

Oscar-Bait Movie's Message: Gay Is OK and Change Is Not!

Living in the Nashville area, I've had three divine appointments with Nicole Kidman who is an Academy Award winning actress, married to music superstar Keith Urban. I've given her one of my books and my personal testimony tract. Although she was once wed to Scientologist Tom Cruise, she's now Catholic, so I hope she relates to my similar upbringing.

When she lends her star power to a film you can be sure it'll draw lots of attention as well as big audiences. Her current movie is one where the "buzz" is already out for an Academy Award nomination. Her co-star is another Academy Award winner Russell Crowe.

Giant posters declare of the just released, first run film, "Stunning achievement... One of the year's best pictures ... Magnificent ... Story demands to be told ... Breathtaking ... Four stars!"

Boy Erased is a heartbreaking story based on a teenager's supposedly real experience with same-sex attraction; his rape by a gay college freshman; the traumatic interaction with his supportive mom and dad who is a Baptist pastor; his experience in a "Christian" rehab center; and his eventual realization that "I'm gay ... I'm not changing ... You're going to have to be the one to change!" Hence the byline on the movie's poster, "The Truth Cannot be Converted."

Similar to the biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody* ending on a Hollywood inspirational moment minimizing the horrific AIDS-related death at 45 of Freddie Mercury, *Boy Erased* concludes with young Jared, successful and glowing alongside his gay partner in "marriage" while the minister who directed his "conversion therapy" team of robotic, mean-spirited and legalistic

individuals is exposed as a hypocrite who happily returned to his former homosexual lifestyle and now is with his gay partner too.

One unfortunate, hulking teenager who told our central character that, "God will not love you the way you are" ends up killing himself. Moviegoers cannot help but cringe that this is what happens when we don't celebrate and encourage people to "come out" and be who they were "really meant to be."

The movie is convincing and communicates a compelling story. It will influence millions to accept homosexuality as normal while Christian attempts to encourage people (as Alcoholics Anonymous does) to yield totally to God and admit their inability to overcome their struggles in their own strength is obviously evil, manipulative and totally ineffective. The credits roll, reminding us that there are still over 30 states that still allow this type of degrading conversion therapy.

What Is the Truth?

Throughout America, there are compassionate and skilled counselors who are committed to helping those struggling with same-sex attraction. They convey God's unconditional love and His design for men and women so they can live in freedom and enjoy the "abundant life" (John 10:10) that Jesus promised all who follow His way.

They work tirelessly assisting people in identifying root causes; helping them know how to deal with ongoing temptation; plus guiding them graciously to walk victoriously in the power of God's grace amidst supportive, authentic Christian community.

When a person genuinely repents and perseveres in the process, he or she experiences the incontrovertible truth of the glorious freedom and a new life in union with Christ. "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old

things have passed away. Look, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Recently, dozens of former gays and lesbians held uplifting rallies in California honoring God for their deliverance and longstanding lifestyles of freedom from homosexuality.

I personally know a woman who left the lesbian lifestyle after 42 years, and several male former homosexuals who today are happily married with numerous children. Organizations and churches helping gays find freedom through compassionate counseling are filled with the testimonies of thousands of real people who really have changed.

This movie unfairly and blatantly portrays a treatment center as a sterile boot camp with a cult-like leader and heartless, abusive figures engaged in behavior modification and manipulative techniques. Forcing young people to publicly confess intimate sexual sins in a mixed setting of guys and girls will repel average moviegoers who lack discernment. The shameful bullying and beating of unrepentant teens by bashing them with Bibles in exorcisms not only strains credulity but makes one wonder how much of this young person's journey was embellished to disgust impressionable and uninformed people.

Here's the deal: *Boy Erased* is a superbly produced and acted presentation of propaganda. It will unfortunately mislead multitudes to reject attempts at helping those struggling with same-sex attraction plus reinforce the notion that change isn't really possible.

The real "truth that cannot be converted" comes not from Hollywood but from the Holy Bible when it conveys hope and freedom. "No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

May this commentary awaken pastors who still remain silent rather than speaking on the moral issues of today. Do you know that Scotland just became the first country in the world to mandate full LGBTQ curriculum be taught all children in all public schools? As salt, we must counter the deception with truth!

Thanks be to God for freedom found in Jesus who promised, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free... Therefore, if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed!" (John 8:32, 36).