

Why 'War Room' Is a Must-See Movie

I'm not a big fan of Christian movies, mainly because low budgets often result in bad acting and cheesy scripts that make even the most gracious churchgoers cringe in embarrassment. But today Hollywood insiders are admitting that the quality of Christian filmmaking is improving—and the newly released *War Room* is likely to take the genre to a new level.

Don't expect your typical nose-in-the-air film critics to give *War Room* good reviews. Its faith message is not subtle. People actually pray—out loud!—on screen, and the name of Jesus is mentioned numerous times. One of the main characters gets on his knees and asks God for forgiveness, while another walks out on her back porch and commands the devil to go to hell.

If all that religion isn't enough to drive the Hollywood elite crazy, the actors in this film talk with thick Southern accents. Even popular Bible teacher Beth Moore shows off her Texas drawl in a cameo role.

The reason for the Southern flair is that *War Room* was created by Alex and Stephen Kendrick, Baptist brothers from Georgia who gave us *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof* and *Courageous*. Those films were panned by Hollywood, but their financial success made a few leaders in the movie business curious. They discovered that evangelical Christians have an appetite for wholesome entertainment that reinforces their beliefs. That's why *Fireproof* was the top-grossing independent film of 2008—and why *War Room* ended up with a stunning \$11.4 million last weekend when it opened in theaters.

I won't be surprised if *War Room* breaks all previous records for the Kendrick Brothers. They have outdone themselves with this one. You need to see it. In fact, you should take your

friends and see it as a group.

The story revolves around a middle-class couple struggling in their marriage. Elizabeth Jordan (Priscilla Shirer) is a real-estate agent who is mad at her busy husband, Tony (T.C. Stallings), because he's stressed out and angry at her most of the time. When Elizabeth takes on the job of selling the house of an elderly woman named Miss Clara (Karen Abercrombie), she begins a remarkable spiritual journey that transforms her family.

War Room gets its title from the small closet Miss Clara uses for prayer. She challenges Elizabeth to let go of her anger, submit fully to God and begin her own prayer life. "You are a warrior," she tells her young friend. Elizabeth reluctantly cleans out the walk-in closet in her bedroom and begins to fight for her marriage—at the same time that her husband is considering having an affair. By the end of the film, Miss Clara has not only mentored Elizabeth in prayer; she has also taught all of us why we need to go to war on our knees.

I don't know of any film that portrays the power of prayer like *War Room*. Abercrombie (who has appeared in numerous TV shows including *Alley McBeal* and *Judging Amy*) steals the show as Miss Clara, but Priscilla Shirer, who is the daughter of Dallas pastor Tony Evans, brings unexpected acting talent to the screen—especially in the scene when she decides she won't let the devil have her family or her marriage.

This movie is unabashedly Christian and might as well be rated P-I for politically incorrect. There is no profanity (Miss Clara does declare in one scene that the devil's butt has been kicked) and no sex—although a woman Tony meets at work invites him to her apartment. And the only violence occurs when a man wielding a knife confronts Elizabeth and Miss Clara. You guessed it—the old lady rebukes her attacker in the name of Jesus.

Miss Clara's bold approach to faith is what I liked most about *War Room*. This brave saint doesn't care what anybody thinks—she is going to pray whether you like it or not. She gets in Elizabeth's face and confronts her bad attitudes, and she gets in the devil's face and commands him to stop destroying Elizabeth's marriage. By the end of the film she's kneeling in her new prayer room in her son's house, praying up a storm for America.

This is exactly why director Alex Kendrick says he made *War Room*. He told *Entertainment Weekly*: "This movie calls people to make prayer a priority, and we believe that it's something our culture and our nation really needs – to turn back to God and to seek him in prayer."

War Room may do more than shatter box office records. It could actually inspire a fresh movement of prayer in our prayerless nation.

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