

TD Jakes: I Had a Scare Last Week With My Daughter

Bishop T.D. Jakes, pastor of the Dallas megachurch The Potter's House and author of best-selling books Woman, Thou Art Loosed and From the Cross to Pentecost, once again steps behind the camera as a co-producer of Miracles From Heaven, releasing this week from Columbia Pictures. During a recent press junket, he explained what drew him to the true story.

You deal with miracles all the time. What was so special about this story?

What's really great about it is it involves a child. Something that can we can all love. I'm looking for common ground to which people of all walks of life can come in and connect. And children are the touchpoint. Number two, it's a true story, and it's a story that happened virtually in my neighborhood. I thought it was a great, heartwarming story during the Easter season that families can have something go out and have something to do together and help celebrate the resurrection of the Lord.

When you saw the script, it was something that connected with you?

Yes, to be honest with you, we (he and co-producer DeVon Franklin) were looking for another story after *Heaven Is for Real*. Clearly, we had touched a nerve in the community and we wanted to feed that pipeline with positive content. Then we happened upon this story. We both had the same literary agent. When Jan started talking to us about this story, Sony bought into it and said, "Yes, we want to be a part of it." So we put together a deal, because we thought it was a story that America needed to see. It really, really is. I think it's going to be very inspirational, because whether you are a

theological whiz kid or you've never picked up a Bible in your life, you still love your kids and you still want to hold your family together. You still have moments in your life that you don't know what to do. This is about all of that and so much more.

What sets this apart from other films?

This is a meeting place of doubt and faith, of generational consequence. This is a meeting space that is unique because it brings together black viewers and brown viewers and white viewers, and we all sit down at the table of common family crisis. The cast is diverse, but what is universal is the love. I think that the viewing audience for this film will be as diverse as the cast and I think that it will have the same affect because we all have the common need to know our kids are OK. I had a scare last week with my daughter. She's grown, but she's still my baby. I flew out to California. You never lose that parental responsibility. I think our country needs to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. I realize that this is a very daunting task, but I think that film can in some ways can bring people together in some ways that politics and other things will not be able to do. This is that type of film. Your family, your kids can watch it. Parents can watch it. Generations can watch it. Black, white, brown can watch it because there's not a person on this planet who's normal who doesn't want their child to be well. So we relate to each other. When we begin to notice what all we have in common rather than what divides us, I think we'll be more united.

You talked about your 40-year ministry from a small church in West Virginia to The Potter's House. Now you're embracing new forms of communication. So where did you first start thinking in terms of broadening your ministry from Sunday morning sermons?

When I got to Dallas, I realized the problems in my city were

not going to be preached right, that it wasn't just about getting people to the altar, but they had to have a job when it was over. The problems were way more comprehensive than just accepting Christ and everything is going to be all right. As a believer, I have to become engaged with my community. I have to be connected in tangible ways that will really make a difference. Sometimes that's giving people a job. Sometimes that's giving people a voice to express themselves. The diverse interest has grown as I have grown. But it's as simple as the fact that Jesus preached in the synagogues, but He still told parables. If parables were done in contemporary society, they'd be movies. He did movies with a message to express truths that didn't fit within the context of a sermon. So I'm really just duplicating an old idea.

Did this story strengthen your faith and relationship with God?

It really did strengthen it, because it reminded me that miracles sometimes drape themselves in ordinary situations. That's it's not always the splitting of the Red Sea, but sometimes it's the person who lets you get a ticket when the seats were oversold. Sometimes it's the little things you overlook from day to day that really are great miracles in your life. I don't know if it enhanced my walk with God as much as it removed the scales that cover my eyes sometimes to behold that God is there even when he lets me get through the traffic to get to the airport on time, to help you get through life. Little simple things like that. In that way, it practicalized faith. It made faith relative to ordinary people without looming over my head as if bread was going to fall from heaven. It brought it down to earth for me.

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