

The Behind-the-Scenes Faith That Inspired 'Unbroken'

On Christmas Day 2014 moviegoers around the nation watched the extraordinary yet true story of Olympian and war hero Louis "Louie" Zamperini in *Unbroken*. The film, directed and produced by Academy Award winner Angelina Jolie, is adapted from the best-selling book by Laura Hillenbrand. But it's the story of Zamperini's faith in God that is inspiring many believers even more.

In a recent interview with *Charisma*, Zamperini's son and frequent companion, Luke, reflected on his father, who passed away on July 2, 2014, at age 97. "It's just been fantastic sharing his story. I've seen the effect it has on people," Luke said. "He was a wonderful dad and a good friend."

The young son of Italian immigrants, Louie Zamperini (played by British actor Jack O'Connell in the film) discovered his passion for track and field while growing up in California in the 1920s. He became one of the fastest runners in the world and left his mark on the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. This should have been his warm-up for the 1940 Olympics, but those games were canceled due to World War II.

While serving his country in the Army Air Corps, Zamperini's plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean. He survived, drifting on a raft for 47 days before being captured and imprisoned by the Japanese navy. As a prisoner of war, Zamperini endured unimaginable cruelty, and the horrifying memories of his experience followed him home.

He turned to the bottle for relief and, with his marriage falling apart, might have unraveled completely, but he instead found faith in Christ at one of Billy Graham's evangelistic crusades. With this came personal freedom, restoration of his

marriage and the courage to not only face his captors but truly forgive them. Beginning in 1950, Zamperini visited many of them who were in prison for war crimes, embraced them with forgiveness and shared the love of Jesus with them (many gave their lives to Christ).

Today Luke Zamperini understands why his father's story has such tremendous power to move an audience. "It's about the indomitable human spirit, coupled with the power of God. It can change lives."