

# DENZEL ANSWERS MY BURNING QUESTION

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Last Spring, my daughter, Jasmine, was invited to go to Washington D.C. to receive a large college scholarship. She was one of 111 out of over 30,000 applicants to win. It was a huge honor for her...and for us. As she was preparing to go, she said that Denzel Washington was slated to be there to help honor the winning students.

That got me thinking. I've always wanted to ask Denzel a question, and maybe this was my chance.

I've read more than once about Denzel's strong faith. Here's a portion of an article from The Christian Post about his faith:

*"I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," he says. "I've been filled with the Holy Spirit. I know it's real. I was in the room. My cheeks blew up, I cried like a baby, and it scared me to death. It kind of scared me off it. I backed up and went the other direction, to be honest with you. I didn't know what was going on. It was too strong. It has taken me many years to come back around."*

*Sitting in his house recently, reading the Bible (he's on his third time reading the whole thing straight through), Washington came across a passage about wisdom and understanding in Proverbs 4, which made him reflect on his life.*

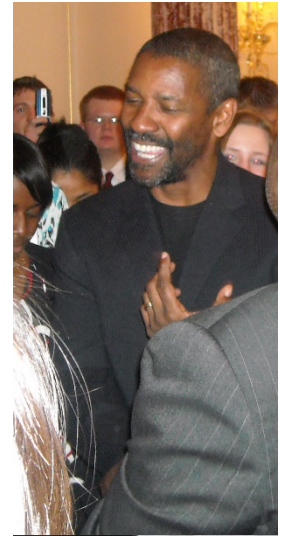
*"I'm in this big house with all this stuff," he observed. "I've heard that saying, 'You never see a U-Haul behind a hearse.' You can't take it with you. The Egyptians tried; they got robbed. I said, 'What do you want, Denzel?' And one of the devotional words that day was wisdom. So, I started praying on that. 'God, give me a dose of that.' I can't get any more successful. But I can get better. I can learn to love more. I can learn to be more understanding. I can gain more wisdom."*

So, considering his open confession of faith, I had one burning question for him: "Why on earth did you take the sinister and vulgar lead role in the movie Training Day?" He won an Oscar for his performance as an LAPD narcotics detective, but his character was so foul and so corrupt that he was impossible to like. Honestly, I was shocked that he took the role - and shocked at how convincing he was. Since watching the film in 2002, I've wondered what possessed him to play such a dark and vile character.

And then, two days into Jasmine's trip, my cell phone rang. Jasmine was on a bus headed to her next event. She didn't have much time to talk, but I could tell that she was excited. She just couldn't wait to tell me what had happened. "I not only met Denzel," she excitedly said, "but I also asked him your question!"

I was a bit taken back. I was kidding when I told her that she should ask the question, and I wondered what Denzel thought having just met this 17-year-old girl and being asked such a confrontational question. "Wow!" I replied. "What did he say?"

She said that he looked her in the eyes and said, "That is a very good question!" He proceeded to tell her that occasionally he will take roles that are dark and sinister as long as they portray evil as being truly evil (not glorified and not heroic), and as long as in the end, evil loses and good prevails. He said that the original script of Training Day had his character surviving, but he told the director that the only way he would take the role is if his evil character dies in the end. And if you saw the movie, you know that his character's death was brutal and final. Evil lost in the end.



I recently watched American Gangster, a movie in which Denzel plays yet another sinister character. I was watching to see if he would stay true to this philosophy, and sure enough, he did. His character didn't die in the end, but he did go to prison for many years and then came out a changed man.

Hats off to Denzel. His tactics may make some people of faith a bit uncomfortable, but he's a purposeful actor who is trying to make a difference in Hollywood.