

Faith

After 'Unbroken': The remarkable story of Louis Zamperini's faith

By [Franklin Graham](#)

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FILE -- May 9, 2014: Louis Zamperini speaks at a news conference in Pasadena, Calif. (AP)

Actor and director Angelina Jolie has done an incredible job in following the remarkable story of Olympian and World War II POW Louis Zamperini, as told in the book "Unbroken" by Laura Hillenbrand.

Unfortunately, Jolie's movie, by the same title, stops before Louie's real battle begins. He was broken by his own memories of anger, fear, alcoholism and the abandoned promise he had made to God while adrift at sea in 1943.

I met this incredible man in Long Beach, California in 1998 where I was hosting an Operation Christmas Child (OCC) airlift of shoe box gifts for children in developing countries. I was impressed, as anyone would be, with this gentle but powerful individual.

Louie struggled between the urge to get out of the tent in haste or respond to my father's call to follow Christ.

Returning to life in California after World War II revealed what the Japanese couldn't do to Louie Zamperini; they couldn't break this hero. But Louie's real battle was still ahead.

For a time he enjoyed the celebrity of heroism and hob-knobbing with Hollywood. He met and married a beautiful woman named Cynthia Applewhite and life was good. But when all the glitz and glamour faded and reality set in, reoccurring nightmares of war and memories of Louie's torture by his enemies tormented him.

To escape these horrors, Louie turned to alcohol. Pent-up anger overcame him.

His wife who genuinely loved him felt she had no choice but to divorce him. The man who had endured horrific physical and mental abuse, and emerged unbroken from the ravages of war, had succumbed to an enemy that would not let go -- himself.

Meanwhile on the corner of Washington Boulevard and Hill Street in Los Angeles, my father Billy Graham and his team had erected a 480-foot tent in a vacant parking lot to embark on a three-week evangelistic campaign in September of 1949; it was extended to eight weeks because of the massive response.

It was under that tent that Stuart Hamblen, a cowboy and West Coast radio personality and Jim Vaus, an electronics wizard and mob-connected wire tapper, discovered God and turned their lives around. And so did the Zamperinis.

When they were invited by neighbors to hear Billy Graham preach, Louie walked away. But Cynthia walked into what became known as the "Canvas Cathedral."

When my father invited people to turn their lives over to Jesus Christ, she responded by accepting Him as her Lord and Savior. That night Cynthia informed Louie that because of this decision she had made, she would not divorce him.

Louie was thrilled. Though he was skeptical of her religious experience, he began to see changes in her.

Cynthia begged Louie to go with her to the meetings but he refused. As Cynthia and her neighbors prayed, Louie relented and finally agreed to attend.

Sitting under the big tent, Louie shifted in his chair as my father said, "There's a drowning man, a drowning woman, a drowning boy or girl lost in the sea of life."

Louie grew angry and bolted out of the tent vowing to never return.

For days Cynthia begged him to go back. He finally agreed but made her promise that when Billy Graham asked for, "every head bowed and every eye closed," they would leave.

When the invitation came, he recalled the broken promise he had made to God as he was kept alive while drifting on the Pacific, "If you will save me, I will serve you forever."

Louie struggled between the urge to get out of the tent in haste or respond to my father's call to follow Christ. As Louie edged toward the aisle and stepped out beyond the row of chairs bent on rushing for the exit, he went the opposite direction -- toward my father. It was this life-changing moment that blotted out the nightmares and years of torment.

Jesus Christ has the power not only to save souls but to change lives. Louie Zamperini is an example of a life that changed instantly.

When he returned home from the meeting he poured his liquor down the drain, dumped his girlie magazines in the trash, and crumpled up his cigarettes and disposed of them.

He found a Bible that had been issued by the air corps and began reading. For the first time God's Word began to make sense to him.

This former prisoner of war had discovered the joy of freedom found in Christ and desired to pass it on to others.

He opened Victory Boys Camp to help troubled boys, many who were renewed and reformed, enabling them to live productive lives.

While Jolie's movie offers us a glimpse into much of Louie Zamperini's life, only eternity will reveal "the rest of the story."

Franklin Graham has devoted his life to meeting the needs of people around the world and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The eldest son of Billy and Ruth Bell Graham, he serves as President and CEO of Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Under his leadership, Samaritan's Purse has met the needs of poor, sick, and suffering people in more than 100 countries. As an evangelist for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, he has led crusades around the world

Thanks to Greta and FOXnews for airing this special. I believe many people were interested in this story, and this special gave them the truth from Louie himself. He found himself by finding God. If only everyone else would follow his example the world wouldn't be in the mess that it's in.

Louie and Billy Graham would both tell you, it's not about them; it's about Jesus Christ !!!

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GeniusPhx Dec 29, 2014

Jolie has empathy for people of all religions and she didn't want any of them to feel alienated from the movie. As an atheist she knows how it feels to feel like an outsider in a country where all viewpoints are supposedly valued, but not.

she didn't want non christians feel like christians make her feel, when they see this movie.

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Eli Jackson Dec 30, 2014

@GeniusPhx

So she distorted the story and blotted out the glory, and in her contempt to God-ward only condemned herself the more.

You can rationalize sin all you want buck, God will never accept your excuses.

But the same work the Lord wrought in brother Louie here's life He is willing to work in yours, if you'll only accept it, the gift of the grace of God is given, wrought in Christ's bleeding flow on Calvary.

You accept this gift of God, by faith, and you'll have eyes to see and a voice to sing like you never have, you may never admit it my friend, but there's something mighty sweet about the Lord.

