

## CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

# Movie: *Slumdog Millionaire*

**Background/summary:** A film adapted from the award-winning novel, *Q and A*, *Slumdog Millionaire* won four Golden Globes, including Best Drama Film, and is nominated for 10 academy awards, including Best Picture. Originally the movie was only released in select cities, but has slowly climbed to the top of US sales charts and has an even stronger worldwide audience. Set in the slums of Mumbai, India, the cast features Indian actors but 80% of the film is in English for an English speaking audience.

### Discover: What is the message/worldview?:

- The film opens with a young Indian named Jamal being interrogated and tortured by a police inspector. Viewers soon learn that Jamal is a contestant on the Indian version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and is about to have a shot at answering the "million dollar" question.
- The problem is that Jamal is a slumdog; a poor, uneducated, orphan from the streets of Mumbai. The game show officials and police think there is no way that he could know the answers to these questions and they accuse him of cheating.
- The basic plot of the film involves a series of flashbacks of Jamal's life, showing how he came to know the answers to the questions.
- As the movie unfolds, you learn much more than how Jamal learned answers to trivia questions. The movie is about following the lives of three Indian orphans (Jamal, Jamal's brother Salim and their friend Latika) as they learn to survive in the poorest of conditions.
- Life in the slums of India is difficult. The three characters were orphaned when their parents were killed in a Muslim/Hindu riot. Now they are forced to navigate life alone as "street kids" which often involves rummaging through trash for food, stealing money from tourists, and eventually getting involved in the Indian mafia as a last resort.
- In this world, many view economic success as the way to "salvation." Money equals survival and power.
- Orphaned children are viewed by some as an economic resource to be exploited. In one flashback we meet someone who "rescues" orphans by giving them food and a place to live. Later, however, he plucks their eyes out and teaches them to become "singing beggars."
- While the movie focuses on the corrupt slums of India, there is a greater power at work. Love plays a key role throughout the film and ultimately is portrayed as being more powerful than material success.



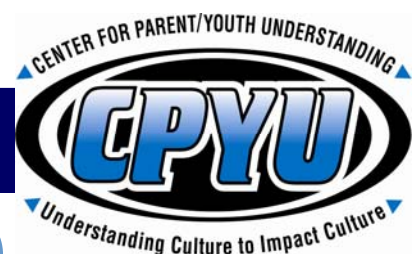
### Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

- We live in a good but fallen world. Jamal, Salim and Latika, see some of the worst that humanity has to offer, but they are still created in the image of God. That image is never completely lost, and it is revealed in their love for each other, their creativity and their deep desire to do what is right even when it is costly.
- Unfortunately the world continues to be broken down into two parts: the haves and the have nots. The biblical story reminds us all of two things: (1) Because of our sin, we are all a part of the “have nots” in need of a savior and (2) Jesus was drawn to the “have nots” among us, revealing God’s heart for his world.
- The book of James is clear: Pure and genuine religion is looking after orphans (see James 1:27). This movie reminds us of the Church’s call to be mindful of and minister to orphans among us.
- Being an “orphan” is a theme throughout all of Scripture. When promising the coming of the Holy Spirit Jesus explained, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18). This movie helps us to better grasp the spiritual meaning of being an orphan and points us toward a deeper understanding of the doctrine of adoption.
- According to the biblical story there is a fine line between wanting to help people out of impoverished situations and looking to economic well-being for salvation. The film powerfully illustrates that money alone does not lead to happiness.



### Decide: What do I do with it?

- *Slumdog Millionaire* is an important movie to see. But be warned: It is an accurate portrayal of our broken and fallen world. There are scenes that are brutal to watch. It should only be viewed by mature audiences.
- The movie is good for our prayer life. It reminds us to pray for the poorest parts of the world, at home and abroad. It should open our eyes to the needs of others and break our hearts in the same way God’s heart breaks for his creation. Where are the “slums” in our towns and cities? How can we be a force for good in those places? Where are the “slumdogs” in our ministries? Are there outsiders that need to find a place to belong? Can our ministries be a place that the poor, the outcasts, and the orphans call home?
- Although it is not a central theme in the movie, *Slumdog Millionaire* could serve as a way to discuss Hinduism. There are references to Hindu Gods and “god/religion” does play a role. Do you have a basic understanding of Hinduism? Do your teens at home or in youth group know about the other religions of the world? If they don’t learn about it at home or church, they will learn it somewhere. Take a proactive approach by providing opportunities to discuss other religions in the world.



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