

Sorbo Keeps Rolling in Faith-Based Film Movement

Kevin Sorbo never stops.

The actor known to most as *Hercules*, the world's most-watched TV show, is seemingly everywhere these days.

He's appeared in more than 30 movies and TV series in the past five years, including the 2011 hit *Soul Surfer*.

This past fall he released his memoir, *True Strength*, where he talks about suffering from three secret strokes and an aneurysm in September 1997.

He is also nominated for a Grace Award at Movie Guide's 20th Annual Faith & Value Awards on Feb. 10, while *Soul Surfer* is being honored as one of the 10 Best Films for Family Audiences.

But Sorbo isn't about to slow down. Not hardly.

The 53-year-old keeps cranking out movies, with at least 10 currently in the postproduction, filming or development stages, including several in the faith-based genre.

After playing a lead role in the Christian film *What If* with John Ratzenberger in 2010, and then saving the Bethany Hamilton character's life after a shark bite in last year's *Soul Surfer*, Sorbo has filmed starring roles in yet-to-be-released faith-based features *Abel's Field* and *The Persecuted*.

Playing a character loosely based on Billy Graham, Sorbo takes on the role of an evangelist-turned-fugitive as a man suffering for his faith in *The Persecuted*, a rare Christian suspense/thriller.

His emergence in faith films, however, is no coincidence.

Sorbo is a committed Christian, who looks for ways to impact others for Christ through his acting abilities.

His personal walk started as a young teen.

1973 Minneapolis/St. Paul Crusade

It's been nearly four decades since that night in the Twin Cities, but Kevin Sorbo can quickly recall many details.

"It was a full moon that night, I remember it vividly," Sorbo said. "There must have been 50,000 or 60,000 or maybe 100,000 people."

Sorbo, who grew up in nearby Mound, Minn., home of the Tonka trucks, was in seventh grade when he first heard Rev. Billy Graham preach live at a Crusade.

Graham's preaching impacted the young teen.

"When he said 'If you would like to come up (to receive Christ), we have people who can talk to you,' a buddy of mine and I went up," Sorbo recalls. "We prayed and we talked. It was a very significant time in my life."

Growing up in what he called "a very religious household," Sorbo had been struggling with what a relationship with God looked like.

"We had a very fire-and-brimstone pastor," Sorbo said. "I was about 12 when I asked my mom one time on the way home 'Is God angry with us?'"

"He made it sound like if you breathe you'll go to hell. But when you look at the New Testament, at His Son Jesus, He was a much mellower guy."

Sorbo will be the first to admit he's become more mellow and found greater compassion after his 1997 health scare and the grueling three-year recovery. His journey has also led him to a more intimate prayer life, regardless of his circumstances.

"It doesn't really matter how you talk to God as long as you're honest with Him," Sorbo said. "In my own prayers, there are days I get on my knees and there are other days I talk to him in my car."

For Sorbo, it's about a relationship, not a ritual.

"I don't think you have to fold your hands," he said. "I think there's a nice ceremony with that and I do that as well, but just talk to Him."

"You can be in a supermarket and trying to decide what bacon to get and something pops in your mind and you say 'God, I really want you to help my friend Mark.' It's a prayer if it comes from your heart."

Abel's Field

In a tiny town called Thrall, Texas, where the only place to buy groceries is "The Store," which is really just a glorified gas station convenience shop, the director of *Abel's Field* found the ideal location for his high school football-based movie.

He also found the ideal lead actor. Sorbo plays the role of Abel, a groundskeeper with a sordid past who becomes a mentor and finds redemption.

"*Abel's Field* is actually two stories," Sorbo said. "Abel is a guy who's had a tormented life and been on the road, basically from town to town."

"The other part of the story is the story of Seth, whose mother has died of cancer, his father has disappeared and he has to work two jobs to take care of his twin sisters."

The uplifting script caught Sorbo's attention for its inspirational message, something that's often missing in Hollywood.

Particularly appealing was Abel's story of redemption.

"I think, for Abel's character, he just stumbled upon a church one day and he started to listen to the music. The doors were open on a hot summer day and he slowly worked his way in," Sorbo said. "He was probably totally afraid to walk through the door, but once those doors were open for him, he did find God."

The mentoring facet of *Abel's Field* is something that's near to Sorbo's heart. His after-school program, A World Fit For Kids, has helped achieve a 94 percent graduation rate in a Los Angeles area that averages 49 percent.

"It's a mentoring story," Sorbo said of the *Abel's Field* plot, "but it's interesting—you would think Abel would be the mentor to Seth, but he's just as equally a mentor to me. And we both sort of find redemption through this friendship."

While still unconfirmed, *Abel's Field* is looking at a fall 2012 release date.

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