

The Bone Collector

(M 15+ Genre: Thriller)

IMDB: <http://imdb.com/title/tt0145681/>

Directed by

Phillip Noyce

Writing credits (WGA)

Jeffery Deaver (book)

Jeremy Iacone (screenplay)

Cast overview, first billed only:

Denzel Washington

Angelina Jolie

Queen Latifah

Michael Rooker

Mike McGlone

Luis Guzmán

Leland Orser

Runtime: 118 min

Country: USA

Language: English

Color: Color (DeLuxe)

Synopsis

The Bone Collector is a 'whodunnit' film about a serial killer in New York, who leaves cryptic clues at the scenes of murders. Denzel Washington plays the role of a forensic criminologist, Lincoln Rhyme, crippled in the line of duty, is confined to bed and dependent on round the clock medical supervision. He is pressed by NYPD detectives to help find the serial killer. He enlists the help of a rookie street cop, Amelia Donaghy (Angelina Jolie), who has just decided to leave street duty and work in juvenile justice. She acts as Rhyme's arms and legs, surveying the scene of the crime with his eye for detail. Together, they uncover the clues and unravel the mystery. The director, Phillip Noyce, describes the film as four stories in one - 'It's a love story. It's a thriller. It's a detective story. And it's a story of renewal and resurrection'.

- This film has been described as a 'totally unique, intelligent thriller'. Although violence and murder undergird the movie (as it's about a serial killer), the focus is on the intrigue - the uncovering of the clues and their implications.

Belief in others

Donaghy becomes involved in the investigation reluctantly. She does not have specific training for the task she is asked to do. Yet Rhyme recognises potential and latent ability in her, and encourages her - even when she feels inadequate or unable to do what is asked of her. It is a testimony of the power of believing in another person. Interestingly enough, Jolie the actress went through the same insecurity. 'From the very beginning, I felt as if I was not capable of doing this, of leading a film and being responsible for this, of physically handling this, of saving a life and going in there and being a cop. Jolie even felt that throughout this process she wasn't even 'useful as a human being, or even a good person. Am I good enough, am I worth anything, really, on a spiritual deep level?'

'What we need to do is not limit other people's abilities by our own. We need to encourage and help in every way possible'. (Jesse Martin, youngest sole sailor to complete a non-stop circumnavigation)

Peter betrayed Jesus three times on the night Jesus was arrested and taken before the High Priest. Yet Jesus entrusts him with the responsibility to take 'care of my sheep' (John 21: 15-17). Compare Peter's behaviour in the High Priest's courtyard (John 18:15-27) to Peter's later boldness (Acts 2:14-42, Acts 3, Acts 4). Peter, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and emboldened by the commission given to him by Jesus, is a transformed man.

- What are your experiences of being encouraged and affirmed, of having gifts and abilities recognised - or of doing this for other people?

Hope

'Hope means simply the belief that something good lies ahead. It is not the same as optimism or wishful thinking, for these imply a denial of reality. Often I think of those of us who stand alongside suffering people tend to confuse hope and optimism'. (Philip Yancey, *Where is God When It Hurts?*). Yancey says there are four frontiers faced by people who suffer - the frontiers of fear, helplessness, meaning and hope. People's response to suffering depends largely on the outcome of our struggle in these frontiers, as they seek to make sense of their lives in different ways - defining their own concept and meaning of existence, autonomy/dependence, and the mystery of human life.

- Discuss the nature of hope (and hopelessness) as a motivation for life (and death).

Voluntary Euthanasia

This is a very vexed issue, hotly debated in the public arena for many years. In the film, Rhyme has limited use of his body, although his mind is still sharp and focussed. He is afraid that the fits he experiences will eventually leave him in a vegetative state and he makes plans to end his own life, with the help of a friend. When Rhyme is challenged to help solve the serial killings he recovers a sense of purpose in life. The 'Mike Tyson' scene at the end of the movie is unexpected, but ultimately points to Rhyme's recovery of the will to live. At the end of the film, we see a transformed man keen to get on with life, where healing is more than simply physical. His healing is emotional, spiritual and relational.

There are many examples of people who have suffered traumatic injuries (eg Joni Eareckson Tada, www.joniandfriends.org, who broke her neck diving into shallow water) and found a renewed purpose for living. Although the stories of people's courage are indeed inspirational, one can never take lightly people's suffering and hardship, nor dismiss the desire some have to end their life.

Euthanasia literally means 'a good death'. It is defined as 'a quick and peaceful death brought about under medical supervision at the request of and in the interests of a patient in which prescribed safeguards are followed' (SAVES - SA Voluntary Euthanasia Society). Voluntary euthanasia is where terminally ill people ask for medical help to die with dignity.

Western society has a focus on the individual, rather than the corporate nature of relationships. It is the basis for statements such as 'Ultimately the person who is suffering should have the right to decide whether to live or die' (The Age).

The biblical narrative highlights the sanctity of human life, the uniqueness of each individual, and individuals made in the image of God. Yet one can also understand the plight of people who live with profound disability and diminution of life from a stroke, cancer, AIDS, arthritis or an accident. They are often totally dependent on others for their care - washing, feeding, dressing, etc. They wonder how their life can continue to bring glory to God or have worth.

Palliative care seeks to support people medically and pastorally. Pain is minimalised so that people can move towards 'a good death' with dignity. Euthanasia, on the other hand, seeks to shorten people's suffering. Most people accept medical intervention in life - repairing broken limbs, chemotherapy, surgery etc, but intervention that means the cessation of a person's life remains a contentious issue. It involves aspects of suicide, and there are pastoral implications for family.

- In the context of the film and Rhyme's situation, discuss the issue of voluntary euthanasia, exploring understandings about life and death, suffering and pain.

NB It's important to note that not all Christians will share the same viewpoint. Discussion needs to respect the viewpoints of others. The most valuable discussion will elicit the issues around euthanasia, rather than polarised viewpoints.

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