

The Religious Freedom Battles So Subtle You Probably Missed Them

Former presidential candidate and governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee appears in the upcoming film God's Not Dead 2 as a political commentator. The film, which focuses on religious liberty, also stars Melissa Joan Hart, Jesse Metcalfe, David A. R. White, Pat Boone, Ray Wise and Robin Givens.

In an exclusive interview, Gov. Huckabee recently commented on why the subject is so important today, the state of the faith-based film industry and his predictions about the presidential race. This is part 1 of a two-part series.

This movie comes at an important time, where everything is talking about religious liberty. Can you tell us why it's such an important subject?

I do think that religious liberty is an issue of great importance. We're seeing people lose their basic fundamental rights. A good example of that is we've seen people who are bakers and wedding chapel operators and caterers and all sorts of people who have been literally put out of business because they believe the same thing about marriage that Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton claimed to believe just four years ago. It's just remarkable that we're living in such a time that people are essentially being criminalized for their faith. Sometimes it's subtle. It's like the Frisco school district just outside of Dallas. They were ordering kids not to wear red and green in their clothing in the month of December because it might cause somebody to think about Christmas and that might make them think about Jesus. It's that kind of nutty stuff that's remarkable.

Did you tape your scenes separately or did you have

interactions with the cast?

No, it was all taped separately. Just that scene was done on a soundstage, so the only people that were there were those who were in that particular scene with me.

We've seen a lot of lot of faith-based films lately that have hit the big screen, some from Christian companies and some from mainstream companies. What are your thoughts on the booming faith-based film industry?

It's one of the most positive developments that we've seen. Hollywood has consistently offended the Christian community, and it has gotten incredibly worse. So Christian filmmakers have decided that there are people who want to go to movies but they don't want to take their families to have something that undermines every value that they hold. I think the most positive development is that the quality of films themselves has risen to a new level. Films like *God's Not Dead 1* and *2*, *Woodlawn*, many other Christian films that are coming out. (In the past), the quality (of religious films) was cheap and cheesy but you kind of forgave the production because you embraced the message. But a secular world is not going to embrace that poor quality. I think that's one of the things that's been most positive, a very strong quality that's been put into the films and the script, using top-notch professional actors, really making a film that's competitive with anything else on the big screen.

Do you have any future aspirations to appear in more movies or is this a one-off thing?

I would love to. I don't know if the opportunity would surface again, but if it did, I would jump at it. It would be a great thrill for me.

You had a lot of people supporting you on the presidential campaign and you ran a good campaign. I appreciated your voice in the process.

I appreciate that. It obviously didn't end as I had hoped, but that's part of the process. There's a huge risk when you run. You just don't know how things are going to shake out and I don't think anybody accurately predicted where this election year was going.

Steve Strang was an early and very big Mike Huckabee fan.

He really was. He was a terrific supporter and just a great guy. Very helpful and a real blessing.

Part two will be available tomorrow.