

## Reflection beginning with Film (Movie, Video or Television Episode, Commercial, etc.)

This method of theological reflection has been designed to meet the particular needs of groups who are wanting to engage in theological reflection beginning from a movie, video or television show (or episode). The design is intended to raise particular questions about the group's engagement with the movie/video/television episode and draw connections to the larger theological themes. It is provided as an alternative to adapting the Reflection Beginning with a Text from Culture or Tradition (CLSM 2-2-(2)). A movie is not "just entertainment," but is a text that can be examined critically and interpreted and understood at many different levels. It was developed at the Canadian Training of Trainers, August, 2005. © Revised August 2007.

Here is a viewing guide for impressions and notes

When you view the film...

...notice the genre, period, production date and nationality of the film.

...notice how the film begins and ends.

...ask yourself "what is the film about?"

...notice where you are most engaged or energized.

### Identifying

1. The group agrees to view a movie/video/television episode either together or individually. This may be done as part of an EFM Seminar or as "homework" in anticipation of the reflection.
2. Begin by classifying the film: by genre [comedy, drama, action, documentary, propaganda, nature, adult, children, etc.], place [where it was made, nationality] and the period in which the piece was made. What is known of the social, political, or historical realities of the period? (cf. Theological Reflection beginning from scripture p.2-2-(1)-3).

**Process Notes:** A viewing guide has been provided to help in the engagement with the movie, video or television episode and provide a consistent starting point for participants.

On selecting a film (movie, video, television episode) it is important to consider the sensibilities of the group - some materials may be offensive or evoke a strong emotional response that could be a barrier to engaging with the theological reflection. To this end, the mentor might consider previewing the selection.

The purpose of this step is to set the film in context, and establish a common understanding and starting point.

3. Ask what the film was about, not in terms of a detailed plot summary, but the themes, overarching concerns or prominent features.

- where was this evident in the film?
- what scene captured the essence of what the movie was about for you?

4. Begin to focus by listing various suggestions:

- a broad focus will look at a particular character or theme
- a narrow focus will look at a single scene

Select a scene OR character OR theme:

- briefly describe the essential characteristics of the focus scene/character/theme

5. Establish theological perspectives by using the appropriate set of questions:

- for a scene
  - what happened? what is the world like?
  - what went wrong/right? what was broken/mended?
  - what was surprising?
  - what was cause for celebration?
  - in this scene, where did you see joy? pain? surprise? coming together?

OR

- for a character
  - what happened to the character?
  - what went wrong/right for him/her?
  - what signifies a change of heart, mind or action for this character?
  - what surprised him/her?
  - what was cause for celebration for the character?

OR

- for a theme
  - where in the movie do we find the theme?
  - how is it depicted?
  - what enhances/destroys/builds up the theme?

This is intended to provide initial responses to begin the reflection process. Avoid summarizing the plot; focus discussion on the general themes.

A broad focus is, perhaps, more time consuming and challenging.

This step is intended to enable all participants may relate to a common image.

## Exploring

The perspectives are based on the theological cycle of creation, sin, judgement, redemption.

These questions are intended simply as possibilities. Other questions could be framed as appropriate.

- what obstacles are encountered? what makes it bearable? overwhelming?
- is there a shift, change or resolution?

## Connecting

### 6. Action

In what way can you identify with that focus point (share briefly)?

- how does your own life and experience connect with this selection

### 7. Tradition

- where are resonances with this scene in scripture or tradition? OR
- where are resonances with this character in scripture or tradition? OR
- where are resonances with this theme in scripture or tradition?

Identify/choose one similarity and explore it using the perspective questions in step 6.

Read or examine and describe the piece of tradition

- briefly describe the essential characteristics of the piece of tradition
- in what way can you identify with the piece of tradition(share briefly)?

### 8. Culture

- what elements from our own cultural context come to mind?
- are there other voices from our own cultural context that address these themes, ideas, perspectives?
- does the scene/character/theme confirm or challenge some aspect of our culture?
- what does this scene/character/theme express about the culture that created it? about our own cultural context?
- what are the underlying values, attitudes, world view our cultural context?

### 9. Compare and contrast

Notice the similarities and differences between the sources.

This step is intended so that all participants may relate to this piece of tradition.

Movies express prevalent values or attitudes of the era in which they were created. Be conscious of what may be different from the time the movie was created and when the reflection is taking place.



## Applying

### 10. Position

- what positions have emerged from this reflection? has my position changed?
- were I to view this film again, how might I perceive it differently?

### 11. Insights and Implications

- what do I want to bring from this reflection into my daily life and ministry? what would help me? what resources would I need? what is God calling me to be and to do as a result of this reflection?
- what would our community look like if we could implement the values and perspectives we have discussed? what would help us? what resources would we need? what is God calling us as a community to be and to do?

## Notes