

Learning to rely on God during trials in Ang Lee's *The life of Pi*

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Through the journey of the main character, Pi, he learns so many important life lessons and things he can use later on in life. The film shows that while he does go through some very difficult and challenging times, that he does not quit, or give up and has the willpower and the faith to persevere even if at times everything looks absolutely hopeless. By relying not only on himself, but a higher power he is giving this endurance and strength to keep going and even during the most agonizing and stressful of times, he still has that perseverance and does not give up. It shows us that through life's trials often something very good comes out of it. Pi learns to depend on God's sustenance and provision even when God seems absent and distant.

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Our main character is an adult named Piscine Molitor, who goes by the name "Pi Patel," and we meet him as an adult who begins telling his long life-story to a writer planning to adapt it. It's a story that tested him as a person in every possible way, and it all goes back to when his parents made the decision to move from India to Canada, and because Pi's father was a zookeeper, take many animals such as orangutans, zebras, goats, and tigers with them on an enormous ship across the Pacific Ocean. Before this move, Pi was an optimistic soul, who

ventured out as a young boy beyond his comfort zone in his Hindu religion to seek out other walks of faith, specifically Christianity and Islam, which he began following all at once.

During the move, a wild, violent storm hits the ocean, flooding the ship and sending Pi, a zebra with a broken leg, a hyena, an orangutan, and a tiger named "Richard Parker" on a lifeboat, leaving behind the several other animals and Pi's entire family. This whole sequence, which lasts around five minutes, feels like the entire movie *The Perfect Storm* shortened from its original two-hour length, only it emphasizes the emotional elements. This is one of the saddest scenes of the year, as we see a teenage Pi (now played by Suraj Sharma) desperately hold onto the lifeboat for dear-life, while being washed away from his mother, father, and siblings and there is absolutely nothing he can do about it.

Now, Pi is stranded in the middle of the Pacific, with an open sky, four different animals, until they are picked off with only the tiger remaining, and his own will to live. The remainder of the film forgoes the back-and-forth narrative between adult Pi telling the story to the writer, but remains focused on his own recollection of events on that lifeboat and the acts of bravery he committed to keep him and the tiger alive. While Pi and Richard Parker are sharing the

boat, that does not mean they get along. Writer David Magee makes no mistake in illustrating that while they are stranded together, Pi is a human boy and Richard Parker is a Bengal tiger. The beauty of this picture is that it never mistakes that the only common traits between these two souls is that they are stranded together and both are mammals.

Thematically, the picture focuses on predominately on the idea of survival and spirituality, which gratefully helps Pi keep hope and optimism during these gruelingly unforgiving days. One of the most intense and poignant scenes comes when Pi is faced with the task of killing a large fish. He is starving, and becoming skinnier by the day, so he fiercely grabs a fish out of the water and begins hacking at it with a small axe. When the fish is bloody and long dead, he begins to sob tears of joy and sadness; joy because he finally has a decent portion of food, yet sadness in the idea that he has killed a living creature and is about to abandon his vegetarian vow. Through the journey of the main character, Pi, he learns so many important life lessons and things he can use later on in life. The film shows that while he does go through some very difficult and challenging times, that he does not quit, or give up and has the willpower and the faith to persevere even if at times everything looks absolutely hopeless. By relying not only on himself, but a higher power he is giving this endurance and strength to keep going and even during the most agonizing and stressful of times, he still has that perseverance and does not give up. It shows

us that through life's trials often something very good comes out of it. In life none of us like going through challenging, or difficult times, but I think all of us can say that through difficult situations that we have gone through that we have learned more about ourselves and have become better equipped for future situations as well. Trials often bring us closer to the things that are actually important and crucial to our lives, but on the same thought, what if we relied on a higher power like Pi does in the film? Christians know that while God seems absent during a trial, he is very much present and will provide you the means and resources to go on, such as the magical island of meerkats and the flying fish to feed Richard Parker. Christians learn to rely on God, and even while often in those situations Christians feel anxious, or like giving they learned that God was with them through those trials and he was not going to abandon them. God is present and in control during trials even when he seems absent. No, going through it was not always easy, or fun, but at the end their relationship with God improved and it often allowed them to trust and rely on Him more. Pi grows in this film as he goes through these trials. They mature him, give him a stronger and more trusting relationship and understanding of God and helps prepare and shape him for what may come in days, weeks, or even years ahead.

One thing which can be revealed is that Pi somehow manages to survive the ordeal. The story is told in flashbacks by an older and wiser Pi, ostensibly living somewhere in Canada in the present day. These segments introduce the film's most puzzling assertion.

The movie includes strong religious overtones throughout. Pi's early years are spent searching for God and the right religion to join. This is a pervasive theme throughout all stages of the film — setting up the central character's most poignant moment of self-discovery. This takes place when the adult Pi, now in his early 40s, reveals to the listener that the perilous sea voyage enabled him to better know and understand God. The reflection is largely positive.

Alas, Pi spends considerable time praising God as his savior at sea. After all, the

necessities for survival were ultimately provided to him. The life of Pi is about endurance through trials and learning to depend on the God who provides. It ends with Pi being happily settled in Canada with a wife and children and having learnt to depend and rely on God's sustenance during trials and provision.

Works cited:

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