

REVIEW: 'Heaven Is for Real' Shows Truth of God's Love

Based on a best-selling book of the same name, *Heaven Is for Real* tells the story of a 4-year-old named Colton who says he went to heaven during an operation where he was near death.

Wonderfully written by Chris Parker and directed by Randall Wallace, *Heaven Is for Real* is one of the most engaging, most inspiring Christian movies ever made. The acting, dialogue, cinematography and editing are first-class. Best of all, the movie shows the truth of God's love.

Colton is an adorable 4-year-old with a loving family, including his hard-working father, Todd (Greg Kinnear). Todd works as a garage door repair guy, volunteers as a fireman and is a pastor of a local church in a Nebraskan small town. His wife, Sonja (Kelly Reilly), leads the church's music department, but the two are barely scraping by on finances.

When Todd breaks his leg playing softball and has kidney stones, the couple gets into even more financial debt. Sonja suggests they take a road trip to relieve the pressure.

When the family returns, Colton gets very sick. For days, Colton is sick, and his temperature is extremely high. Todd and Sonja take him to the emergency room. Doctors have to operate on him immediately because his appendix has burst. While they operate, Colton's mother calls their friends, asking for immediate prayer. Meanwhile, Colton's father goes to the hospital chapel, where he angrily rails at God.

Happily, Colton survives the operation, though at one point he was near death. Everything starts to return to normal until Colton tells Todd that during his operation, he went to heaven and met Jesus. At first Todd is amused by the little boy's statements. Then he becomes perplexed and questions whether

Colton is telling the truth.

However, some of Colton's statements have the ring of truth. For example, he knew exactly what his mother and father were doing during his operation. Suddenly, Todd feels that he must share Colton's experience with other people, including his church congregation. This causes resentment and concern in the church, and even a rift between Todd and Sonja. What will happen next?

Heaven Is for Real is an extremely well-done faith-based movie. Though it's not absolutely perfect, it's one of the most captivating, inspiring movies of this or any other year. The dialogue is wonderful. Greg Kinnear does a superlative job as Todd Burpo. Also, little Connor Colum is absolutely amazing as Colton, the boy who went to heaven.

Randall Wallace (the writer of *Braveheart*, writer/director of *We Were Soldiers* and writer/director of *Secretariat*) does a brilliant job directing *Heaven Is for Real*. With this movie, he's clearly become one of the best directors working in Hollywood today. The cinematography in *Heaven Is for Real* is beautiful, and the editing is sharp. *Heaven Is for Real* is simply terrific in almost every way.

Of course, *Heaven Is for Real* has a very strong, positive Christian worldview. It honors Jesus Christ while, at the same time, showing that the Christian life won't always be perfect, that doubt often is part of faith and that each and every Christian must always grow in love.

Thus, *Heaven Is for Real* is an honest portrayal of Christian faith and its struggles with little or no ham-fisted preachiness. In the end, the movie shows that God is real, heaven is real, Jesus is real and God is love. As such, it challenges all of us, not just Christians, to go forth in faith and love. Bravo!

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