



Michael Douglas stars as Gordon Gekko in Twentieth Century Fox 'Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps.'

So which is good: Christmas or greed?

Wall Street II – Money Never Sleeps

(2010 rated M)

At a time when shops are full of consumer goods, and we are certainly urged not to exercise restraint in spending, I thought it would be helpful to consider the sequel to the 1987 film, *Wall Street*, which won Michael Douglas an Oscar for Best Actor for his role as Gordon Gekko.

In this sequel, Michael Douglas returns as Gordon Gekko. He has been out of prison for several years now, and has published a book, *Is Greed Good*—a play on his now infamous line “Greed is Good”. It is 2008, just before the global financial crisis and the meltdown of the American economy.

The additional title “*Money Never Sleeps*” sums up the dominant role that money plays in our society. Gordon now believes he is a bit more righteous than most of the people presently reaping financial rewards in the American financial juggernaut. At a book launch in an illuminating and confronting address he remarks “Someone reminded me I once said ‘Greed is good’. Now it seems it’s legal. Because everyone is drinking the same Kool Aid.”

In 2008 time has caught up with Gordon Gekko, and he now wants to repair his relationship with his estranged daughter Winnie (Carey Mulligan), who just happens to be in a relationship with trader Jake Moore

played by Shia LeBeouf. Jake is more of an enlightened 21st century financier, as evidenced by his interest in alternate energy sources. For Gordon, everyone is viewed with a little suspicion, “You know what they say, ‘Parents are the bone on which children sharpen their teeth’”.

Gordon’s self interest is still dominant, always ready to come to his own defence, even if he has admitted his faults. One cannot help but believe Winnie when she finds out that Gordon has connected with Jake, and says “He’s not who you think he is Jake!”

There are many twists and turns in this adult drama, including references to real-life events when the financial crisis hits, and different characters appear in solid supporting roles, but the theme of this gentler sequel is certainly relationships and values, versus money and power. As Gordon Gekko says, “It’s not about the money. It’s about the game between people.”

A Christmas Snow (2010 rated PG)

A new Christian DVD also centres on relationships and family at the sometimes disturbing time of Christmas. Catherine Mary Stewart plays Kathleen, owner of a popular restaurant, who is written up in the local newspaper as the “Gourmet Grinch”.

She is portrayed as a Christmas denigrator—Christmas is not to be enjoyed at all costs. We find out early

in the film that this view is all related to her experience as a young girl when her father walked out on her family on Christmas Eve, never to return.

There are some wonderful little Christmas-time references that drive her mad—the general happiness of people at this time, giving to good causes, and Christmas greetings, even in stores when people wish you Merry Christmas—she would rather tell them where to go.

Cameron Ten Napel plays Lucy, the ten-year-old daughter of her male friend Andrew, a widower wanting a new relationship. Lucy is not at all impressed by this woman who she thinks is trying to take the place of her mother.

Kathleen is also not keen to really develop a relationship with Lucy, but this situation all changes when she is asked to look after Lucy when the regular baby sitter is unavailable during the pre-Christmas break and Andrew has to go away. Due to two different events she meets and then



befriends Sam, played by well-known character actor Muse Watson (Gibb’s mentor in the TV series NCIS), a loner type of stranger and yet an oddly contented figure.

It is around these three people that the story turns, simply because of the weather as they are “trapped” inside the house, including a period without electricity. Christian messages are clearly depicted within the drama of the film, arising from Lucy’s rehearsals of her part in a Christmas play and the involvement of the others.

There is some uneven production and acting, though one can forgive this in the context, and the simplicity about some of the portrayals, notably the girl’s character will probably resonate with families. Certainly it raises helpful questions about this time of the year, as the focus is not on presents, drinking and eating, but forgiveness and new life. It certainly encouraged me to be a little bit more sensitive toward people at Christmas time, especially shop assistants.

Peter Bentley

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