

'Gifted Hands'

A biopic about Dr. Ben Carson's inspirational journey from failing student to celebrated neurosurgeon premieres on TNT Saturday.

 Cuba Gooding Jr. (L) and Ben Carson (R)

Feb. 6, 2009 – The inspirational story of how a failing student overcame personal odds to become a world-renowned neurosurgeon hits the small screen on Saturday.

Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story premieres on TNT at 8 p.m. Saturday, and stars Cuba Gooding Jr. as Carson and Kimberly Elise as his mother, Sonya.

Based on Carson's best-selling autobiography by the same name, the film follows Carson from his difficult childhood in inner city Detroit, being raised by a single mother, to the time in 1987 when he performed the first successful separation of Siamese twins.

Carson, who was heavily involved in the film's development, said the film doesn't ignore his deep Christian faith. "[Faith is] a natural part of who I am," he said, "so it's going to come through in anything that's about me."

The film shows him rebelling against his mother and getting into a fight at school, which ultimately led to his salvation. He had attempted to stab a classmate who had been bullying him, but the knife broke and no one was injured.

Stunned by the incident, Carson ran home and locked himself into the bathroom for three hours, praying for God to take away his temper. He said there happened to be a Bible in there, so he picked it up and began reading Proverbs.

"There were all these verses in there about anger and the trouble it gets you into. But there are also verses like chapter 16 verse 32 that says mightier is the man who can control his temper than the man who can conquer a city," Carson said.

"During that three hours I came to a realization that to react, to hit somebody, to kick something down, was not a sign of strength but rather it was a sign of weakness. And it meant that situations and other people could control you. I also came to understand that if you step outside of the circle, then not everything is aimed at you."

He said after those three hours he never had another problem with his temper, and he was convinced that God was real. "After that day I adopted God not only as my heavenly father but as my earthly father," Carson said.

Throughout medical school, Carson said, he never wavered in his faith. "In fact, it just grew stronger, particularly the more I learned about the complexity of the brain," he said. "It became clear to me that that could not just be a spontaneous occurrence. ... Our universe is so well-organized that we can predict 70 years hence when a comet is coming. Can you imagine the degree of precision that is required for that?"

For nearly 25 years Carson has directed pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center, where he has pioneered several neurological procedures, and is a full professor of neurosurgery, oncology, plastic surgery and pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. In 2008 he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Carson, who co-founded the Carson Scholars Fund to recognize young people for exceptional academic and humanitarian achievements, said he hopes the film will inspire viewers to

have a can-do attitude. "I hope that they will take away the idea that if you have a brain and you live in a free society, then you have the capacity to do virtually anything you want to do," he said. "It does require work, there's no question about that, but you have the capacity to do it. Therefore you do not have to be a victim.

"And the person who has the most to do with what happens to you is you. It's not your environment, and it's not other people. That's what I want them to take away from it."