



Love Actually

This weekend, Carys and I were kinda in the mood for just chilling out, before the mad rush of Christmas get-togethers kicks in! So, feeling purely lazy, we headed off to our local cinema for an afternoon viewing of the hit Christmas Brit-Flick, 'Love Actually'...

The film comes from the same team who put together '4 Weddings and a Funeral', 'Bridget Jones' and 'Notting Hill', so you can imagine the general kind of feel that the film had, mixed in with some Christmas schmultz to guarantee it's screening on tv every year for the foreseeable future!

The plot

Essentially, the plot revolves around 10 or so characters, each seeking love in its many different forms. From the prime minister (Hugh Grant) falling head over heels for his tea-lady (Martine McCutcheon) to a widowed stepdad (Liam Neeson) helping his stepson, Sam (Thomas Sangster) through his first crush, 'Love Actually' hopes to defend the opening lines of the film:

'General opinion's starting to make out that we live in a world of hatred and greed - but I don't see that - seems to me that love is everywhere.'

And the film certainly was feel-good (despite various sad and poignant moments), and it was



with a bit of a warm glow that we left the cinema in the rain to go and meet a mate of mine in our local!

The interesting story

Although I really liked all of the film, and there is quite a lot to say about all of the stories, in terms of how we view love, there was one kinda less prominent storyline that really touched me,

and made me think about my priorities in a new light.

This particular story was about American junior-manager, Sarah (played by Laura Linney), and her struggle to balance her romantic ideals with the reality of her life. Basically, she's totally tongue-tied in her office, cause she's madly attracted to the graphic designer who works opposite her.

Her boss (Alan Rickman) encourages her to confess her love to this guy, which she can't manage to do, but ends up getting together with him at the office Christmas party. The rest, as they say, is history...

Apart from it's not.

Just as she's finally about to attain the love that she's been hoping for over the course of years, she receives another mystery cellphone call (as she's been doing through the whole film)... and it turns out that it's not her husband or somebody that you might expect, but actually her brother who's in a psychiatric hospital, and needs to talk to her.

That's probably enough of the story for you to get the idea, but what was really striking was the way in which this guy who she was getting together with was trying to tell her that she should forget about her brother, and leave him to get on with stuff.

Sarah, though, forsakes the love she has been waiting for, to provide love and support for her brother.

The point

Well the point is not that this was a really emotional storyline, but that it actually speaks to me a bit about the sort of love that I can offer to other people this Christmastime.

I really shocked myself a few weeks ago when I was up in London, and some lady was selling *The Big Issue*, and I just completely blanked her. Anybody who knows me would know (and probably has experienced the frustration when I make them late!) that I always try to spend time chatting to homeless or disadvantaged people when I meet them. And I kinda pride myself on that. However, the fact was that I was on a knife-edge about whether I'd catch the train that I wanted, and that I was more concerned about that than I was about acknowledging this vendor.

Afterwards, I was thinking about my actions in this situation, and realised that it was purely to satisfy myself, get into the warm, and avoid the hassle that I acted like this. In the same way, Sarah in the film is in a comfortable situation, it's easy for her to ignore her brother's phone call, and yet she picks it up, and goes out of her way, sacrificing her own pleasure and fulfilment, to provide love for him.

To think about

During Advent, we are thinking about Jesus coming to us at Christmas time, and thanking him for that gift. It was an act of complete selfless loving when God took this action (you can read about it in *Philippians* chapter 2)... How do I imitate this selfless giving to other people?

Most churches organise Christmas parties for the elderly or disadvantaged. How about getting involved in your local one? Loads of charities also run Christmas lunches for people who have nobody to spend Christmas with. How about trying to help them in some way, either by volunteering time or money?

To pray

'The Street Bible' has a really nice version of the description of love found in *1 Corinthians 13*... How about reading through this, and asking God to transform us all into more loving people at the end of every description of love?:

*What is love anyway? Not the tripe you've been force-fed! No, love gives people space and time; it does people good. It's not jealous, loud-mouthed or cocky. It's not vulgar; it doesn't look after No. 1. It's not got a short fuse - it forgives and forgets. Love doesn't smile when dark stuff goes on, but throws a party when the truth gets out. It protects more than a blockbuster hero; it trusts more than a toddler. It's always positive; it always hangs in there. Love doesn't let you down.
Amen*

NB: 'Love Actually' is rated 15. There are themes of the plot that would be unsuitable for young people under this age.