

And the Top Christian Film of 2024 Goes to ... 'The Forge'

Just say the phrase “Christian movie,” and you’ll hear plenty of snarky comments. Most secular viewers don’t want to be preached at in theaters, so they aren’t going to praise a faith-based movie no matter how high its production values. And film critics rarely give five stars to anything that reflects Christian spirituality.

But Hollywood is paying more attention to Christian films these days because the scripts are better, the acting has improved, the religious cheesiness has been minimized and (most of all) profits are up because more people want wholesome, faith-based entertainment. For example, the 2023 movie “Jesus Revolution” had a production budget of only \$15 million, yet it made \$54 million for Lionsgate Films.

Compare that to this year’s “Megalopolis,” a film by Hollywood heavyweight Francis Ford Coppola that cost \$120 million to produce but made a paltry \$9 million at the box office. Ouch. And the overhyped “Joker: Folie à Dieu,” starring Joaquin Phoenix and Lady Gaga, cost \$200 million to make and only brought in \$215 million for Warner Brothers.

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Christian filmmakers are perfecting their craft, and it showed in 2024 with such movies as “Cabrini” (about Catholic missionary Francesca Cabrini), “Bonhoeffer,” “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever” (from Dallas Jenkins, the creator of “The Chosen” TV series) and “Reagan” (starring Dennis Quaid as the 40th U.S. president). But what was the best faith-based movie of the year? I may be biased because of my love for personal discipleship, but my choice would be “The Forge,” the

newest release from the Georgia-based Kendrick Brothers.

Set in the same film universe as “War Room,” a 2015 Kendrick Brothers movie about the power of prayer, “The Forge” tells the story of Isaiah Wright (Aspen Kennedy), a fatherless teen who takes a job at a fitness equipment factory in Charlotte, North Carolina. He eventually finds Jesus through the influence of his successful boss, Joshua Moore (Cameron Arnett).

Wright’s mother, Cynthia, a hairdresser (Priscilla Shirer), prays for her son and watches his amazing transformation as he gets baptized, sheds old habits, takes responsibility, forgives his deadbeat father, apologizes to people he has offended along the way and embraces responsibility and real faith. Cynthia also invites her own mentor, a feisty prayer warrior named Miss Clara (Karen Abercrombie) to pray for her son and to encourage him in his newfound faith.

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