

# Crazy Stupid Love (2011)

Rated PG-13. Our Ratings: V -1 ;L -1 ; S/N -5. Running time: 1 hour 58 min.

*Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet" ; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.*

*Romans 13:8-10*

*If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.*

*Philippians 2:1-4*

I love it when a film exceeds expectations, as does writer Dan Fogan and directors Glenn Ficarra and John Requa's dramatic comedy Crazy Stupid Love. What could have been just another shallow summer popcorn movie turns out to be a thought-provoking tale that looks at love from the perspective of a number of characters of various ages, including that of adolescents. Love that is mostly

This photo shows well the relationship between Cal and Emily Weaver. © 2011 Warner Brothers

unrequited, until a series of crazy, stupid events bring the various strands of the complicated story together.

The film starts out cleverly: we see a series of men and women's feet beneath tables, one foot caressing the other as a "come on" gesture. Then we see two pairs of legs and feet set far apart, and the audience laughs at the contrast. The camera tilt up to the unhappy Cal and Emily Weaver (Steve Carell and Julianne Moore). She breaks into his bland comments with the announcement, easily overheard by those sitting near by, that she wants a divorce. On the drive home (she is at the steering wheel) Cal maintains a petulant silence. She wants to talk about it, but his angry reaction is to warn her that he will get out of the car if she continues. When she does, he unbuckles his strap and throws himself out the door, rolling on the pavement. She stops to make sure he is not seriously injured. This brief scene is about the only clue that we are given as to why Emily wants to leave the man she had been in love with since high school. Cal has apparently stopped meeting her emotional needs, maybe becoming too involved in his work or just taking her for granted.

The family's 13 year-old son Robbie (Jonah Bobo) and 17 year-old babysitter Jessica (Analeigh Tipton) provide another perspective on love. Robbie is smitten by Jessica, convinced that soon their difference in age will not matter. However, Jessica rebuffs him because she has long harbored a crush on his father Cal.

After moving out, Cal spends most of his nights at a bar where he drinks alone and complains aloud of his bitter fate. Jacob Palmer (Ryan Gosling) is a professional womanizer who uses the bar as a place to pick up beautiful women for his one-night stands. Cal has observed this with looks of disgust. His ranting aloud disturbs Jacob so that one night he calls Cal over to give him a lecture. Aware that the older Cal is

clueless about picking up a woman, he offers to tutor him in the art.

There ensues a series of shopping sprees with Jacob insisting that his pupil purchase just the right cut of expensive clothing and expensive hair styling. Jacob benefits from all this by imbibing expensive drinks with Cal and leaving him with the tab—in one case the food and bar tab is over \$800. Clearly money is not a part of Cal's problems.

At first the nervous Cal fails to impress the women he approaches, until he meets Kate (a hilarious over-the-top Marisa Tomei), a schoolteacher whose repressed passion is unleashed the night they spend together. However, Cal cannot forget Emily, especially as they see each other because of their children. The scene in which the two attend Parent Teachers' Night at school moves from the tenderness of the possible rapprochement between them to the abrupt eruption of the teacher's rage when she sees Cal. The teacher is Kate, and she goes ballistic in one of the many truly funny scenes that make this film such a delightful blend of drama and slapstick comedy. Emily, who had continued her affair with David (Kevin Bacon), her colleague at work, had seemed to be realizing that she had perhaps given up on Cal too soon, but the revelation that Cal had slept with their son's teacher puts an end to such speculation.

Love, even eros love, has the power to transform, and we see this in the case of Jacob after he meets Hannah (Emma Stone), a beautiful woman some years younger than he. Again, the scene in which they bed down together, shot like it is going to be a hot sex scene, turns out to become a night of real intimacy as the two talk and laugh together. Jacob, scarcely believing what had transpired between them, tells Cal over the telephone that he has met the woman who is "a game-changer" for him. This leads later to a scene of outrageous slapstick when both Cal and Jacob learn the identity of the latter's new love interest.

The film's title is an apt one, reminding us that love is beyond rationality. The film also suggests that the boundaries that we draw between eros love and agape love are not as firm or distinct as we might think. Although eros love is more of a desire to take or possess, as in the case of young Jessica and the younger Robbie, and even more so for the lustful Jacob, it can readily change into the giving kind of love that we call agape. Cal comes to realize this as he becomes aware of how he had failed Emily, especially articulated in his public speech at Bobbie's 8th grade graduation ceremony. Most of all we see this in Jacob, who upon meeting Hannah, realizes how shallow and manipulative all of his earlier relationships with women had been.

The title might lead people of faith to reflect upon the apostle Paul's version of "crazy stupid love" when he writes to the Corinthian church about the foolishness of the cross. Rated PG-13, this film would have been "R" a few years ago, so any church leader wanting to use it with a group should be cautious—but nonetheless I believe that a young adult group could have an enjoyable and rewarding time watching and discussing it.

**Note:** Discussion questions are available with this review for those subscribing to the Visual Parables journal. The journal also includes many extras—book reviews, the use of films for church seasons, a lectionary related column, and more. Hundreds of old reviews are also available in the subscribers; section. Check out the [sample issue](#).