

Dragons' Delivering Power

It's not often that one walks away from a film literally transformed. But that's exactly what happened to actor Wes Bentley after starring in *There Be Dragons*, which releases in theaters May 6.

Derived from true events, *There Be Dragons* follows two young men who find themselves on opposite sides of the Spanish Civil War. Josemaria Escriva, a Catholic priest (played by Charlie Cox), and Manolo Torres, a bitter soldier (played by Bentley), showcase the extreme positions one can take when faced with dire circumstances.

Escriva was named a saint in the Catholic church in 2002, and the film showcases his life of faith and forgiveness, while Bentley's character is deceitful and selfish.

Bentley says playing the role of Torres forced him to look at his own life and its negative direction. The son of Methodist pastors, Bentley says he left his childhood Bible teachings and turned to alcohol, cocaine and eventually heroin to cope with the sudden fame he received after starring in the 1999 Academy Award-winning movie *American Beauty*.

With his life in a 10-year spiral, Bentley came face-to-face with his need for change while filming a scene in *Dragons*:

“I was seeing myself in that old-man makeup, preparing physically and realizing that ... he’s having to make good on his deathbed. I was terrified for a second because I realized I don’t want to be so stubborn, so blind that I have to wait until my deathbed to realize that I want to make good in my life.”

Bentley’s publicist says he’s been drug-free for more than a year now. Though he admits he doesn’t go to church every week, he says his relationship with God has been restored.

“My spiritual connection was interrupted by material things,” Bentley says. “A big part of that healing was reconnecting to my faith.”