

Drop Everything and Go See 'Jesus Revolution'

There's a scene halfway through the new film "Jesus Revolution" in which Greg Laurie, a fatherless teenager who's been searching for life's meaning through drugs and Janis Joplin concerts, is baptized in the Pacific Ocean by a hippie preacher named Lonnie Frisbee. Before Lonnie dunks Greg in the water, he leads Greg in a salvation prayer.

It's the only time I've heard someone pray those words on the big screen. When Greg comes up out of the water, Lonnie asks him: "How do you feel?" Looking stunned, Greg replies: "Alive." As the camera pans the crowd gathered in that spot near Newport Beach, California, we realize that hundreds of young people are making the same decision Greg did.

This really happened. "Jesus Revolution" isn't fiction. Thousands of aimless teens and 20-somethings embraced Christianity during an era that was marked by racial violence and the Vietnam War. It was known as the Jesus Movement.

"Jesus Revolution" is a two-hour snapshot of that revival. It focuses on the true story of Chuck Smith, a pastor (played by Kelsey Grammer) who opens his struggling church to welcome an influx of bare-footed young people who are leaving their acid, LSD and free sex to embrace Christian faith. Toward the end of the movie, we learn that Time magazine devoted a cover story to the Jesus Movement in 1971.

I'm not surprised that "Jesus Revolution" is a hit. It offers a mega-dose of hope at a time when we are drowning in negativity. The film surprised Hollywood by raking in a bigger-than-predicted haul of \$15.5 million on opening weekend, and fans gave it a rare A+ rating on CinemaScore.

It's entertaining and inspiring (it made me cry at least three

times!)), but it also offers some prophetic warnings for those of us who are praying for a similar spiritual revival to shake our generation. It was no coincidence that the film hit theaters exactly two weeks after the Asbury Revival erupted among college students in Kentucky. I believe God is saying to us: "I will do it again."

If we are going to experience another Jesus Movement, then it would help to learn all we can from what happened five decades ago in California. I took some notes during my first and second viewings of "Jesus Revolution," and I found these leadership lessons:

1. Don't let revival critics stop you from obeying God. When Chuck Smith opened his church to Lonnie Frisbee (played by Jonathan Roumie of "The Chosen" TV series), Pharisees came out of the woodwork. Religious critics will always try to stop revival. Smith had to choose between the needs of broken and abused youth and hard-hearted Christians who cared more about keeping their church's carpet clean.

I was shocked to hear so many mean-spirited comments from religious people when the Asbury Revival began in February of this year. Armchair critics were ready to pounce on those meetings just because they didn't approve of the worship style, the raised hands or the sight of young Christians on the floor repenting. They sound like Chuck Smith's critics in 1968! Smith not only opened his church doors to hippies, but he had to show some religious hypocrites the exit.

2. Working with young leaders always requires risk. "Jesus Revolution" is a feel-good movie, but it has some sad parts. Frisbee was an anointed preacher who spoke the language of his generation, but in the end he imploded because of spiritual pride and his own deep human flaws. I'm so glad the directors of the film didn't whitewash that part of the story. Smith was willing to give Frisbee his pulpit, but in the end he had to correct him—and he watched this gifted man backslide.

Thankfully, Smith also had young leaders like Greg Laurie (played by Joel Courtney), and the pastor eventually gave Laurie the chance to lead one of his Calvary Chapel congregations. Laurie eventually become one of America's best-known evangelists—proving that it's always worth it to give your disciples a chance to lead. When Laurie tells Smith, "I can't do what you do," the pastor replies: "No, you'll do it better." I pray older leaders today can be as affirming.

✖ **3. Spiritual gifting must be grounded in strong character.**

In one painful scene, Frisbee feels compelled to pray for healing for people in the audience, and Smith has to sit him down because he realizes that all the attention is going to Frisbee's head. The young evangelist couldn't handle Smith's correction, so he ends up leaving the revival he helped start. It's a scary reminder that spiritual gifts can turn people into monsters if they don't stay humble.

I'm convinced we are on the verge of another Jesus Movement, and many Lonnie Frisbees and Greg Lauries will emerge during this season. My prayer is that we will have the same grace that was on Chuck Smith to steward revival carefully. Let's take the risks, speak the correction needed, and have the sense to stay out of God's way when He moves.

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