
"Bridge of Spies" by Steven Spielberg

In the 2015 Cold War Thriller *Bridge of Spies*, Steven Spielberg presents his audience with a film that makes us ponder on the important question - what is humanity? Through the protagonist James B Donovan (Tom Hanks), we are exposed to the modern conflict that arises between duty and humanity, as he goes through the trials and tribulations of being assigned the unwanted task of defending a Soviet spy, Rudolf Abel (Mark Rylance). So, what is humanity? It's in the name! Humanity is about being human and, not being inhuman. It's about showing love and having compassion for everyone, no matter what their religion, beliefs, race, or status.

However, sometimes it can be hard to show compassion to everybody, and that's where conflict arises. James B Donovan was assigned the unwanted task of defending the Soviet spy, Rudolf Abel, knowing full well the consequences of doing so. However, he showed compassion towards Abel, just as Atticus from *To Kill a Mockingbird* showed compassion towards Tom Robinson. Even though both Atticus and Donovan knew they would be hated for it, they also knew that it was the right thing to do - as it says in James: "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." Nobody wants to get persecuted, but sadly, people get persecuted all the time - and for what? Doing their duty!

To prove my point, Donovan and his own family were destroyed by the community, all because Donovan had to legally represent Abel. He was given rude and chilling stares from those who accompanied him on the train, and his house was even shot at! This got me thinking about how we, as Christians, also get persecuted in modern society. I consider myself lucky to only get teased or judged by carrying out my duties as a Christian, because there are people in other countries who risk literal persecution for this. Let's talk about conscience. Remember reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* and totally falling in love with Atticus? No? Just me..? After I finished reading the Pulitzer Prized novel, I aspired to become like him - morally upright in every aspect of life.

Donovan follows a very similar direction as he acts as the film's 'moral compass'. Much similar to his *To Kill a Mockingbird* counterpart, Donovan faces a war between his conscience and his prejudiced peers. Our conscience can make it difficult to carry out our duties, as it is usually driven by what is humane - which in this case means no electric chair. What I also found really interesting was that *Bridge of Spies* has brought to my attention the conflict between duty and humanity, and how our conscience can either lessen or enlarge the impact it can have on our decisions.