

## 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 only we 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?
- ▶ Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

### Some facts about the film

- ▶ During *The Overnighters* project, which lasted two years, Pastor Jay Reinke allowed over 1,000 different people to stay at the church.
- ▶ The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Special Jury Award.
- ▶ The film was also shortlisted for Best Documentary Feature at the Oscars.
- ▶ Jesse Moss is an award-winning documentary filmmaker known for his cinéma vérité style (observational filmmaking). With *The Overnighters* he wanted to film a movie without voiceover or extensive interviews, simply filming dramatic scenes as they happened. He was praised by *The New York Times* for his "observational, near-invisible presence" in the film.
- ▶ Moss is also known for working with a small or non-existent crew, partially because of budget constraints and partially because of the increased mobility a one-man crew allows for. He shot the entirety of *The Overnighters* by himself on location in North Dakota from 2012 - 2013.
- ▶ Other full-length documentaries from Jesse Moss include *Full Battle Rattle*, which looks at the Iraq Simulation that the US Army has built in the Mojave Desert to help train its army units before deployment, and *Speedo*, which follows the promising racing career of Ed Jager, one of the nation's top demolition derby drivers.

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

**31st May Paddington**  
**5th Jul The Theory of Everything**  
**2nd Aug What We Did On Our Holiday**  
**6th Sep The Overnighters**  
**11th Oct Selma**  
**1st Nov The Imitation Game**

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

**10 Bletchingdon Road  
Islip**

**Further details from Jonathan (Ox 842214)  
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## The Overnighters

The Overnighters is a documentary telling the true story about a pastor and his church in Williston, North Dakota. North Dakota is currently experiencing an oil boom, due to fracking, and people are flocking there to search for work and to begin a new life, perhaps escaping demons from the past or because they are down on their luck and see this as their only chance of making ends meet. The result is a town creaking at the seams to cope with the influx of people. The new arrivals may often have nowhere to stay when they first arrive; they may be short of money until they land that first job. The question then is, how does the church respond?

Europe is experiencing one of the greatest refugee crises for many years as people flock from the Middle East in order to escape war and horrific ethnic tensions, looking for sanctuary, looking for a better life, having nothing more with them than what they can carry. They are desperate for help and, once again, the question is, how do we, as human beings, as Christians, as the church, respond?

### Fear of the unknown

The townsfolk are often very suspicious of the incomers but, as Pastor Reinke says at one point in the film, if people only knew a person's backstory, they would better understand. How do we enable the local community to hear the full story of those coming in and allow the new arrivals to share something of who they really are, rather than letting fear and stereotypes rule the day?

### Honesty and discretion

How do you achieve that balance between being honest and open with people whilst not saying something that will immediately close the door? As one man comments, it is sad that one misdemeanour remains on your record and follows you around everywhere, while all the good things you have done since seem to count for nothing. How do we ensure people are given a second chance and an opportunity to redeem themselves? How do we allay people's fears? How much should our trust in someone be foisted on the whole community? And what happens if something goes wrong and our faith in someone is broken?

### Maintaining one's own community

Not all the church was wholeheartedly behind what Pastor Jay was trying to do. Indeed, various people began to leave the congregation. How do you balance such tensions within one's own community whilst still meeting the need of those outside?

### Length of commitment

When the church originally began offering their space, many felt it was a temporary measure, maybe for a few months. But the people kept on coming. In the end, the project ran for two years and could have gone on longer if it had been

## A cautionary tale

A man once asked Jesus: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him: "What is written in the law?" He answered: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." Jesus said: "You have given the right answer. Do this, and you will live." But, wanting to justify himself, the man asked Jesus: "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied:

"A man was going from Syria to Europe when he fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. Now by chance a Hungarian politician was going down that road, and when he saw the man lying on the road, he said to himself: 'Oh dear! Our Christian country is being overrun by these foreigners. We must keep them out, then there would be no one to get mugged like this.' And he hurried by on the other side. Then a British politician came by. He said: 'Oh dear! This is terrible! We must install better street lighting and CCTV cameras so that those who have not yet travelled this way will be better protected.' But, as for the man lying on the road, the politician passed by on the other side. Finally, a German politician came by and saw the man lying on the road. He immediately got out his mobile phone and called home, arranging for help to be prepared. Then he gently lifted the man into the back of his car and took him to his house where he cared for him until provision had been made to enable the man to look after himself."

And Jesus said: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" The man replied: "The one who took him in." Jesus said to him: "Go and do likewise."

*Luke 10: 25 - 37*

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allowed to. How does such uncertainty colour the decisions, and the offers of help, that we make? And should it?

### Boundaries

The church developed a set of rules which those who stayed were expected to abide by. How important do you think that was? And how important is it to think things through thoroughly and draw something up before you begin? Or is it sufficient simply to tackle issues as they come along?

### Closure

Why do you think people wanted it to close?

### The end of the story

What do you think about the ending? Should this have been part of the documentary, or is it part of another story?