

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?

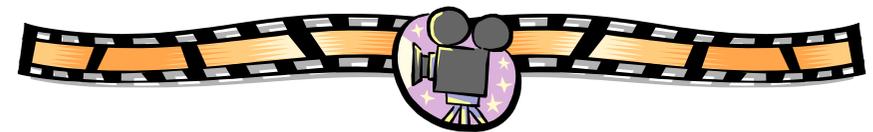
Has the director taken a distinctive approach to filming or telling the story? If so, how does the film benefit from being made in this way?

Relating it to the Bible

Exodus 20:7 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord.

Psalms 14:1 Fools say in their hearts "There is no God".

Matthew 7:7 Search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened.



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

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

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

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



The Man Who Sued God

Steve Meyers, one-time lawyer and now would-be fisherman, has his fishing boat destroyed by lightning. When he tries and claims on his comprehensive insurance, the company refuse to pay up, citing “an act of God”. So Steve decides to sue God for compensation—or, at least, his representatives on earth, the Church. Steve is not particularly anti-God. However, he does want to challenge a legal position that interprets random disasters as the whims of an arbitrary deity. Meanwhile, the church is caught in a difficult position. The only safe way to win the case requires them to prove that God doesn’t exist. However, if that is the case, they will then stand accused of misleading people for centuries.

Some key issues

God’s nature

The image of God as a sender of suffering is one that still has resonance for many people. This remains in stark contrast to a loving God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

Taking God’s name in vain

The insurance companies admit that “an act of God” is nothing more than a legal fiction. In the film, the churches are challenged over allowing the insurance companies to infringe their copyright. How much should we worry about those who take God’s name in vain or continue to perpetuate images of God which do not ring true (whether insurance companies, TV, films, the media at large, certain branches of the church etc.).

Making God relevant

A God who throws lightning bolts does not make sense in our 21st century world. As Steve says: “God’s not in charge of that stuff anymore. We have this thing called science. We can predict the weather now.” In every age, fresh ways are needed to speak about God. How do we make God relevant to those who live in our modern world?

The need for the churches to be Christ-like

It is not just negative stereotypes of God that get in the way. The church itself often gets a bad press—after all, it is the scandals and the hypocrisy that make a good story. How, as a church, do we combat such negativity?

Memorable quotes

- Jules: You’re going to sue one of the world’s biggest insurance companies?
Steve: Well, apparently I wouldn’t stand a chance. I’m suing God.
- Steve: Did God make the bolt of lightning that sunk my boat?
Clergyman: Yes—and no. These things don’t have easy answers.
- Steve: How would you describe an act of God?
Clergyman: Well, acts of natural destruction—tidal waves ...
Steve: ... earthquakes, plagues of locusts ... God’s not in charge of that stuff anymore. We have this thing called science. We can predict the weather now.
- Lawyer: If you want to keep the money it would be better to say God doesn’t exist.
- Clergyman: I think we can take it as read that God exists.
Rabbi: I hope he does—I’ve spent half the morning singing to him.
- Clergyman: What are the others doing about it?
Rabbi: They are all praying. They should be praying for better lawyers.
- Clergyman: The only safe way is to prove that God does not exist.
Rabbi: That’s easier said than done.
- Clergyman: It’s a question of faith. Either you believe he doesn’t exist or you don’t.
- Clergyman: It’s a poor world without faith, you know.

The existence of God

“It’s a question of faith. Either you believe he doesn’t exist or you don’t”. Although in the end it is a matter of faith, what things help you make that leap?

Intervening in the world

If we no longer believe in a God who throws thunderbolts, how does God intervene in the world? Is there really such a thing as “an act of God”? And, if so, how would we recognise it?