

Reflection beginning with a Movie, Video or Television Episode

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)).

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.

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 genre [comedy, drama, action, documentary, nature, adult, children, etc.] and the period in which the piece was made.
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 (perhaps by listing various suggestions)
 - a broad focus will look at a particular character or theme
 - a narrow focus will look at a single scene
5. Choose focus point:
 - in what way can you identify with that focus point (share briefly)

Several opinions/positions may be identified in the discussion of genre. It is important to acknowledge the variety of opinions, but not to prolong the debate about classifying the material – it is simply to establish the members' perspectives.

This is intended to provide initial responses to begin the reflection process.

A broad focus is, perhaps, more time consuming and difficult

Brainstorm descriptive words

Exploring

6. Establish perspectives:

- 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?
- for a character
 - what happened?
 - what went wrong/right?
 - what surprised him/her?
 - what was cause for celebration?
- for a theme
 - where in the movie do we find the theme?
 - how is it depicted? what makes it bearable?
 - what enhances/destroys/builds up the theme? what obstacles are encountered?
 - is there a resolution?
 - is there change?

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

Connecting

7. Scripture/Tradition

- where do we find resonances with characters in scripture or the tradition?
- where do we find similar themes in scripture or the tradition?
- where do we find similar scenes in scripture or the tradition?

Identify/choose one similarity and explore it using the perspective questions (above)

Brainstorm and list words to describe it.

8. Culture

- are there other voices from culture that address these themes, ideas, perspectives?
- does the scene/theme/character confirm or challenge some aspect of culture?
- what does this scene/theme/character express in or for the culture that created it? Now?
- are there underlying values, attitudes, etc.?

Movies may 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

9. Position

- what do I believe about what we have discussed? has my position changed from my initial impression?
- were I to view this film again, how might I view it differently?

10. Consequences and Implications

- what do we want to bring with us into our current lives? can we do it? what would help me? what resources would I need?
- what would our community look like if we could implement the values and perspectives we have discussed? what are we called on to do?
- how does this relate to my life and ministry? what is God calling me to be and to do?

This might make an appropriate check-in activity the following week.