

God in Film Study

Film: *The Shawshank Redemption*



Watch the film



Discuss Themes



Key scenes



Close the curtain



Film Synopsis

Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) is sentenced to life in Shawshank State Penitentiary for the murder of his wife and her lover. Andy claims to be innocent and maintains this during his time behind bars. He befriends “Red” (Morgan Freeman), a cynical lifer who smuggles contraband for inmates. Surviving brutal beatings and assaults, Andy shrewdly becomes a tax adviser to corrupt prison warden and guards, as well as landing a job in the library. Andy finds ways to extend to his inmate friends the protection and privileges he is afforded by prison staff. As Red’s lack of hope is challenged by Andy’s steely optimism, an intricate plan comes together that will offer these two prisoners a future that seemed impossible. *Synopsis written by Ben McEachen*



Movie Talk: Reel Dialogue discussion

The Shawshank Redemption remains the best rated film on IMDB. Why do you think it has become a classic movie?

What elements of the story or performances impact you most? Why?

How does your opinion of crime, punishment and justice fit with what happens within *The Shawshank Redemption*?



Key scenes

Follow the linked headings to press "play"

Get busy livin' or get busy dying (language warning)

A defining element of Andy is hope. Hope that he will leave Shawshank. Red doesn't believe he personally will, unless it's when he's on the way out of life itself. The prisoners also speak of paying debts for wrongs committed, the issues of being institutionalized, and the perils of misplaced hope.

Discuss Red and Andy's different outlooks, particularly about being free. What does Andy mean by "get busy livin' or get busy dying?"

The sound of freedom (language warning)

A soul-stirring opera causes an entire prison to stop and "escape" – as if a rescue mission has reached their hearts with song. Red notes that Andy's record delivered singing of something so beautiful it's beyond words. The scene drips with a longed-for taste of liberation or salvation. Andy finds a small yet profound way to broadcast his hope to everyone at Shawshank.

Why do Shawshank prisoners long to be free?
What is true freedom to you? Why do we long for it?

On the beach (language warning)

"Hope is a good thing. Maybe the best of things." The future Red thought impossible comes to pass as he follows Andy's lead to the fabled Mexican beach of new beginnings and "no memory" of the troubled or painful past. On his way to meet Andy, Red feels "the excitement only a free man feels." A free man who has broken the law and, also, doesn't actually know if his future is secure (or will he be caught for skipping parole?).

What is the redemption in *The Shawshank Redemption*? Who receives it? Why?



Curtain closes: Final question

Redemption means to deliver or rescue; to save from sins; to atone for guilt; to buy back at a price.

The Shawshank Redemption paints a picture of redemption that delivers two prisoners to physical freedom. Andy and Red's journey beyond Shawshank's bars also offers glimpses of justice, mercy, forgiveness and salvation. Such deeply felt things revealed by *The Shawshank Redemption* are memorably expanded in the Bible. The redemption that Jesus Christ offers all people goes way beyond prison walls or Mexican beaches.

Romans 3:22-26 offers one snapshot of the Bible's depiction of redemption.

What is similar about *The Shawshank Redemption* and The Jesus Redemption? What strikes you as different?

"This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." – Romans 3:22-26