

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.

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?

Relating *Crash* to the Bible

Luke 7: 37—42

Jesus warns his listeners not to judge others. How can we rail against the prejudices of those around us unless we first seriously examine our own, for we kid ourselves if we say we do not have any.

Matthew 8:1-4; 9:9-13; Luke 19:1-10

In these stories Jesus meets and heals a man with leprosy, calls a tax collector to follow him, and has a meal in the home of another tax collector. If Jesus had taken notice of the contemporary stereotypes of lepers and tax collectors he would never have bothered with such people. Instead, Jesus saw the person beyond the stereotype and lives were transformed.

Matthew 15: 21—28 / Mark 7: 24—30

Jesus responds to the Canaanite woman in a way which would have been typical for a Jewish man. He initially dismisses her with contempt. Yet through his dialogue with her, his attitude changes and he heals her daughter.

John 3:16—21

God's love extends to all people. This passage encourages us to look upon every person as a brother and sister in the human family. Try reading John 3:16 but replace the words "the world" with particular groups of people (eg. "asylum seekers", "black people", "Asian people", "Muslims" etc.) Then think of the people or person you find it most difficult to love and make that the focus of the verse. Allow the implications of the verse to sink in.



**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	<u>Crash</u>
3rd Sep	Bridget Jones' Diary
1st Oct	Dogville
5th Nov	The Man Who Sued God
3rd Dec	Cool Hand Luke

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

**10 Bletchington Road
Islip**

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



Crash

*You think you know who you are. You have no idea.
Moving at the speed of life, we are bound to collide with each other.*

This film, made in 2004, centres around two disturbing car accidents, a carjacking, vicious workplace vandalism, and the suspicious death of one police officer by another. The action shifts between the various characters, whose lives collide with each other in unpredictable ways as each faces their own moral dilemma. In so doing, the film explores the themes of racism and prejudice, cause and effect, chance and coincidence. In the end, everyone is flawed, the racism is inescapable, and it is easy to feel a twinge of sympathy for almost everyone. In a sense, everyone is at fault in some way, yet there are no villains. Everyone is fallible but everyone has the capacity for good.

Some key issues

The danger of prejudice

Although we may fight against it, the way we relate to each other still tends to be ruled by first impressions or stereotypical prejudices, for those prejudices run very deep. Throughout the film, watch as with each new additional character we find another assumption, another stereotype—and then see how that preconception is shattered as the character develops.

The need to value people as people

Through its interlocking stories, the film brings home the stupidity of treating people differently due to their colour or ethnicity. Lives and communities are destroyed and institutions corrupted. But when people are seen as people, it opens the way for the acts of compassion and selflessness which define our true humanity.

The ugliness of racism

On numerous occasions throughout the film we see the destructive consequences of racism. In so doing the film highlights the problem with racist stereotypes: that they can exert a powerful influence over people when regarded as fact rather than as exaggerated distortions. For example, note the character of Daniel, a devoted family man who works hard as a locksmith to provide for his family. Daniel, a Mexican, is wrongly assumed to be a gang member, first by Jean Cabot and then by Farhad, a Persian shopkeeper who has his shop ransacked, with the result that Farhad sets out to extract vengeance.

Perpetuating false stereotypes

Often our own behaviour feeds into the perceived prejudices of the society we belong to. When Anthony gets upset by the service he receives at the café he blames it on the fact that he is black. People think blacks don't tip and thus give others preferential treatment. When asked how much *he* tipped the waitress his replay says it all: "You expect me to pay for that kind of service?" What a contrast this is to God's abundant grace which goes on giving even when the gift is spurned, ignored or unappreciated. Yet it is this second method which ultimately changes people's behaviour and people's lives.

Memorable quotes

[first lines]

- Graham:** It's the sense of touch. In any real city, you walk, you know? You brush past people, people bump into you. In L.A., nobody touches you. We're always behind this metal and glass. I think we miss that touch so much, that we crash into each other, just so we can feel something.
- Shereen:** They think we're Arab. When did Persian become Arab?
- Rick:** Why do these guys have to be black? No matter how we spin this thing, I'm either gonna lose the black vote or I'm gonna lose the law and order vote!
- Karen:** You know, I think you're worrying too much. You have a lot of support in the black community.
- Rick:** All right. If we can't duck this thing, we're gonna have to neutralize it. What we need is a picture of me pinning a medal on a black man. The firefighter - the one that saved the camp or something - Northridge...
- Bruce:** He's Iraqi.
- Jean:** I am angry all the time... and I don't know why.
- Anthony:** Look around! You couldn't find a whiter, safer or better lit part of this city. But this white woman sees two black guys, who look like UCLA students, strolling down the sidewalk and her reaction is blind fear. I mean, look at us! Are we dressed like gangbangsters? Do we look threatening? No. Fact, if anybody should be scared, it's us: the only two black faces surrounded by a sea of over-caffeinated white people, patrolled by the triggerhappy LAPD. So, why aren't we scared?
- Peter:** Because we have guns?
- Cameron:** I didn't ask for your help, did I?
- Anthony:** You see any white people in there waiting an hour and thirty-two minutes for a plate of spaghetti? Huh? And how many cups of coffee did we get?
- Peter:** You don't drink coffee and I didn't want any.
- Anthony:** That woman poured cup after cup to every white person around us. Did she even ask you if you wanted any?
- Peter:** We didn't get any coffee that you didn't want and I didn't order, and this is evidence of racial discrimination? Did you happen to notice our waitress was black?
- Anthony:** That waitress sized us up in two seconds. We're black and black people don't tip. So she wasn't gonna waste her time. Now somebody like that? Nothing you can do to change their mind.
- Peter:** So, uh... how much did you leave?
- Anthony:** You expect me to pay for that kind of service?
- Graham:** I swear to you, Mom. I'll find whoever killed him.
- Mother:** Oh, I already know who killed him. You did. I told you to find your brother, but you were too busy for us. I'll take care of everything here. You go on now. You have better things to do.