

‘This Is Us’ Star Chrissy Metz Talks ‘Breakthrough,’ Modern Miracles and Leaning Into Faith

Chrissy Metz, the Emmy and Golden Globe nominated actress for the NBC show *This Is Us*, is the star of the new faith-based film *Breakthrough*, releasing this week from 20th Century Fox. Metz plays Joyce Smith, a mother whose son drowned in a lake and calls upon her faith in God to bring him back to life.

In this interview, Metz explains what drew her to the story and the emotional journey she experienced during filming.

Your show *This Is Us* is uplifting, as this film is as well. Is that what drew you to it?

Yes. For me it's always about the intention behind the project. To me, I feel good about something that I want to do. I don't like the scary stuff because I don't want to be in that mindset every single day. I want to do something uplifting. It's going to change people's hearts and their minds. Also, my mom went through a medical emergency about eight months ago. I said some of the same words that Joyce said to her own doctors, to John's doctors. So, I was like, "My goodness, I can relate to this situation in ways that I didn't think that I'd ever have an opportunity to of course use in a creative setting and then tell a true miraculous story is like, wow. It's amazing."

How did you react when you read the script? What were your thoughts on it?

I was so taken aback by this woman who stayed so strong in her faith. She leaned more into her faith and into God, and that

was just something that you must do, because at some point you have to just relinquish the control. I think that was so powerful because there is an actual change. A rise and a fall and then of course the climax of her whole journey. Even her own husband couldn't face their son. She had to go through all of that on her own, pull from her faith. At some point, we all have to do that. I have been down and out; I was like, *I don't think I'm ever going to be an actress, there's nothing going to happen for me*, so I can understand feeling alone and feeling like you aren't supported. Obviously, not to that degree, but knowing that you've got to lean into the faith of what is in store for you. This was something she prayed for and, by the grace of God, it was the outcome that everybody wanted. There was a purpose for John's life. That is so amazing. "Amazing" doesn't even cut it. It's not really a word to explain it. I just thought, *Wow. This is something I would love to be a part of. I'll be an extra, I want to be part, somehow, some small way*. Then I was fortunate enough to take on the role.

What's a scene that you've already filmed so far that was the most difficult, maybe because it was the most emotionally wrenching?

The scene we shot with me praying like Joyce prayed over John and asked the Holy Spirit to bring him back to life. That was really challenging. It was heart-wrenching. There are things in life you don't want to believe, you don't want to accept, but you also want to believe in a miracle, but you're devastated. There are floods of emotions, and you're just sort of trying to figure out the layers. I think on a cellular level, our bodies don't know the difference in real and pretend so I'd have to tell myself, "This isn't really happening." I had to sort of adjust, and that was emotionally draining. At the end of the day, I was like, "I'm exhausted." So, it was a challenge in that way. It was so important. It was like this turning point in the movie, and we want it to be

epic. To tell the true story of Joyce's faith and her love for her son.

How has it been working with (producer) DeVon Franklin?

He is so supportive and complimentary. So much energy and excitement and zest for telling this incredible story. The fact that it was sort of his idea for Joyce to write the book. Then to bring it to the masses. You definitely feel that energy all the time. That's just who he is. I don't know how he does it, by the grace of God, because I'm overwhelmed with keeping a plant alive. It's just innately that faith that he has and that just comes from within and it's exciting. It's exciting to be around him. It's been really fun.

Has seeing Mandy Moore playing your mom on the television show shaped your role in this film?

Yeah, and that is a role I have yet to play is a mom and, of course, a mom in a crisis. I think I'm nurturing in ways that a mother would be, I taught preschool and have a big family. It's sort of feels right. I try to turn toward what feels normal. {eo}

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