

Oppenheimer, Science and Human Nature

This too is a **DEEP** film; it paints a compelling picture of a complex man at the heart of the most complex moral problem of the 20th century.

Two things to observe:

1. **Science is absolutely amazing.**
2. **Science is limited:**

The film *punctures* two contemporary assertions:

- i. *Scientific progress is our hope for the future.* This assertion is shown by the film to be naïve at best.
- ii. *Science is the only reliable knowledge.*

In contrast, **Christians can speak confidently** of:

- i. Loving science – we know why the world is rational
- ii. Knowing why the world is intelligible (Einstein's 'miracle')
- iii. Knowing the frailty and limitations of human beings (that's our area of expertise!) – this underpins the scientific method AND makes us realistic about the scope of science.
- iv. Having wisdom/knowledge to speak of *how we should live*
- v. Believing in morality – we have language and categories to speak of this

Questions for Discussion:

1. What other themes or interesting 'messages' did you pick up from Oppenheimer?
2. Imagine being in conversation with an ardent scientist who refuses to acknowledge any real 'knowledge' outside the scientific. How might you use *Oppenheimer* to suggest to them that there may be cracks in their view of the world?
3. How might you speak of the difference Jesus makes to your life in terms of your view of science (and its role in society)?
[does this CS Lewis quotation help? '*I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else*'.]

Here are some other questions raised by the film which are for discussion beyond the meeting:

- What is the relationship between scientific progress and human warfare?
- To what extent do moral failures in the private sphere impact public leadership?
- What do we value most about people: their contribution or their character? Why?
- How does personal ambition impact scientific investigation?

- Is 'the greatest good for the greatest number' a good way to make moral decisions?
- Should scientists take an interest in ethical enquiry?
- Is it possible for any scientist to be morally impartial?
- Is there a difference between taking 100,000 lives in one bomb, or thousands of bombs? Why?
- Does nuclear deterrence work? Should Christians support it?