

“Les Miserables” starring Liam Neeson, Geoffrey Rush, Uma Thurman, & Claire Danes, 1998, PG-13, 134 minutes

Major themes:

- law vs. grace
- redemption
- social justice
- Christ figure

Scriptures:

Psalm 32:1 – 2

1Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!

2Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!

Matthew 10:42

42And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.

Matthew 25:35

35For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.

Romans 5:8

8But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

1 Corinthians 6:19b – 20a

You do not belong to yourself, **20**for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

2 Corinthians 5:17

17This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Major characters:

- Jean Valjean
- Inspector Javert
- The Bishop
- Fantine
- Cosette
- Marius

Discussion points:

1. Consider how the bishop treats Jean Valjean. How are our relationships built on trust? How is our entire society built on a measure of faith or trust? Could we function without it, or would we become a society of paranoid people? Consider the following: mail carriers, auto mechanics, chefs & wait staff in restaurants, store clerks, repairmen. Thoughts?
2. Did the bishop lie when he said what he said to protect Valjean? What do you think of this? How are our actions often a mixture of “good” and “bad”, or the “not-so-good” rather than the clear-cut? Is the bishop being reckless – after all, he could be charged as an accessory to a crime?
3. How did you feel at the end of the scene where the bishop said, “You no longer belong to evil. With this silver I’ve bought your soul”? In your own life what similar moments of grace have you experienced? What risks have you taken in trusting or forgiving others?
4. How does Javert’s plan for information gathering seem similar to those in our country who want a central file with fingerprint & DNA information on everyone? What implications could this have for classifying human nature and “criminal profiling”?
5. Consider Valjean’s treatment of Fantine when she says, “I am a whore, and Cosette has no father.” His reply – “She has a heavenly Father, and you are His creation. You are a beautiful woman.” How is their luncheon together a foretaste of the messianic banquet described by Jesus and enacted in the Upper Room?
6. What do you think of Inspector Javert’s confession to the mayor? We think that the mayor’s refusal to dismiss him an act of grace, but how does Javert view it? How does Valjean’s statement, “I order you to forgive yourself” relate to Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves?
7. When Jean Valjean comes to the convent with Cosette, how was his past arrangement for the welfare of the injured factory worker Lafitte like, “casting your bread upon the waters”?
8. Discuss the symbolism in Valjean carrying the wounded Marius to safety through the sewers of Paris.