

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

- ▶ Unusually these days, the film was actually shot in chronological order.
- ▶ The inspiration for the film came in the early 2000s, when the Dardenne brothers read about a real-life case in a big French factory. There was a worker whose production output wasn't good enough for the other workers to get their bonuses, so that person was let go. They heard about similar cases in Belgium, Italy and the USA, and they all raised the question of solidarity.
- ▶ The film is set and was shot in Seraing, an industrial town in Liege, in Wallonia, where the Dardenne brothers were born and raised.
- ▶ The two brothers have said they were influenced by the film *12 Angry Men* when conceiving *Two Days, One Night*, because both involve a process of going to see people to try and change their minds.
- ▶ Although she was required to shoot long 7-minute takes, Marion Cotillard found the experience the most rewarding that she's been a part of. She recalled shooting certain takes 50 - 60 times, the record being 82 takes of the same scene.
- ▶ This is the sixth film by the Dardenne brothers to be nominated for the Palme d'Or, though it didn't win on this occasion.
- ▶ The film was nominated for both an Oscar (Best Actress) and a BAFTA (Best Foreign Language Film) this year.

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

4th Jan Kinky Boots
1st Feb Pride
8th Mar Two Days, One Night
5th Apr After Life
10th May Belle
31st May Paddington

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

10 Bletchingdon Road
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Further details from Jonathan (Ox 842214)
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Two Days, One Night

Two Days, One Night is a Belgian film made in 2014 by the Dardenne brothers.

Sandra (Marion Cotillard) can barely get out of bed, look after her two young children, or hold her life together. Dragged down by depression, it seems like the last straw when she gets some bad news from work. Her co-workers at solar panel company Solwal were given a choice: agree to let Sandra go, or forego their €1,000 annual bonus. The majority have voted against her.

Her friend Juliette (Catherine Salée) manages to persuade the manager that a re-vote is necessary. With time to spare until the final decision is taken, Sandra's husband Manu (Fabrizio Rongioni) urges her to track down each of her colleagues and speak to them face-to-face, asking them to vote in her favour. When confronted with a real person, what will her true worth be in their eyes? Sandra has two days and one night to find out.

Solidarity

Sandra: *"They want their bonus, it's normal."* **Manu:** *"No, it's not normal."*
Are you with Sandra or with Manu? Is it "normal" to prioritise a bonus over a colleague's job (eg. the survival of the fittest)? Or is there anything in human nature which might make generosity and selflessness the norm?

Differing priorities

Juliette: *"When the others see you, they'll forget their bonus."*
What range of responses does Sandra get to her request? What does the overall moral dilemma reveal about each individual she visits - their priorities and the way they see the world? How does the film complicate our sympathies throughout? What difference does it make to be faced with someone's dilemma face to face rather than "at a distance"?

Going with the majority

Yvon: *"What do the others say?"*
Why do so many of Sandra's colleagues ask her this question? What does that say about the way people make moral choices? Is there anything wrong with "morality by majority" or is morality more absolute than that?

Imposing on others

Sandra: *"Every time, I feel like a beggar. A thief coming to take their money."*
Do you think there is anything selfish or inappropriate about Sandra's quest to keep her job? Is it right to ask for help when that help will come at a significant cost to other people? To what extent do we have a right to ask for help from those who aren't relatives or close friends? And to what extent do we have a responsibility to help such people when asked? What has been your own experience?

Loving our neighbour

Alphonse: *"I'd like to vote for you tomorrow. It's what God tells me to do. I have to help my neighbour."*

What does the film have to say about Jesus' commandment to "love our neighbour"? What are our obligations to each other in the communities where we live and work and how does that commandment towards our neighbour actually play out in practice?

Who is the villain?

"If the film is full of victims, who exactly is the villain? Occasionally, one identifies a possible culprit. There are the brawling colleagues by the lock-up garage; the weaselly foreman who engineered the initial show of hands. Yet these, I think, are mere distractions, a set of stock and brutish archetypes. More likely the film's real evil-doer is the one we never see. Implicitly (and sometimes not so implicitly), Two Days, One Night slams and damns modern management techniques, lifting the lid on a culture of short-term contracts and non-unionised labour. What's the answer? Bond together. In throwing a lifeline to the anguished Sandra, the workers are surely rescuing themselves as well." (Xan Brooks, *The Observer*)

Would you call *Two Days, One Night* a political film and, if so, in what sense might this be the case? What does the film have to say about working class lives and the pressures put on ordinary people by the current economic climate? How can work both give people dignity, and take their dignity away?

It's all about the journey

"I don't exist," Sandra laments to her husband, as she puts her hair in a scrunchy and embarks on her quest. She thinks her co-workers cannot see her but it soon turns out they can. With each house that she visits, she rediscovers her fire, reconnects to the world. Who cares, in the end, that the odds are stacked against her and that she may well not get the votes? Two Days, One Night tells us that the fight is always worth it, whatever the result. Even if Sandra loses, she has already won. (Xan Brooks, *The Observer*)

Do you agree with Xan Brooks' comments? Is the journey always more important than the destination? And how does that relate to our own spiritual journey of discipleship? Would the film have been a different film if the destination had been different?

What about the music?

The Dardenne brothers are known for not using music in their films. Did you notice the lack of music in *Two Days, One Night* and, if so, how did it affect your viewing experience? Which aspects of a film might we be more attentive to when music is absent?