

Surrogates (2009)

Rated R. Our ratings: V-5 ; L-4 ; S/N-1 Running time: 1 hour 28 min.

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."

Genesis 2:18

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:4

With new ways of FBI Agent Tom Greer controls communicating—text messaging, his surrogate from the safety online chatting, Facebook, of a special connected chair MySpace, Twitter, and so and lab.

forth—the world of 2009 is definitely a different world^{2009 Walt Disney Studios} than it was in 1999. Human relationships can work on very different levels than any other time in history.

But what if you take the reality of 2009 and raise it to the nth degree? What if people never even had to leave their homes? What if people interacted by means of what are essentially robots that can be remote-controlled from the comfort of one's own home?

This is the world of Surrogates. It is a perfect world without pain, without fear, without risk. All thanks to surrogate technology.

The story focuses on a man named Greer (Bruce Willis), an FBI agent who is investigating a murder—the first murder in years—in which a particular surrogate's operator (i.e., the real human who was remotely operating the surrogate) was

somehow killed when his surrogate was destroyed. Greer loses his own surrogate in an accident and is suspended from the force while his actions are investigated. To make matters worse, he will not be issued a new surrogate until the investigation is complete.

Well, this is a Bruce Willis movie and that means going on the offensive! Greer decides to continue the investigation without the use of a surrogate. His investigation ultimately leads him to the creator of surrogate technology, Dr. Lionel Canter (James Cromwell), who had been forced out of his own company and is now bent on destroying surrogate technology.

Having seen what his technology has done to the human race, Canter releases a virus that will not only destroy all surrogates around the world but will also kill their operators.

While the premise may seem far-fetched, it is actually a fairly good movie and raises some timely questions: Can technology really make our world a better place (the tag-line for VSI, the company that manufactures surrogates, is, "Life... Only Better")? Can people have real relationships through the medium of technology? What does real community look like?

We see these latter questions addressed in the relationship between Greer and his wife, Maggie (Rosamund Pike). Having lost their son in an accident several years earlier, Greer and Maggie have been slowly drifting further apart from one another. Maggie—the real Maggie—won't even leave her own room. It seems that Greer hasn't even seen his real wife in—who knows how long? They have developed an artificial relationship by means of an artificial technology.

And, yet, while the movie paints a disturbing picture of the future, the audience is left with a sense of hope in the end.

Like much science fiction, *Surrogates* asks the question, "What does it mean to be human?" Can we truly experience community

remotely? Or do we need each other in a flesh-and-blood sort of way? The movie answers these questions in one of the first lines of the movie: "We're not meant to experience the world through a machine."

For Reflection/Discussion

: 1. Do you use Facebook? MySpace? Twitter? Text messaging? Online chatting? What has this done for your relationships? In what ways have your relationships been enhanced? In what ways have they been weakened?

2. Read Genesis 2:18-25. What do we learn from this passage about human relationships? In what ways do the relationships in Surrogates reflect or deviate from God's intent for human relationships?

3. The theme of salvation through technology is not new to the science fiction genre. In Surrogates, the use of surrogates is promoted as something that makes the world a better place. Do you think technology has a positive, negative, or neutral effect on the world? Why? On human nature? Why? On human relationships? Why? On your relationship with God? Why?

4. Do you agree with the film's statement, "We're not meant to experience the world through a machine" ? Why or why not? What do you think Jesus would say in response to this statement? What do you think Jesus would say in response to the statement that artificial surrogates can provide "Life... Only Better" ?