

Movie on importance of fatherhood wows at box office



“There is an opportunity for fathers to step up in our culture and take more of a spiritual role and to affirm and love their kids and to prepare them for what should be a Godly legacy among families,” Alex Kendrick, actor and director for “Courageous,” told CNA on Oct. 6

“We see too many men accepting a 'good enough' mentality when their role is crucial to helping each child realize that God loves them.”

“Courageous,” has now ranked as the number four movie in the country, despite opening against six other movies with almost three times as many screens. The film opened on Sept. 30 to over 1,100 theaters across the U.S.

Kendrick, who works with the Sherwood Pictures production company that also produced the 2008 hit “Fireproof,” explained that the film follows the lives of four police officers who grapple with their identity as men, fathers and societal leaders.

“We saw a correlation with the motto of law enforcement, 'to serve and protect,' with that of fathers and many ways he serves the family as spiritual leader protector to provide for them,” Kendrick said.

“When a father is engaged and loving his children the way he should it's easier for them to believe that God loves them,” he added, “if they're not engaged, it's more difficult for them to believe that God loves them.”

“The father's role is crucial in that regard and we wanted to remind men of that and in a larger context, remind parents of their role to love and nurture their children.”

On what served as the inspiration for the film, Kendrick said that between movies, the company goes through what they call a “season of prayer” to discern what their next step should be.

“We've learned that the more we seek God, the more we seek his favor, the more he tends to direct and bless us.”

The group then “delved into the Scriptures and asked 'what does God say about fatherhood?' and then pulled those elements out and formed our plot around that.”

Kendrick said that the movie is unique in that it was made in Albany, Ga. “You can't get any further outside Hollywood,” he laughed, adding that the actors were also selected based on their embodiment of the film's message.

“We look for people who resonate with the story, the purpose behind the movie,” he said. “When the movie's over they don't look at it as a 'gig' or as just a job but they expect it to change culture and glorify God.”

“Those are the kind of people we look for and we're happy to have found them. Who you see on screen in real life all believe what this movie is about and are speaking for it.”

Kendrick observed that the success of the film can be traced to the hunger many Americans have to see basic virtues portrayed in movies – a rarity in today's cinematic culture.

“I think they respect the values presented on screen,” he said. “For many, they want these values in their own life.”

“It's really going after that part of us that wants that higher calling, that wants that more noble life and noble standard and a life that honors God.”

With a modest budget of less than \$2 million, and a cast of “no-name” actors, Sherwood Pictures has been thrilled with the unexpected response to the movie.

“We take joy in doing something that requires faith and gives God the opportunity to do only what he can do,” Kendrick said. “We make the movies but God changes the heart.”

He added that the personal feedback the company has gotten from moviegoers has been astounding.

“We're hearing so many testimonies from people all over the U.S. and Canada—hundreds and hundreds of emails and Facebook notes and things like that, even phone calls” from people relaying how touched they were by the film.

“It's been very, very exciting to see the response to this movie.”

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