



Michael Caton in *Last Cab to Darwin* (2015)

## Where is God in life?

### War Room (2015, PG)

I have heard Rod James outline in several presentations about research that demonstrates “that the best way for a father to love his children is to love their mother, and the best way for a mother to love her children is to love their father. What is happening in the family is reactive to what is happening in the marriage relationship.”

The new Kendrick Brothers film *War Room* has a focus on prayer but it is about relationships, faith and love, centred on coming closer to God through prayer. This is a film that will connect with many busy and actually disconnected ‘successful’ families. The scenes with the young daughter are often touching as you know she loves her parents who have drifted apart, but is confused as she does not really know if they love her as they seemingly no longer love each other or spend time as a family and simply being with her and helping her with her own life. They do not even know the name of her skipping rope team (I had no idea that skipping was such a professional and amazingly athletic sport in the USA).

This movie shows a foundation for prayer – it is not our will, but God’s will be done. We need to know what is the good and proper will and much is recorded in the Bible especially in terms of the general will of God in relationships, especially marriage. Miss Clara asks God to help her help someone – someone like she had been and Elizabeth is brought into her life

to help her save her marriage and family.

As I mentioned, prayer is a real practical focus here, but it is integrated prayer as a part of life. The central character Miss Clara is indeed a real character. She embodies that perhaps stereotype of the Southern USA person of faith who will shout out ‘Praise the Lord’ and leap to her feet and dance when she gets excited to learn of an answer to prayer. She loves to spend time in her closet – her War Room, to pray and seek God.

There are good messages about possessions, money and needs, but this is in a context of middle-class America as this audience is the prime focus for the film. It could be a film that may connect with a wider range of people as certainly today many are considering how to be a family in the 21st century. As Elizabeth and Tony learn to really forgive and love each other, they are united as a family again.

### Last Cab To Darwin (2015, M)

Any film with Michael Caton as the star has an instant connection. His role in *The Castle* (1997) probably means that an unusually large number of people will see this film, especially on DVD or TV eventually. The film is based on the popular 2003 Australian stage play written by Reg Cribb and he co-writes the screen play with director Jeremy Sims. Its foundations are from a true story arising from the 1995 Northern Territory euthanasia laws (they operated for a brief time before being ef-

fectively rendered void by the Federal Government). The film takes up the story of a taxi driver with terminal stomach cancer who decides to drive from his home town of Broken Hill to Darwin to seek out the doctor who is at the centre of the new push for euthanasia and has a machine to help people end their life. It is not difficult to work out who the doctor was based upon.

Michael Caton is very good in the role as Rex the cabbie, and also most of the people he meets along the way are portrayed very well and link in with the whole story. The odd figure is Jacki Weaver as the doctor, who does not play the role convincingly. The film is interestingly not essentially an apologetic message for euthanasia, although various standard ideas come out. It is a however a little bit of the stereotype of the quintessential rough Australian town full of loud and swearing outback characters who of course all have a heart of gold and worship together in the local pub. The other part of the story, the place and connections with the two main Aboriginal characters and with society is also fascinating, especially Rex’s relationship with his Aboriginal neighbour Polly.

There is little overt Christian or religious consideration, and interestingly I found the film in a way more of a consideration of the nature of community and how essential it is to have people who support you at times like this, and who will look after you and say ‘you don’t have to do this.’

Peter Bentley