

'October Baby' Champions Life, Forgiveness

Not knowing anything about *October Baby* other than it's a movie about an abortion survivor, the obvious thought process would lead you to believe it's a film that carries a strong pro-life voice.

And you would be correct.

But you may also miss the point of *October Baby* completely.

For as much as the movie—premiering March 23 on 390 screens in over 70 cities nationwide—champions the value of life, that theme is more of the undercard.

"October Baby" takes you on a two-hour journey that leaves you spent, and most likely red in the eyes, but with an unmistakable message:

"It's the message of forgiveness," said writer and producer Jon Erwin, who directed the film with his brother Andrew. "That message even transcends the message of sanctity of life."

Fear not, the two messages can peacefully co-exist.

And in a lot of ways one plays perfectly off the other. As the *October Baby* feedback comes rolling in, Erwin is finding that message of forgiveness is healing post-abortive women, possibly hundreds at a time.

All in the name of Jesus.

"The main story is how powerful forgiveness can be," Erwin said. "When you find forgiveness through the power of Christ, it will change your life."

"October Baby" is inspired by the true story of abortion survivor Gianna Jessen, who survived an 18-hour saline abortion nearly 35 years ago and has overcome many obstacles, including living with Cerebral Palsy. The inspirational survivor has even run two marathons.

Featuring music from Jessen, The Afters and former American Idol star Chris Sligh (who also has a role in the film), "October Baby" takes you on a journey as 19-year-old Hannah (Rachel Hendrix) finds out she's an abortion survivor and takes a trip to find her birth mother.

This journey is wrapped around a love story between Hannah and Jason (Jason Burkey), who struggles to earn the trust of Hannah's father Jacob, played by John Schneider (Dukes of Hazzard, Smallville). Jasmine Guy (A Different World) also has an important role in the film.

"I didn't know there was such a thing as an abortion survivor," said Burkey, a Taylor graduate, whose first acting break came in a pilot of the Halogen show "Alumni."

"It's a powerful film and it might create some controversy. There's going to be people who love it and people who hate it. But it's cool to see the affect it's having on people."

After the first set of screenings, Erwin heard reports of several young pregnant girls who watched the movie who decided against abortion and chose life.

"I was very humbled by that," Erwin said. "There's nothing more important we could do but give these unborn children a voice.

"Jesus said if you're doing it to the least of these, you're doing it to me."

The Erwin brothers took an unconventional road into film-making, starting off as college football cameramen with ESPN

in Alabama. They started making Christian music videos and worked with Stephen and Alex Kendrick on *Courageous* when they were challenged about their purpose.

“Faith-based films are on the rise, and thank God for the Kendricks to prod us to get off the sidelines,” said Erwin, who is hyper-focused on “keeping the faith message honest and organic” and “not preachy.”

Nothing was more real-to-life than Shari Rigby (Not Today), who plays Hannah’s birth mother, and pulls off the most dramatic scene in the movie, as she finally realizes that she indeed has been forgiven.

Rigby had an abortion when she was a young woman and in the heart-wrenching scene, she admitted the tears she was shedding were not acting at all, rather it was the moment God had healed her from the pain she’s dealt with all these years.

“You definitely need a box of tissues,” Erwin said. “But we hope when you leave the movie theatre, you will not be the same.”