

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?

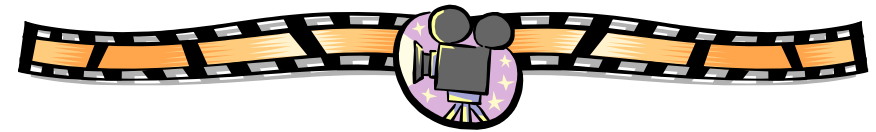
What issues did the film raise for you?

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 trivia about the film

- Rinko Kikuchi went through a year-long audition process before finally gaining the role of Chieko.
- The film was nominated for seven Oscars in 2007 including Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress. It won one Oscar for Best Original Music.
- Since each story was filmed at different times and on different continents, some of the cast members never met their counterparts until the film's premiere.
- 17 days before shooting was to commence in Morocco, none of the characters had been cast. The production crew made an announcement in the nearest town via television and radio and in the mosques that actors were needed. Within the next 24 hours, over 200 people showed up hoping to participate. Almost all of them are in the final cut of the film, both as principal characters and as extras.
- Almost all of the film, even the driving scenes, was shot using a hand-held camera.



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

6th Jan	Star Wars
3rd Feb	Into Great Silence
2nd Mar	<u>Babel</u>
30th Mar	The Queen
27th Apr	The Simpsons Movie

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

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Babel

Babel is a film which interweaves the stories of four families from Morocco, America, Mexico and Japan. In doing so, it encourages us to reflect on how we are connected with communities around the world, yet how, through a series of misunderstandings, we so often fail to communicate, choosing only to hear what we want to hear.

Communication

The film is full of occasions when people simply fail to communicate for a variety of reasons: there are cultural misunderstandings, there are language barriers, people jump to wrong conclusions, people are so focussed on their own world that they are unable to understand another person's concerns, people are not given the opportunity to explain. And then for Chieko and her friends, they live in a completely different world and simply do not have the some methods of communication many of us take for granted. So, instead, Chieko turns to using her body in provocative ways to try and bridge the gap, as she seeks the attention she so desperately desires.

How good are you at communicating? How good are you at creating that space which allows others to communicate—after all, for someone to begin a conversation they need to believe that the other person will listen. How much of what we read, hear and see in the media actually gives a full, proper picture and how much is really only giving a limited, distorted picture (whether intentional or not)? And what about God? How does he communicate with us? And how do we ensure we really listen?

It is not enough to have a voice—you have to be able to listen to other people's voices.

Consequences

The film portrays a number of decisions made by the people involved. The story begins before the film does, with the gift of a rifle—an altruistic gesture. Some of the other decisions made are much tougher. All have consequences, some of which were totally unforeseeable. The father giving his boys a rifle; an agonising choice over childcare; a decision to leave and go for help. What would you have done in those situations? How do we make choices like that? And does God have a role to play? If so, how?

Living in someone else's world

The various children in the film—in Morocco, the children in Amelia's care, the Japanese teenagers—all to some extent live in a world which is not of their making: an adult world over which they do not have much control, or which they do not fully understand. And the results of living in that world can be quite traumatic. How do we really enter into someone else's world in order to empathise with them and understand their needs?

The hospitality of strangers

In some ways, the film paints a very bleak picture. But there is also much hope. Complete strangers do their best for others in distress: the members of a Moroccan village, the children at the wedding, a Japanese policeman. In so doing, a real connection is made.

Memorable quotes

- Abdullah** With this rifle your sons will kill plenty of jackals.
- Richard** Why can't you relax? Why are you so stressed?
Susan You are the reason I can't relax. You are the reason I am stressed.
Richard You are never going to forgive me, are you?
- Ahmed** These bullets are lame. They don't do anything.
Yussef You are not shooting right.
- Father** [*on phone to Amelia*] Cancel your son's wedding. I'll pay for another one ... We're really counting on you, Amelia. You have to do this. Sorry. Goodbye.
- Tom** My mom said Mexico is dangerous.
Santiago [*in Spanish*] Yes, it's full of Mexicans.
- Chieko** [*signing*] They look at us like we're monsters.
- Chieko** [*signing to ref*] I'm deaf, not blind!
- Radio Announcer** An American was shot today. Authorities say it could have been a robbery. But the American Government were quick to suggest a terrorist link.
- Richard** [*to other tourists*] You leave, I'll kill you. I'll kill you!
- Yussef** I killed the American, I was the only one who shot at you. They did nothing... nothing. Kill me, but save my brother, he did nothing... nothing. Save my brother... he did nothing.
- Chieko** [*to her father*] My mother always paid attention to me.
- Santiago** Sir, can I explain?
Border Guard No, you cannot explain.

Relating it to the Bible

Genesis 11—The story of the tower of Babel.

In Gen. 11:9, the name of Babel is etymologized by association with the Hebrew verb *balal*, “to confuse or confound”. The whole film raises this issue of communication, both between humanity and between us and God.

Luke 10: 25—37

The story of the Good Samaritan and the care of the stranger.