

Syriana Discussion Sheet

1. *Syriana* is a powerful film. What are your initial thoughts or reactions after watching it?
2. The tagline of the movie is “everything is connected.” How was this idea demonstrated in the story? How true do you think the idea that “everything is connected” is in our lives?
3. Matt Damon's character tells the Arab prince he is advising about oil in the world: “It's running out and 90% of what is left is in the Mid East.” How responsible are we because of our dependence on oil for some of the crazy things that go on in the Middle East or actions taken by large oil companies or even our government?
4. Do you agree that we are too dependent on oil in America? If so, what are some ways we can change our lifestyle?
5. Religious people are often thought to have little regard for the environment. Why do you think this is? Do you think it has anything to do with the young Pakistani suicide bomber's farewell video in which he said “the next world is the true life?”
6. In one scene a group of young Middle Eastern men are walking through the oil fields. One of them stood on the base of an oil well and declared “If man is made in God's image then God is deeply messed up.” What do you think he meant by that? Are the problems of man more reflective of the character of God or the challenges within humanity?

Wrap-Up

Syriana is an excellent, thought provoking film. It explores the desire for power, money, safety, life and comfort all in the context of oil. One of its main points is that our actions have a much more significant impact than we ever realize. How we treat others, how we treat our surroundings and how we treat ourselves are very important. Even the products we buy matter. This is especially true in regards to our American lifestyle and how much of it is driven by oil and petroleum products. As the oil supplies on earth are drained our way of life will be seriously threatened and more importantly one of the greatest natural resources will be completely depleted.

In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God charges Adam with being the caretaker of earth. For whatever reason, followers of Jesus rarely display a concern for the environment when it seems they should be some of the most passionate advocates for it. The Bible makes it clear that God wants desperately to restore all of creation -- not just individual humans, but creation as a whole. While this is certainly a huge undertaking, God invites us to be a part of His movement, and assures us that one day everything will be made whole again. For now, we need to be aware that our materialistic lifestyles and consumption of oil all matter. Being an environmentally-aware nation begins with each of us making responsible lifestyle choices. As we join God in his work of restoration we begin to see that while everything may not be connected, everything is spiritual.

If you are interested in finding out more about the oil crisis and what we can do about it consider these resources:

Websites: www.lifeaftertheoilcrash.net www.peakoil.net/ www.postcarbon.org/
Books: The Long Emergency, By James Howard Kunstler, The Party's Over, by Richard Heinberg,
 Powerdown, by Richard Heinberg, Twilight in the Desert, Matthew Simmons
Articles: The Peak Oil Crisis <http://www.fcnp.com/614/peakoil.htm>
Movies: The End of Suburbia (www.endofsuburbia.com) An Inconvenient Truth (www.climatecrisis.net)
 Who Killed the Electric Car? (www.whokilledtheelectriccar.com)