

'Courageous' Film Shines Light on Fatherhood

In an era where divorce is rampant and families are disintegrating—even in the church—men desperately need encouragement to embrace their roles as fathers. The producers of *Fireproof* and *Facing the Giants* have turned their attention to that crucial topic in their new movie, *Courageous*, which opens Friday.

The film follows the story of four friends who are knit together by a tragedy that awakens them to shortcomings in each of their lives in the area of parenting. You see from each of their unique vantage points the struggles they face in parenting and how their decisions in life affect their children.

"They begin looking at their role as fathers and they begin challenging one another to fulfill God's intention for fathers," said producer Alex Kendrick. "Our hope is that as you see the men in *Courageous*, you will identify with one of them. And when you leave the theater, you will say, 'Not only do I need to step up my role as father and have a strategy for my children, but I need to live a life of consistency, seeking the Lord where my sons and my daughters will want to do the same thing.'

"If we can do that for men," he added, "then from the grass roots effort, you will see families change as they pursue the Lord. Therefore, churches, communities and nations will change."

Produced by Sherwood Pictures, the film's leadership team includes Kendrick, who also plays a lead role; his brother Stephen Kendrick, who is the co-writer/producer; Michael Catt, the senior pastor of Sherwood Church, and Jim McBride, the

executive pastor.

In many ways, the movie is a love letter to Larry Kendrick, father of Alex and Stephen. The brothers have admired their dad's consistency and courage since they were young boys. Now, as filmmakers, they continue to draw on his example in their work.

"We saw a consistent father figure in our earthly father," said Alex. "We saw that he was very passionate about pursuing the Lord and living a life to honor Him. We've seen him go through multiple sclerosis, which is a frustrating disease. We saw him really fight and strive to cling to the Lord through some very hard days—and then to give God credit when the Lord brought him through it."

Stephen Kendrick, who has served as associate teaching pastor at Sherwood Baptist Church since 2001, was influenced not only by his father, but also by the legacy of Billy Graham's World Wide Pictures: "Alex and I grew up watching World Wide Pictures, including *Joni*, *The Prodigal*, *The Hiding Place*, *The Home Coming*. We are grateful for Billy Graham's ministry; we are grateful for any kind of effort that will reach people for Christ. All the fruit of those movies we celebrate."

Having seen a strong role model in their own father, the brothers now have a burden to help other men embrace parenting from a Christian perspective. "We believe that a father is given a purpose and he should strategically raise his children to know God, to love God and to obey God," said Alex. "We want men to take their crucial role of influence in their homes, and apply the standard God lays out in Scripture so that the next generation would seek the Lord with passion and fervor. If men stand up and do that, then our culture will change."

Catt, Sherwood senior pastor, believes churches should come alongside fathers and instruct them in fathering. "Everything rises and falls on leadership. If pastors and key men in the

church model what it means to be a godly man, then it affects the rest of the church. That has nothing to do with size. It has to do with the quality of a man's heart, a man who is willing to be accountable, willing to step up."

Catt is so invested in mentoring fathers and in the movie that he challenged members of Sherwood Baptist to pray the entire time the film was being shot and produced. "Our church has an intercessory prayer ministry 24/7. People in the church prayed over the key actors and partners in ministry. Every day, you could look around this set and find team of people praying while we were shooting a scene."

He prays the movie will nudge men to take the next step: "We are hoping we will see with *Courageous* what we saw with *Fireproof*. We hope men will say, 'I've seen a movie; that's the event. Now what's the process?' Hopefully, we can help them with the process of equipping men to be godly."

Visit the Courageous movie website for more information and to get your tickets now.

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