not much, but it will get you started. ... There's no strings.
Jimmy: There's always strings.
- Father Flynn:** Look, I didn't say Jesus couldn't be a woman.
Elizabeth: That's exactly what you said.
Father Flynn: No, no, no. I said he wasn't a woman.
Elizabeth: He wasn't a bald accountant from Newton Means either, but that didn't stop us last year.
Father Flynn: Look, I'm just concerned that we don't distract from the message.
Elizabeth: Because, of course, that's what women are—a distraction.
- Jimmy:** I don't know what your files say, but I'm not the churchy type.
Father Flynn: Neither am I.
- Sebastian:** All we're saying is that we'd appreciate some indication from Jimmy that he appreciates all the hard work we've been doing and is willing to be a team player.
Jimmy: No! You want me to keep my mouth shut.
Sebastian: No one is saying that.
Jimmy: I know you've put a lot of hard work in but that doesn't alter the fact that the play is shite. As long as I'm here, I'm going to speak my mind.
- Maria:** The soup's cold. I think they've forgotten to heat up the soup.
Elizabeth: It's Gazpacho. It's meant to be cold.
- Villers:** Let's stop beating each other up over this. Let's get our heads together. Get him nailed.
- Father Flynn:** You call this winning. It's just a play for God's sake!
- McGlone:** I will be there, as I have always been there.
- McGlone:** You did the right thing, coming to me. Jimmy's like a son to me. Prison does things to people. They come out all confused and lost. What he needs is someone to watch over him.
Terry: Oh, so you want me to spy on him.
McGlone: No, not spy on him. Look after him. Help me look after him. You owe him that, don't you?
- Terry:** I'm sorry, Jimmy. I can explain. I did it for you. I did it for you.