

'The Best Christmas Pageant Ever': Dallas Jenkins Brings Faith-Filled Film to the Big Screen

Filmmaker Dallas Jenkins is known for bringing the pages of scripture to the screen in the popular hit series "The Chosen." Now he's bringing another book to the big screen from the beloved 1971 children's novel called "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever."

In the film, six siblings get into all types of trouble including hijacking the town's Christmas Pageant. They soon end up in leading roles. Jenkins reminisced with CBN News about the journey to seeing this book become a big-screen adventure.

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"About 20 years ago, my wife brought the book home and I had read it as a kid in my public school. I remember I'd seen a TV movie in the early 80s, but I didn't remember a whole lot about it. I was reading it to my kids and I'm laughing and I'm noticing all these wonderful little moments and I'm like, boy, this is so good. By the end, I'm crying so hard I can't read. And my wife grabbed the book. She's like, all right, let me do it. And so, she starts reading to the kids and she starts crying. She can't get through it. So, I take the book back and we would just exchange the book while the other one recovered," he told CBN News.

"That became our Christmas tradition, reading the book to the kids and them making fun of us for crying the whole time,

while also loving the story themselves. So, when I finished the book, I just said, I have to make this movie, and I've chased the rights for 20 years. The rights have been with other studios and other directors off and on, and I was just hoping God would preserve it for me and not let it get made. Finally, a few years ago, but because of 'The Chosen,' actually the rights holders said, all right, we're ready for you to do this, and we think you're the right guy," he continued.

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Jenkins had a unique approach to casting the six siblings in the film.

"The casting of the Herdman kids. They're the worst kids in the history of the world. They're on the outside, they're in poverty. They do a lot of hijinks, but then of course, you have to find kids who can. I think it's easier sometimes for kids to perform some of those parts, the humor, the toughness. It's hard when the show gets more emotional and to find that heart. And so that was a big part of the casting process. It took us a long time. We went through hours and hours and hours of auditions because to find those kids at that age who can pull off both comedy and drama, it's extraordinarily rare. And we just got very fortunate. I mean, I think we got to the place where the choices weren't actually difficult because the kids had emerged so good that I think God brought them to us and said, these are the people that I want to portray," he told CBN News.

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