

Why Christians Should Support 'Unbroken'

When Angelina Jolie's new Louis Zamperini biographical movie *Unbroken* releases on Christmas Day, anybody familiar with Laura Hillenbrand's riveting book of the Olympic runner, POW survivor, turned Christian evangelist and inspirational speaker will notice that Zamperini's conversion to Christianity is mentioned after the climax in a closing title.

As told in Hillenbrand's book, Zamperini survived the war, married Cynthia Applewhite, but was constantly haunted with nightmares from his time in the prison camp. Falling into alcoholism, his marriage was on the verge of ending, until his wife became a born-again Christian at a Billy Graham crusade. Through her prodding, she convinced Louis to attend the crusade where an internal struggle eventually broke him and brought him to his knees at the cross of Christ. Through his relationship with Christ, he was able to forgive his captors and tormentors.

If Louis' journey isn't enough to move a person, his conversion is the proverbial icing on the cake.

So why did the filmmakers only include it at the very end in a closing title, and even more importantly, should Christians accept or reject the movie? Before we answer this, there are a few things to consider.

Impossible Expectations

The truth is, the movie will not and could never live up to Zamperini's actual life story. To ask this of a filmmaker is to set oneself up for disappointment. *Unbroken* the movie is merely a snippet of Zamperini's life, focusing on his incredible drive to survive fueled by a family who loved and believed he could do more. The movie doesn't and shouldn't

replace his story, but it does put a spotlight on Zamperini and gives his story and message exposure to millions who haven't heard it.

Time Constraints

The most obvious answer to why they didn't include his later conversion is time constraints. To keep the movie under three hours means condensing the story into the best three-act structure possible while keeping the integrity and message the same. Additionally, an epic story like this can diminish the emotional impact if you have multiple plot endings. Finally, his conversion isn't the only important aspect missing from the movie. His 55-year marriage to Cynthia and their respective family isn't covered at all in *Unbroken*. It's not that the screenwriters and director didn't consider this worthy. There's only so much time to tell a compelling story in one movie. You could make multiple movies on Louis's life, and you'd still only be scratching the surface.

***Unbroken* Doesn't Ignore Faith**

There have been ridiculous accusations that *Unbroken* ignores the Christian faith. This is completely false!

In the movie, a priest says that Jesus Christ died on the cross to forgive, preaches love your enemy, Louis promises to serve God if he survives, his mother prays for Louis, and a Christian soldier also prays. Thus, Christian faith is definitely present in the movie. Also, after the final image, the movie's closing titles say that Louis gave his life toward God, and he credits this to giving him the strength to forgive his captors.

Take a minute to reflect on this. A major Hollywood production that likely millions of people worldwide will see ends with the powerful message of forgiveness, and not just any type of forgiveness, but forgiveness because of God.

This alone should make us rejoice and praise God!

The Zamperini Family

Lastly, Louis, his children and grandchildren fully embraced Angelina Jolie, the cast and the other filmmakers helping the project. Jolie and Louis (who were actually neighbors) became very close leading up to his passing on July 2, and it was no secret that Louis was very fond of the director who'd be bringing his story to the big screen. She even brought the movie to Louis' hospital, and he was able to watch it in his hospital bed before he passed.

MOVIEGUIDE® had the pleasure of screening the movie early with some of the Zamperini children and grandchildren, and they seemed nothing but supportive of the movie as they hugged and congratulated Angelina Jolie after the screening. If the movie really ignored his faith, Louis and his family would have been the first ones to object.

Unbroken is a beautiful and inspiring movie. Could it have had a stronger Christian message? Of course! However, if we focus on everything the movie doesn't include, we might completely miss the movie's positive, uplifting, inspiring themes.

Thus, *Unbroken* extols fighting for liberty amid injustice, refusing to compromise one's values, perseverance, holding onto hope when there seems to be no hope, committing yourself to God, prayer, and forgiving those who persecute you because Christ first forgave you.

Unbroken is certainly one of the better movies you will find at your local movie theater this Christmas.