

House md

Season 5 episode 15

Unfaithful

This episode is another one of the 'House vs God' series, and includes themes of faith, loss of faith, love, hypocrisy, truth, lies and forgiveness.

Synopsis

Daniel Bresson is a young Roman Catholic priest who has been moved from parish to parish after an allegation of inappropriate conduct with a young man. Although he says he is innocent, people always believe he is tainted with the allegations and so he never gets to settle as he is moved on. He loses his faith, but as it's his life-long vocation and he doesn't know how to do anything else, he stays in the ministry.

At the beginning of the episode a homeless man comes to Daniel's flat asking for help. Daniel lets him choose a coat and then goes back to smoking and drinking. There is another knock at the door, but this time when Daniel opens it he is confronted by the crucified Christ floating off the floor, naked except for a loin cloth and with his wounds dripping, displaying the stigmata. Jesus says 'no-one is laughing, Daniel'.

Dr Cuddy, who is Jewish, asks Dr House if he will attend the baby-naming ceremony for her daughter. She says it will be just the Rabbi and some friends. House accuses her of hypocrisy and pretends he has organised 'hooker sex' instead of what he calls 'religious hokum'. He then goes down to the ER to look for a 'fake' case for his team. Meeting Dr Cameron, he picks the priest, but she says his hallucination of Jesus was either caused by alcohol or exhaustion.

Dr House wants a fake case for the team because he is annoyed that Dr Foreman and Dr Hadley (13) are dating. He thinks that their love for each other is making them worse doctors and so he tells them to 'split or quit' by the end of the case.

Fr Daniel tells Dr Taub and Dr Kutner about the allegations of molestation and explains how it all damaged his faith. The 'fairytale ended'. Because of this he cannot believe that the hallucination had any reality and that seeing Jesus was 'insane'.

House now tells Dr Wilson that he has Brubeck tickets for Friday not the 'hooker sex' he threw in Cuddy's face. Wilson accuses him of lying to face his real issues which are to do with 'being human' enough to get over the 'hypocrisy' of having a religious ceremony when you are not religious. He goes over the priest not believing in God because God did not save him. Meanwhile Foreman and 13 won't quit so House fires Foreman.

Fr Daniel gets more and more ill. House has another go at Cuddy about religious hypocrisy because she does not keep kosher. She says her heritage is important, but House says religion should be all or

nothing. However, he is getting intrigued by the 'man of God who doesn't believe in God'. Cuddy tells Foreman that she can't recommend him for another job because of his behaviour during the drug trial when he switched medications to try and help 13 because he loves her.

House interrogates the priest about the loss of his faith. Fr Daniel says that the teenager accused him of something he didn't do, God forsook him and his church didn't believe him. Kutner tries to suggest the freewill argument, - that suffering comes about because of free human choices. Fr Daniel says he's been all round the argument that God wants us to suffer and rejected it, and also rejects the idea that God is just the god of the gaps, around for the 'big stuff' but leaving us all to wallow the rest of the time. House says to him archly 'God, I wish you weren't a paedophile' and says that if Fr Daniel dies he will be 'dancing with the Dark One'. He sees him as a fellow atheist. If God were testing Daniel's faith then he had already failed.

House draws a cross on his whiteboard (crosses appear in a number of scenes) and has another conversation with Fr Daniel. If House cures him, would that mean God was working through him? Would it be evidence of a miracle? Fr Daniel says the loss of his faith was not a choice. House wants to know if it could come back, or is he hoping that it will come back? After all Daniel is stuck in the job and still ministering. House says he can smell the 'stink of left-over faith'. Fr Daniel says House is also in the business of saving lives, but House counters that he only likes puzzles, - saving lives is 'collateral damage'. Fr Daniel challenges him and says that House is looking for hope and wants to believe. House goes back to his 'whores' and 'hypocrisy' metaphors.

Everyone is telling Foreman and 13 that they should split up and keep their jobs. 13 is looking for another job to save Foreman's.

