

Will Smith: My Grandmother Was My Connection to God

Football over the last century has come to define everything America: teamwork, pride, strength and community. Even so, football is one of the most dangerous sports in the world, considering the 1,300 broken bones, pulled muscles and traumatizing head injuries players suffer from each season. It begs a pathologist from Nigeria to make America question, "Did God intend for man to play football?"

This certain pathologist, named Dr. Bennet Omalu, came into America to continue his doctoral profession as a U.S. citizen. While working on a clinically ill former league player named Mike Webster, he discovered a terrifying disease known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE. This triggered his ambition to persuade the NFL to provide players with further protection.

This last Christmas Day premiered *Concussion*, a retelling of the groundbreaking discovery as directed by Peter Landesman and starred by Will Smith. The movie follows Dr. Omalu's story rather faithfully, with the greatest impact made by the career-defining performance by Mr. Smith.

While being interviewed by *ChristianPost*, Smith said how his grandmother left the greatest influence onto his portrayal and that she "was really my connection to God. ... She was my spiritual teacher, she was that grandmother at the church, the one having the children doing the Easter presentations and putting on the Christmas plays and her children and grandchildren had to be first. She was the most spiritually certain person that I had ever met in my entire life. Even to the point that when she was dying she was happy, like she was really excited about going to heaven."

Smith even got the chance to work with Dr. Omalu himself. The pathologist later spoke to *ChristianPost* about his experience working with Smith, recalling that, "The spiritual stuff is deep. We met, we shared and we communed the love of God, and he also saw the light. The Spirit of God also touched him."

Director Peter Landesman made sure Omalu's Christian faith transpires throughout the film, shining a spiritual light in two places where it seems to be totally absent: the NFL office and the research lab. Very rarely does a scientist single-handedly use his scientific knowledge to state a claim for Christ. It also rarely happens for a man of faith, or any individual, to stand up on his own against a growing corporation as monstrous as the NFL.

Yet, like several people called to service, Omalu also admitted to *ChristianPost* that he was the "wrong person" to discover the issue. He even humbled himself further by naming himself the "vessel used by God to help others understand the dangers of CTE." He "did not want the credit but had to share the truth."

Here, Dr. Omalu demonstrates the unthinkable awesomeness of God, who uses the most unwilling and improbable people to leave the greatest impression upon the world. Omalu continued, "Sometimes people think that being American or being a scientist are diametrically opposed to being a Christian. No! Because science [and] America are all founded upon the truth, our faith seeks the truth. So there's a commonality, there's a common goal. Our faith as Christians synergizes with our ethnicity as Americans and our practice as professional scientist. That is why it is being released on Christmas Day. What could be better than that?"

Concussion addresses difficult realities that should trigger some thoughtful discussion. However, Omalu's life as depicted in the movie focuses less on which argument is correct, and more on the incredible man who embraced his God-given skills

and passions. Omalu's discoveries will influence this current generation as well as many generations to come.

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