

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

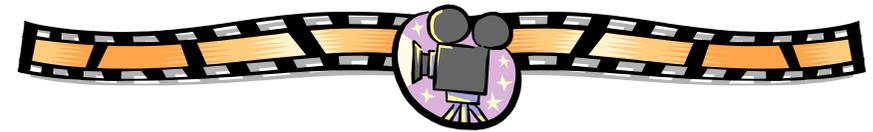
The tattoos on Sirius Black's body and hands are borrowed from Russian prison gangs. They are markings which identify the person as a man to be feared and respected.

The effects team spent six months creating the dementors.

When we see the Marauder's Map for the first time, the name 'Newt Scamander' can be seen. In the Harry Potter universe, he wrote the book "Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them", but isn't a teacher at Hogwarts.

The Mexican director, Alfonso Cuarón, had never read the Harry Potter books or seen the first two movies when he was offered the job.

After Dumbledore says his final lines outside the infirmary, he goes down the stairs humming La Raspa, the Mexican hat dance.



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

**5th Nov
3rd Dec
7th Jan**

**The Man Who Sued God
Cool Hand Luke
Harry Potter
& the Prisoner of Azkaban**

**4th Feb
4th Mar
1st Apr**

**Pulp Fiction
Pleasantville
Man dancin'**

**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**



Harry Potter

The Prisoner of Azkaban—The story so far

Harry Potter is now 13 and still living with the Dursleys, his aunt and uncle, with whom he does not get on. He has lived there since becoming an orphan when a baby, his mother and father both being killed by Lord Voldemort, the evil wizard. They were in hiding at the time and were betrayed—no one knows by who. His mother died saving Harry and Voldemort was severely crippled. He has vowed to return and kill Harry. The Dursleys are muggles (non-magical people) and kept Harry's past a secret but he discovered something of his past on his 11th birthday when he took up his place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, much against the Dursley's wishes. While there he has built up firm friendships with Ron and Hermione, as well as Hagrid the gamekeeper. They have suffered a variety of adventures, all highly dangerous, but so far always come out on top. Meanwhile, Dumbledore, the benevolent headmaster and the most powerful wizard there is, keeps a fatherly eye on Harry and slowly introduces him to the truth.

The Harry Potter books have been tremendously successful. Millions of them have been sold around the world and the stories themselves are great fun. The final instalment (book 7) should appear in the next year or so. Although some Christian groups have expressed their reservations, claiming they promote wizardry and witchcraft, as with many other books, the characters simply inhabit a fantasy world, a world which then provides the backdrop for the stories. Those stories are not about witchcraft per se but instead explore much richer themes: the battle of good versus evil, the use and abuse of power, love, sacrifice, grace, our flawed humanity. Because of this, although there is no overt theology, Christian themes are there to be found for those who look. Here are a few—there are no doubt others.

Sacrifice

The idea of putting yourself out for others runs deeply throughout the stories, something which often involves the characters risking death. Ron and Harry fight the troll to save Hermione (bk 1); Ron lays his life on the line to win the game of chess (bk 1); Harry risks drowning and the wrath of the Mer people to save all the hostages rather than just the one required by the competition (bk 4). At the heart of the whole story, is the way Harry's mother died to save Harry from Voldemort. 'There is no greater love than this, that someone should lay down his life for his friends.'

Flesh, blood and love

There is something intrinsically good about love. Interestingly, it plays itself out in flesh and blood. Voldemort cannot touch Harry's skin. Voldemort seeks a drop of Harry's blood because 'the protection my mother left in me, he'd have it, too.' We have yet to see whether the fact that Voldemort now has a drop of that blood in his veins is his ultimate undoing. 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.'

"Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. Love as powerful as your mother's leaves its own mark. No visible sign but to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin. Voldemort could not touch you for that reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good."

'Love your enemies'

Evil is never overcome by evil. Whatever the outcome, the ends do not justify the means and evil, even if supposedly in a good cause, ultimately corrupts (eg. Crouch). Harry has a strong sense of right and wrong and is prepared to risk his life even for the one who betrayed his par-

Memorable quotes

Peter Pettigrew: Harry, James wouldn't have wanted me killed! Your dad... your dad would have spared me! He would shown me mercy!

Peter Pettigrew: What would you have done, Sirius?

Sirius Black: I would have died! I would have died rather than betray my friends!

Dumbledore: A word of caution: dementors are vicious creatures. They will not distinguish between the one they hunt and the one who gets in their way. Therefore I must warn each and every one of you to give them no reason to harm you. It's not in the nature of a dementor to be forgiving. But you know happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, when one only remembers to turn on the light.

Sirius Black: It's cruel that I got to spend so much time with James and Lily, and you so little. But know this, the ones who love us never really leave us. And you can always find them; in here. [*puts his hand over Harry's heart*]

The wisdom of Dumbledore

"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

"You fail to recognise that it matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be!"

"To the well-organised mind, death is but the next great adventure. You know, the Stone was really not such a wonderful thing. As much money and life as you could want! The two things most human beings would choose above all—the trouble is, humans have a knack of choosing precisely those things which are worst for them."

ents. The betrayer then escapes but he is forever tainted. As Dumbledore reminds Harry: 'When one wizard saves another's life, it creates a certain bond between them. The time may come when you will be very glad you saved his life.'

'Someone looking over me'

Dumbledore is the archetypal benevolent wise old man—God with a beard. He sees and understands more of what is really going on than anyone else. He 'trusts where a lot of other people wouldn't'. He gives people a second chance and is willing to have faith in them (eg. Hagrid). With regard to Harry, he is always there for him. Yet he never prevents Harry from having to face great dangers. What he does instead, is ensure that Harry has the tools at hand to do the job. Great bravery is still required, but the job is possible. In book one, he ensures that the philosopher's stone is safe in the mirror of *Erised* so that only Harry, who wants the stone rather than the things it can bring, can get it. He sends Fawkes and the sorting hat to the Chamber of Secrets. He provides the Invisibility Cloak. There is the protection of the wand that shares its feather with that of Voldemort. There is the Time-Turner which enables Harry to save himself with his own patronus. God does not promise us an easy ride but he does promise to accompany us on our journey. In the same way, Dumbledore is there for Harry.

Developing our gifts

Harry has the potential to be a great wizard but it is only through using and developing those gifts that they begin to flourish. Here, confidence is the key—believing in the tools we have been given.