Meanwhile the religious debate continues with 'fear of the unknown is the cornerstone of faith' and that's why Cuddy is having a ceremony for her child.

Kutner says the holy water has affected Fr Daniel. He is getting infections most people shake off. His immune system is compromised and so he most probably has AIDS. Even without proof this is enough to convince Dr Taub, who was already sceptical, that Fr Daniel is a 'diddler' and wants to tell the young man in case he has AIDS. House muses 'Fr Nietzsche has AIDS'. Another conversation between House and Wilson centres around hypocrisy. House rails about Cuddy's hypocrisy but Wilson says House is the hypocrite because he really wants to go to the baby naming but won't. Taub tracks down Ryan, the young man who accused Fr Daniel and asks him if he's been tested for AIDS. Ryan is disturbed by the news that Fr Daniel is sick.

Foreman goes to House and says he wants his job back. House comments on a cycle of love, sacrifice, deception and betrayal. 13 argues with Foreman in front of House and walks out. House offers him the 'split or quit' challenge again. Foreman takes his badge back. Later, Foreman and 13 argue vigorously about the priest's symptoms and House takes this for evidence that they have split up for good.

Fr Daniel has yet more symptoms and House compares this to Satan's smiting of Job in the Old Testament. Ryan turns up at the bedside and says 'I'm sorry for everything, I'm sorry' and begins to weep. Fr Daniel puts his hand on his head and says 'I know, I know' as Ryan kneels beside him.

Meanwhile House is ranting 'religion is not the opium of the masses, religion is the placebo of the masses'. Wilson counters by saying that even if there is an ultimate Higher Truth we can't know all of it and House can't condemn Cuddy for recognising that. House says that 'truth is truth' but Wilson's words give him his 'eureka' moment and he realises that Fr Daniel has a genetic disorder, 'a gift from God' which has made him ill. The vision of Jesus he puts down to 'Scotch', even though House wiped 'hallucination' off the board as a symptom of his illness.

They have a final conversation about causes and effects. The priest comments on the chain of events which brought him to House and got him diagnosed when every other doctor, including Cuddy and Cameron, would have sent him home as having drunk too much. House was looking for a fake case and Daniel just happened to be there. House says that coincidences happen but Fr Daniel says that according to Einstein, coincidences are just God's way of remaining anonymous. House says if you believe that you can believe Jesus can turn up in a cheese sandwich, but the priest is impressed by the way his life turned round in just one day. House says there are rational explanations for all of it, but the priest says there are just too many coincidences. House is silent after that and rests his head on his cane.

Meanwhile it turns out that despite all the double dealing, Cuddy would really like House to come to the baby naming but when it comes to it she just can't tell him the truth. We also find out that Foreman and 13 have scammed House by pretending to have split up; we see them kissing at their home. Now they can both keep their jobs.

The final scene is Cuddy's baby-naming ceremony. All her friends from the hospital are there but not House. House is at home playing the piano, - and drinking Scotch. He plays a little fantasy on a Jewish melody as a tribute to Cuddy and her baby.

Some excerpts to watch:

Fr Daniel sees Jesus

House and Fr Daniel's conversations (any)

House and Wilson talk about hypocrisy and truth

Fr Daniel forgives Ryan

The baby naming ceremony

Some questions:

Who is 'un-faithful' in this episode and why?

What do you make of Fr Daniel's 'hallucination'?

Do you think Fr Daniel's experience is similar to that of Job? Or of Jesus?

What do you make of the discussions about God and suffering/God and free will/proofs of God?

What do you think might be in Dr House's mind by the end?

What do you make of the scene between Fr Daniel and Ryan?

What does this episode tell us about the difference between exploitative sex ('hooker sex'/molestation) and love?

Why doesn't Dr House go to the baby naming ceremony?

Why is the baby naming ceremony important to Dr Cuddy if she isn't all that religious?

What does this episode tell us about faith?

Some Bible passages:

Isaiah 53

Job 2.7-9

Psalm 22.1-18

Matthew 23.23-24

Revelation 3.15-16