

The Critics Hate 'Reagan'—I Promise It Will Inspire You

Midway through the new movie "Reagan," there's a scene in which Christian entertainer Pat Boone and evangelist George Otis Sr. visit Ronald Reagan when he's running for reelection for governor of California. As the men stand outside the governor's mansion in Sacramento, Otis gives a prophetic message from God to Reagan: "If you walk uprightly before Me, you will reside at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue."

That scene wasn't fabricated. It really happened. One eyewitness of that moment, author Bob Slosser, said charismatic preacher Harold Bredeson was also with Otis and Boone when they prayed for Reagan that day in 1970. Otis recalled that after he gave Reagan the prophecy, Reagan simply looked up from the prayer circle and said, "Well"—as if he were filing away the profound words in his heart for a later time.

Otis' prophecy was fulfilled in 1980. Ronald Reagan became the 40th president of the United States, and he is remembered most for courageously confronting communism and helping to dismantle the Soviet Union.

Nobody is surprised that critics don't like "Reagan." But while elitist film reviewers gave it low ratings, audiences gave it a 98% score on Rotten Tomatoes. "Reagan" also earned an A from audiences on CinemaScore, and 4 1/2 stars on PostTrak.

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Critics today wouldn't dare give four stars to any movie that has wholesome values or that portrays Christianity in a positive light. But "Reagan" was doubly doomed by critics even

before it was screened because several actors in the film—including Dennis Quaid, who plays Reagan like he was born for the role—have publicly endorsed the Republican ticket in the 2024 election.

In this case, I say ignore the critics. I loved this film—not only because Reagan is my all-time favorite president, but because politically incorrect director Sean McNamara (who also directed the faith-based film “Soul Surfer”) unashamedly made Reagan’s Christian faith a central theme.

The film depicts Reagan’s childhood, his years as a 1940s Hollywood star, his efforts to stop communists from infiltrating the film industry, his marriage to actress Jane Wyman (played by Mena Suvari), his second marriage to Nancy Davis (Penelope Anne Miller), his ups and downs in California politics, his eight years in the White House and his twilight years back home at his ranch in Santa Barbara, where he suffered from dementia until his death in 2004.

Much of the story is narrated by a Russian observer, Viktor Petrovich (Jon Voight), who is fascinated by the idea that God was on Reagan’s side during the Cold War years. While the Petrovich character is a composite of several Russians who observed Reagan’s tough diplomacy from a distance, he reminds us that Soviet communists struggled to understand what made Reagan so successful.

The movie is not revisionist history. Ronald Reagan did in fact grow up with a Christian mother who instilled faith and character in him from his earliest years in small-town Illinois, just as the film portrays. Reagan was in fact baptized while attending the First Christian Church in Dixon, Illinois. He did in fact read a Christian book at age 11 called “The Printer of Udell’s,” written by a Christian minister; the book shaped the course of Reagan’s life.

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A Christian preacher did in fact prophesy in 1970 that Reagan would become president. And when Reagan was almost assassinated in front of the Washington Hilton on March 30, 1981, just months after his landslide election victory, he really did rededicate his life to God. He wrote in his journal after the bullet went into his side: "Whatever happens now I owe my life to God and will try to serve Him in every way I can."

We all know Reagan wasn't perfect, and the film shows plenty of his rough edges—including his failed first marriage and his bungling of the Iran-Contra affair during his second term. But "Reagan" focuses on this remarkable man's courage in the face of the threat of communism. It seems that the remarkable actor turned politician was destined to hurl the rock that brought down the Goliath of Soviet tyranny.

Critics are whining that "Reagan" is too positive, too patriotic and too inspirational. They say the film should have been more critical of the former president's flaws. I disagree. America could use a big jolt of inspiration right now to save us from an epidemic of cynicism.

"Reagan" inspired me in several ways. I realized that when our nation faced one of its most formidable challenges, God raised up a humble yet bold man to lead us. I saw that God spent years preparing Ronald Reagan for his difficult task, and He even sent Spirit-filled ministers to pray for him ahead of time. And I was reminded how desperately we need leaders today who carry the authentic fire of freedom in their hearts.

"Reagan," in theaters now, is rated PG-13 for smoking and violent content (including some blurry images of the Reagan assassination attempt).

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