

How This ‘Tangled’ Star Put a Voice Behind One of the Bible’s Most Beloved Fathers

When he speaks, it’s difficult not to hear iconic characters such as Chuck from the NBC show of the same name or Flynn Rider from Disney’s *Tangled*. For his latest role, however, Zachary Levi, a self-professed “person of faith,” tackles a previously-quieter hero, this one of the biblical variety.

Levi plays Joseph to Gina Rodriguez’s Mary in the Sony Animation/AFFIRM Films’ release *The Star*, arriving in theaters Nov. 17. In the new take on the nativity story, a group of animals are pushed front and center, doing their part to assist the holy family fleeing the clutches of Herod’s armies.

The actor, who recently spoke with Charisma News about the project, said it was “fun” to take the story in a new direction this time, focusing on a band of animals voiced by Steven Yeun, Keegan-Michael Key, Aidy Bryant, Oprah Winfrey, Tyler Perry, Tracy Morgan, Patricia Heaton and Kristen Chenoweth, among others.

“Gina and I get to be the token humans in an animal story, which is really fun,” he said. “Telling [this story] in a new way is difficult, but these guys did it. You, know, to go through the perspective of the animals is just really clever, really fun.”

Joseph has some funny moments in the film, mostly trying to understand what is going on with the animals that are teaming together to protect them. The fictional story also allowed writers Simon Moore and Carlos Kotkin to give the biblical character more of a human face.

“They gave us really great words to bring these characters to

life,” he said. “And then it’s just a matter of us to try to find that and bring that truth through our voice, and the vulnerability, the humanity of him and of Mary. A lot of times, biblical characters and people are put on these pedestals, like there’s nothing wrong with them, they’re all saints. But it’s like, ‘No, they were schmucks like everybody else.’ We are all broken.”

Levi, who was recently cast in the upcoming superhero epic, *Shazam*, relayed his excitement about the project, an exploration of the “most powerful origin story of all,” which began when he was among the first cast in the project.

“Everyone kind of knows it on some level—Jesus born of a virgin, and the star of Bethlehem and the three wise men,” he said. “So I think that’s pretty massive, whether you ascribe to Christianity or not. I think the message behind it, one of hope, one of redemption and love from a Creator to His creation, is just amazing. It’s huge. So I think it’s always a story worth telling.” {eoa}

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