

The Woodsman

Rated R

A movie of a serious nature, "*The Woodsman*" chronicles the life of a sex offender upon his release from prison. The movie addresses such critical issues as re-offending, prejudice against the offender, and the psychology of both the offender and the victim. The film is relevant for parents, Christians, educators, and all of society. This is especially true for those of us that have followed the tragic death of Dru Sjodin.

I wanted to see the movie in hopes of answering my own questions about re-integrating sex offenders in society once they complete their sentence. Unfortunately, I did not find an answer. Still, *The Woodsman* did provide unexpected insights that made it well worth viewing.

The Woodsman is wonderfully directed by Nicole Kassell, a first time film maker who also wrote the screen play with Steven Fechter. Veteran actor Kevin Bacon plays the title role of Walter, an offender who has served a 12-year sentence for sexually molesting two young girls (10 and 12 years old). He finds work in a lumber mill and begins to develop a relationship with Vicki (played by Kara Sedgwick). In order to be involved with Walter, Vicky must also face some of her own past negative and destructive behaviors.

A great deal of external pressure comes to bear on Walter from the judgmental and even cruel people at the mill. In addition, he suffers from his own internal conflicts and desires to abuse again.

Walter wants to be "normal." While seeing a psychologist, he demands that the therapist tell him when he can be normal. In this poignant scene, we see Walter's true humanity and desire to be like everyone else. Here we see that Walter's dilemma is not nearly so different than the dilemma all of us ultimately face when our behaviors or motivations go against those of our God, our family, or even those standards we set for ourselves.

While "*The Woodsman*" presents us with a disturbing topic, the movie gives us the great opportunity to view sexual abuse from many angles. It is a subject that few of us want to address, yet the movie shows us what it is like to walk in someone else's shoes and provides a quality of humanity that is rarely seen. The movie did not editorialize or theorize, but left the viewer to draw their own conclusions.

This is the type of movie conducive to a discussion group. I particularly liked the music featured in the final credits, *His eye is on the sparrow*, which further encouraged the movie goer to step back and look at this subject from a broader perspective.

By ***Curt Levang***