Lee Daniels’ The Butler is inspired by the life of Cecil Gaines. He was a butler at the White House from 1957 to 1986. Lee Daniels’ The Butler depicts the effects of injustice, ignorance, hatred and fear that Cecil and other African-Americans faced during his lifetime. The eye-opening images remind us of a horrible time of our nation’s history and challenge us to address the remnants of racism today.

LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE

Lee Daniels’ The Butler encourages us to enter into people’s lives that are different than our own. It encourages us to understand their struggles and their dreams. To appreciate their talents and strengths. To celebrate our similarities and differences. To love and not fear.

Back in the first century, Jews and Samaritans hated each other. Jesus was a Jew, but he loved Samaritans. Jesus’ closest followers were shocked when he had a conversation with a Samaritan woman.

Her ethnic background and her past behavior were not barriers to Jesus. Jesus knew all about her past and he loved her. He wanted the woman to experience his life-giving presence for eternity. Read this story in John 4.

QUESTIONS:

1. What impacted you the most as you watched this movie?
2. Have you ever felt like you were the “odd person out?” What was that like?
3. Talk about a time that you stereotyped someone that you didn’t know.
4. Why do people treat others differently based on appearances, ideas or their position?
5. What is preventing you from loving people the way God loves them?

GOING DEEPER

1. Have you shunned someone you know?
2. Is your behavior based on the truth about that person, or things you’ve felt or heard from others?
3. What next step might God be leading you to take?

“Don’t you lose your temper with that man. It’s his world. We’re just living in it.”
— Cecil Gaines’ father

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out all fear.”
— 1 John 4.18
FORGIVENESS

Louis couldn’t understand why his father would serve as a butler. In fact, he was ashamed of his father’s position. When Louis went off to college, he became involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Cecil strongly disagreed with Louis’ choice. He was ashamed of his son’s decision. Cecil was so upset, he didn’t speak to his Louis for years. The relationship changed when Cecil took the initiative and surprised Louis at an apartheid rally.

Asking forgiveness is humbling. It requires us to resist the need to judge or punish the offender. Yet forgiveness is a gift Jesus has freely given us. Jesus forgives anyone who comes to him. Even his enemies.

Jesus endured hours of excruciating pain, yet in the midst of his pain, he looked down from the cross and said, “Forgive them, Father! They don’t know what they are doing.” Luke 22:34

QUESTIONS:

1. What would have made their relationship better during Louis’ younger years?
2. How did their struggles affect the rest of their family?
3. Why is it hard to forgive?

GOING DEEPER

1. Has someone hurt you? Are you are still allowing that hurt to affect you?
   Read Colossians 3.12-13
2. What characteristics in this passage would help you forgive that person?
3. Ask God to help you forgive and reflect those characteristics in your relationships.

“Everything you are and everything you have is because of that butler.”
— Gloria Gaines (Cecil Gaines' wife) to Louis Gaines