

# **Derek**

## **Episode 6**

*Derek* is a series in 'mockumentary' style about the inhabitants of a care home and those who look after them, including Derek, a simple and 'innocent' person who loves animals and caring for other people. Although Derek is mocked by others for being naïve, unattractive, unsophisticated and generally different to most people, he has qualities and a lifestyle which his cynical friends in fact long for.

Some reviewers have found the series disturbing, wondering whether Ricky Gervais, the series' creator and principal actor, intends to mock those who are mentally disadvantaged. Gervais himself has insisted that this is not the case and that the character Derek is not intended to be seen as mentally challenged.

In this, the final episode of the series, a number of important themes about life, death, love, old age, forgiveness and reconciliation are considered.

## **Synopsis**

Derek is seen enjoying a silly Youtube video about a baby monkey riding on a small pig. He delights in the monkey's enjoyment and the fun the animals seem to be having. Hannah, who also works at the care home, takes a call from a man who says he is Derek's father. Derek's alcoholic father disappeared when Derek was a baby. Derek doesn't want to talk about the man who abandoned him and says he would not want to meet him. Yet Derek cares for everyone, - is this the one person who is beyond the pale?

In the care home, the elderly Gerald always visits his wife Lizzie every day. She has Alzheimer's disease and often doesn't know who he is any more. Gerald recalls when they met and how much he has loved her all his life and has been loved in return. He reflects on how fortunate and happy they have been in their life together. But then Lizzie dies. Gerald is left sorting through her things.

Derek too reflects on his life, saying that although he has never had a father, the people in the home have been a family to him. But the problem with that is that it is sad when they die.

Derek and Hannah and the others go to the church for Lizzie's funeral. Derek's father turns up and tries to reconcile with him, but Derek rejects him. As the car pulls away after the funeral taking Hannah and Derek back to the home, it passes Derek's father walking down a street. The car stops and Derek gets out. He approaches his father and puts his arms round him, patting his back. It seems that Derek can forgive everyone, after all. Derek's father joins him in the car and they leave together.

Different characters from the series talk to camera about their views on life, death and everything. Derek's sex-obsessed friend Kev says that he mostly prays for 'muff' but adds wistfully that if he could be someone else, he'd like to be Derek; Derek is simply kind and selfless, so different from the self-obsessed Kev. The cynical Dougie argues that prayer is simply a 'posh moan'. Derek says he doesn't know if there's a God or not, but there's a choice in life whether to be horrible or nice to others and it is, in the end, better to be nice. 'I'm nice' he says.

**Some questions for reflection:**

What are your feelings about the characters in the episode – Derek, Lizzie and Gerald, Hannah, Derek's father, Kev or Dougie?

What do you make of the characters' reflections on God, prayer and life after death?

What difference would it have made if Derek had not shown compassion towards the father who abandoned him?

What do you think about the themes of old age and suffering in the episode?

Ricky Gervais is an avowed atheist. Does that make any difference to how you see 'religious' themes portrayed and examined in this episode?