

More than a movie about Facebook

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Rarely do I see a film when it first comes out, but I'm very glad I chose to see *The Social Network* on its box-office-dominating opening weekend. It was brilliant—a fantastic script by Aaron Sorkin, skillfully directed by David Fincher. It tells the story of Mark Zuckerberg (Jesse Eisenberg) and his friends and Facebook cofounders, but the film isn't just about Facebook. It even features several significant religious themes.

Mark is depicted as searching not for money or fame but for life's elusive joys like friends, respect, self-worth and social acceptance. One of the film's main conflicts—and there are many—is between Zuckerberg and his best friend Eduardo Saverin (Andrew Garfield). As Eduardo becomes more popular and connected to the social scene at Harvard, Mark searches for online notoriety to rival his friend's real-world success. From the opening scene, Mark is tireless in his search to find his place in the dog-eat-dog Harvard world. His question is almost a religious one, an obsession for something greater than himself. Eventually it yields material results, but not true friendships, social acceptance or respect.

In several scenes, Mark and the other computer programmers write code for hours on end while wearing headphones and refusing to interact with anyone or anything outside the computer. While the point is to connect Facebook friends to one another, the coding becomes an ecstatic experience that disconnects the programmers almost totally from the corporeal world. They can make meaning in cyberspace, but the return to the less ordered real world can be wrenching.

One of the film's main themes is community—how it is made and how it is torn apart. Mark successfully constructs a billion-dollar platform to bolster a community online, but he

dismantles the community he enjoys in day-to-day life. The building up and breaking down of community is, of course, a major religious theme as well.

The Social Network really isn't about Facebook per se. It's about meaning and relationships, about friend denials and broader searches for meaning that's more than just virtual.