

Silent Faith In Hollywood

After winning five Emmys, writing, producing and directing  numerous big-budget films (including the blockbuster hit *Gridiron Gang*), LEE STANLEY has found that ministering in Hollywood is less about preaching the gospel and more about living a life modeled after Christ. He recently sat down with *Charisma's* Associate Editor Felicia Mann to share his thoughts on silently witnessing in Tinseltown.

CHARISMA: *You're a Christian and a filmmaker. Many would say the two can't coexist. How would you categorize yourself?*

Stanley: I'm a filmmaker who is a Christian. When I found Christ, my big thing was that I was going to change the world with my Christian films, and the Lord made it very clear: *You are a Christian who is a filmmaker and you are to make films for all of those that I died for.*

CHARISMA: *Do you inject your faith and beliefs in to your films?*

Stanley: In films that I do, I will not violate the principles and love of Jesus Christ if I have financial and total creative control. I don't want the principles that I have surrendered to be violated because somebody thinks it's going to be better at the box office.

CHARISMA: *From your unique perspective, what's the state of Christianity in Hollywood right now?*

Stanley: When Christians make Christian films, they're blatantly Christian. Before I knew Christ I was invited to a premiere of a new movie. This was 34 years ago; I knew nothing about Christ. I was excited to go to the premiere because it was the first one I was ever invited to.

It was an OK movie until about the last half of the last act,

and then it became what I would call a blatant “come to Jesus” movie. Not only did I feel embarrassed, I felt every eye in the theater was staring at you-know-who because somebody tipped people off that you-know-who wasn’t a believer. I felt betrayed, and frankly trapped. When I came to Christ, I remembered those things.

CHARISMA: *What would you tell those who are working in Hollywood who may feel alone in their faith and as if they have to fight by themselves?*

Stanley: Stop fighting. Care more about your fellow man than trying to show them what a wonderful Christian you are by your testimony. That repels people that don’t know Jesus Christ. Conduct yourself in a proper manner. Stop telling your own story. Sooner or later, if you stay strong in your principles, presentation, character, morals and ethics, the opportunity [to witness] will suddenly rise to the surface.

CHARISMA: *Do you have an example of this in your life?*



Stanley: This happened to me with Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, who starred in *Gridiron Gang*. One late evening—about 2 o’clock in the morning—we were filming. My assistant came up to me and she said, “Lee, The Rock ... has got a tremendous pain in his stomach.” So I went to Dwayne’s trailer. I said, “I’ve got one thing to offer you, Dwayne. I believe in prayer. I’m a born-again Christian.” Dwayne jumped out of his chair, grabbed my hand, and we prayed together in the name of Jesus.

A few minutes later, he felt well enough to come out and be on set and do his stuff. I couldn’t have done that if I had conducted myself in any way that violated the principles that Christians talk about.

CHARISMA: *You’ve won numerous awards in Hollywood and attribute them to God’s grace. How else have you seen God move in your career?*

Stanley: The first project that God ever put on my heart was *Desperate Passage*. The Lord impressed upon me years ago that I was going to make a film where I took violent juvenile offenders out of a maximum-security prison and that I'd take them seaboard on my sailboat and make a film that would impact the nation. Of course, what He didn't tell me was that everything He put on my heart was against the law!

It took us four years to get that court order [so I could film the young men]. It happened, and that's the miracle. The court order said I had no restrictions. We went to sea for 10 days to make the film.

Emmy Awards time, we were nominated for four Emmys and we won two. God kept His promise. It's by God's grace, by God's favor and by God's anointing that we pulled that off.