

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?

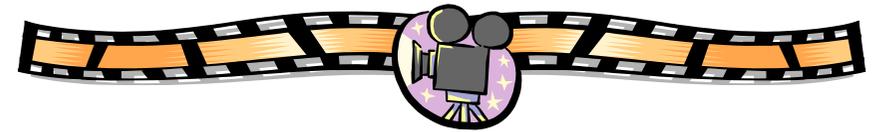
Some facts about the film

The shadow of the camera crew is (deliberately) visible while the credits for the cinematographer are on the screen.

It is also known by the title “Out of Rosenheim”.

It received one Oscar nomination in 1989—that of “Best Music, Original Song” for its title track *Calling You*.

While the characters in *Bagdad Cafe* may be fictional, the cafe really does exist. It is located in Newberry Springs, CA, about 20 miles east of the desert town of Barstow on Interstate 40. Though it was originally called *The Sidewinder Cafe*, due to the following of this film, it is now called *Badgad Café*. The cafe looks much the same as it did in the film and you can sit at the table right by the door where Jasmin used to sit and have her coffee.



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

15th Jan*	Bruce Almighty
5th Feb*	The Mission
12th Mar	Shrek
9th Apr	The Last Temptation of Christ
14th May	<u>Bagdad Cafe</u>
11th Jun	21 Grams

**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**

*Please note change of date



Bagdad Café

Set in the desert plains of America, *Bagdad Café* is a film which tells the story of how the arrival of one middle-aged lady, finding herself dumped in the middle of nowhere after falling out with her husband, transforms a small community, bringing hope and new life. At its heart it is a film about friendship and love, as Jasmin brings meaning and purpose to the lives of the small group of people who surround her: the painter who begins to paint again and falls in love; Brenda, the harried, frustrated owner of the cafe who finds friendship, comfort and support; Brenda's children, who also benefit from Jasmin's caring and compassion. Look out for the boomerang, an interesting metaphor for what you give, you get back, and for the joy of giving and receiving. The magic of love will appear anywhere, even in the middle of the desert, as long as you have an open heart and mind.

Some key issues

Acceptance

At the heart of Jasmin's transformation of the little community is the acceptance of people as they are. As such, she is willing to spend time just sitting alongside others, getting to know them, sharing their hopes and dreams, and sharing something of herself with them. The effect is literally quite magical.

Judging by appearances

Appearances are not all they seem. It is too easy to dismiss others because of a mistaken view of who they are, as Brenda initially does with Jasmin, and it can take time and commitment on both sides (particularly, perhaps, from the injured party) in order for those barriers to be broken down.

The outsider's view

It sometimes takes someone from outside the community to see things as they really are. We often get so bogged down in our daily routine that we fail to see the mess we are in. Brenda has become used to living amongst all the clutter in her office. It takes Jasmin to have the courage to clear out the junk, something which is resisted at first but much appreciated afterwards.

Transformation is a two-way process

Although Jasmin brings a transformation to the community she finds herself in, she, too, is transformed in the process. When she arrives at Bagdad Café, she also is trying to make sense of life and trying to cope with a very trying situation, just as Brenda is. Although they appear quite diverse, underneath they have much in common. Both are in ruts, both are looking for change, for something better in the middle of nowhere. And then they find each other. Once the rock-hard exterior melts away and they reach a common ground, their blossoming friendship transforms both.

The endurance of love

Sal leaves Brenda in a fit of pique, fed up with being told what to do, but he loves her too much to actually leave town.

Some quotes

Brenda: I knew she was weird.

Brenda: Don't tell me that was it, Arnie! I mean, you gotta be kidding! That what I had you come up here for? I don't believe it! I mean she, she shows up outta nowhere without a car, without a map. She ain't got nothing but a suitcase filled with men's clothing. How come? How come she act so funny like she was gonna stay here forever? And with no clothes?! No! I don't like it! It don't make no sense at all! No, no, no, no, no! It don't make no sense!

Brenda: My office! Who did it?

Jasmin: I thought you would like it.

Brenda: A hotel guest make me happy? I don't believe it. You call this an office. It's empty! ... What business was it of yours, anyway?

Brenda: Go and play with your own kids.

Jasmin: I don't have any.

Phyllis: Eric—this is my girlfriend, Jasmin.

Salomo: (*of Jasmin*) She's the only person who really understands my music.

Sal: Oh, Brenda. Brenda, baby!

Brenda: Now why would you want to leave?

Debby: Too much harmony.

Trucker: What happened to the magic?

Cahuenga: The magic? It's gone.

Relating it to the Bible

Much of Jesus' ministry and the way he deals with people—particularly those on the edges of society and those misunderstood by others—shows how people can be transformed through love and acceptance. God offers us that friendship; God can clear out some of the junk; God loves us for who we really are. Our challenge is to allow that love to transform us into the people we were meant to be. (Matthew 16: 21—28; Luke 14: 12—23; Luke 19: 1—10; John 12: 1—7 etc.)