

# The Devil Wears Prada (2006)

Rated PG-13. Our ratings: V- 1; L – 2; S/N – 2; Running time: 1 hour 46 min.

*No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

*Matthew 6:24-33*

Young viewers, especially girls, The Devil Wears Prada will flock to this film to see Anne Hathaway as Andy Sachs, but older viewers will delight that Meryl Streep assumes the role of the deliciously wicked Miranda Priestly, the goddess of the fashion industry. Although our

hearts are with Andy, who like Faust, is tempted to sell her soul, it is Ms. Streep who makes this film so enjoyable to watch. In her consummate way she becomes the self-centered, all-powerful doyenne who rules not just by words, but by every little gesture anxiously watched by everyone, such as the pursing of her lips. This is an excellent film to explore the implications of Jesus' teaching in his Sermon on the Mount about whom we will serve and what we should be concerned about.

The screenplay by Aline Brosh McKenna is based on Lauren Weisberger's popular book about her experience as personal assistant to Vogue editor-in-chief Anna Wintour. According to those who have read the original, the screenplay is far better, rounding out the fictional Miranda so that in one scene we see the vulnerable human being that underlies the tough outer shell of the imperious ruler of the fashion world. We first see Andy, fresh from Northwestern University with her degree in journalism, entering the Manhattan offices of Runway Magazine for an appointment with its editor. Her clothing, looking like it came from Goodwill, captures the attention of the denizens of the world of haute couture, each of the secretaries regarding her as if she were a tentacled alien invading their space. Emily (Emily Blunt), the culture-voiced First Assistant to Miranda, doubts that she will survive the interview. The gay art director Nigel (Stanley Tucci, also perfect in his role) calls her "that sad little person" and asks, "Are we doing a before and after piece I don't know about?" Miranda is taken aback by Andy's sad sack look and her acknowledged lack of interest in high fashion, but when Andy

has left the office, Miranda calls her back before the girl can leave the building. As she says later, her previous Second Assistants had all disappointed her, even though they were steeped in fashion. Maybe this girl will turn out differently. Thus begins Andy's work, a job that everyone asserts is "the job a million girls would die for."

Andy is sent for coffee, dry cleaning, and a million other menial errands, including hanging up Miranda's coat and purse as the queen passes by each morning. There is never any praise, but always much criticism, such as when Andy is unable to book Miranda on a flight out of Florida because every flight has been grounded due to a severe storm. Miranda will not even allow Andy to explain her lack of success, declaring that her Assistant has failed. Meanwhile Andy's boyfriend Nate (Adrian Grenier) and her other friends worry about her, especially after the sarcastic Nate gives her some beauty and grooming tips and allows her to take a number of items of clothing from the magazine's well-stocked closet. All eyes at the office widen in surprise when the new Andy walks in, even Miranda almost complimenting her on her looks.

Andy had originally considered the job because it could open so many doors for her as a writer, but as she is drawn into the high-pressured world of Miranda and Runway, she begins to lose sight of her goal. By the time she has accepted Miranda's invitation to accompany her on the annual trip to Paris, so coveted by Emily, we worry about her fate, because Miranda stipulates that if she is to go, she must tell Emily. Andy's life is further complicated by freelance writer Christian Thompson (Simon Baker) whose good looks and journalistic connections threaten to seduce her away from Nate, especially when the latter finally confronts her on her all-demanding job that has destroyed the relationship with him and their friends. How this all works out for Andy results in a viewing experience that is rich and rewarding. The film might be regarded by serious critics as light fare, but it is loaded

with serious themes.

## **For Reflection/Discussion**

1) What kind of a person and boss is Miranda? Have you worked under anyone like her? How does the script, admittedly satirical, and Ms. Streep keep Miranda grounded in reality? Miranda has reached the top of the fashion world, but what has it cost her?

2) Why do Emily and Andy put up with all the insults and impossible demands of Miranda?

3) What do you think of Miranda's defense of the fashion trade that Andy has been dismissing as trivial? Note how she delivers her observation in a typical insulting way by referring to Andy's sweater as bought at some "tragic Casual Corner." Do you agree that we all are indebted to high fashion designers, even though we will never buy a designer piece of clothing? Compare Miranda's words with those of Jesus in the passage from his Sermon on the Mount. And yet, would you agree that Andy does look better after her makeover?

4) In the scene in which Andy is delivering the mockup of Runway and she overhears the argument of Miranda with her husband, how do we begin to see the human side of Miranda? Later, when Miranda learns of her divorce, what does she reveal about the cost of maintaining her pre-eminent position?

5) How are Emily and Andy becoming like Miranda? How is Andy like Faust, in danger of losing her soul? What is the moment of truth for Andy? How are Miranda's words to her in Paris like holding up a mirror before her? How have you blamed your job for missing out on family affairs, rather than admitting it was your choice?

6) How does Andy become a channel of grace by the end of the film?

7) Other films to compare as to the choices between work, integrity, and loved ones: *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*; *Working Girl*; *Wall Street*; *Boiler Room*; *The Devil's Advocate*.

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