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karlfromaz Jan 6, 2015

@Eli Jackson @GeniusPhx Amen!

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TimothyCGarcia Dec 29, 2014

Ryan . you think Marjorie `s report is exceptional... on thursday I bought themselves a Citroën DS when I got my check for \$5497 this-past/month and-also, ten-grand this past month . it's definitely the most financialy rewarding I've ever had . I started this 9-months ago and almost immediately was bringin home over \$76... per-hour . Get More Info→→→→→ www.jobs700.com

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Grimreaper13 Dec 28, 2014

Louie had faith, I know he is in a better place. God tells us love your enemies, Louie did "walk the walk" in this regard!

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leonvang Dec 28, 2014

Right wing religious zealots do not realize movie was intended for both American and Japanese audiences. Jolie picked a popular Japanese rock star as actor who is camp commander to make the movie appealing to younger Japanese viewers. Issue was Zamperini's ability to show an ability to tolerate abuse and show forgiveness and reconciliation. This is not a movie about

religion.

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compassion Dec 28, 2014

@leonvang Mr. Graham said she did a remarkable job. He just pointed out the the rest of the man's life was still effected by his sufferings thru Japanese war time. The man's life is truly remarkable. There is nothing wrong with knowing the rest of the story.

Jolie's heart certainly was in this movie and did a outstanding job.

This man's life truly does deserve to be told. It is remarkable. All are amazed and proud of such a strong courageous man.

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dougbag Dec 28, 2014

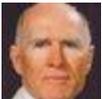
@compassion @leonvang

If you haven't, you should read the book - it's even more amazing.

While all I can do is laugh at faith of one man surviving a war while millions of innocents died, you're correct that his story must be told.

It's stories like this that make reading the most important thing adults can do.

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Eli Jackson Dec 30, 2014

@doughbag @compassion @leonvang

That's "all you can do?"

My sinner friend, you can repent of your sin and be wonderfully saved today, you can continue your trial of cruel mockings, laugh in the face of Christ, but lest you repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3)

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DickRichards Dec 29, 2014

@leonvang After having both read the book and seen the movie, I felt like the movie just fell flat. I'm not a religious guy, but for the movie to leave out the torment Zamperini continued to go through after getting home as well as the way he finally was able to overcome it, in my opinion, left out the most important part. It could have been done in the movie in a way to make his recovery more about redemption than about religion. The book did not overlay the religious component.

Either way, the man's ability to endure what he endured is just amazing.

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jacoboh Dec 28, 2014

Great complementary to the book and movie, even better in some respects. God Bless Louis Zamperini and the Grahams.

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yougruber Dec 28, 2014

What an incredible and vivid comparison of two different worlds...the INCREDIBLE world experiences of this man, and the INCREDIBLY DESTRUCTIVE man now in the White House.

One an inspiration,

The other, a National SHAME.

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libchristian Dec 28, 2014

I believe they are both Christian

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1M2M Dec 31, 2014

Matthew 7:16-23

Jesus said "Ye will know them by their fruits."

"Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. " A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them." "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

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michaelrh12 Dec 28, 2014

To bad the movie isn't about his faith. This movie is only about his quick rise to being in the Olympics and then in a POW camp - that's it! Only at the end do Jolie and the studio toss Christianity a bone by showing him - in his true Christian faith and walk - as he retruns to Japan to forgive those who tortured him. This is a typical liberal left-wing stunt they play - showing nothing about him actually coming to God - being the most important part of his life story - only the forgiveness of the enemy. I'm not discounting forgiveness at all, but you don't cut out the fulfilling portion of his life in the film - knowing God - just to preach forgiveness. This is exactly what the Hollywood Liberals want us to focus on - not Jesus, just forgiveness. This is 'humanism' being taught plain and simple. They should have cut out half the POW scenes and put in the rest of his story - as his life story is not complete without Jesus!

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libchristian Dec 28, 2014

Rather than showing anger about the "liberal left" you might do better in showing the restorative qualities of what faith in Christ can do which is what this whole story speaks to.

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jdspeaks Dec 28, 2014

Great life story... too bad the Graham's Incorporated see the need to use it for advertising their brand of Christian Faith.

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ancienttexas Dec 28, 2014

@jdspeaks pitiful response.

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EmileDuVal Dec 28, 2014

Mankind is capable of a lot in our own strength, but we're not invincible. When we come to the end of ourselves, what's left? Who is there to rescue us from our deadly adversaries when we have no more strength?

Only the LORD Jesus Christ is invincible. Only He is mighty to save, as Zamperini's story below illustrates. That's why "So Help Me, God" is so crucial to our oaths and creeds.

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bobbypinspin Dec 28, 2014

Billy Graham is a homophobe and a generally nasty piece of work.

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ancienttexas Dec 28, 2014

@bobbypinspin and you are the epitome of all that IS RIGHT WITH THE WORLD?

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bobbypinspin Dec 29, 2014

@ancienttexan @bobbypinspin

At least I'm not a homophobe.

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DickRichards Dec 29, 2014

@bobbypinspin "At least I'm not a homophobe" should be chiseled on your tombstone so the world can remember you for that great accomplishment.

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JayRunyon Dec 29, 2014

@bobbypinspin I'm sorry you feel that way. Truth is Billy Graham has done more good in this world than we will ever know, simply by being a humble servant of a gracious and loving God. you've just earned your way on to my prayer list as I hope that someday you will find the peace and joy god offers to us all.

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76liberty Dec 27, 2014

Read the book then saw the movie. The article is spot on. After reading about the horrors Mr. Zamperini endured at sea and in Japanese POW camps, the most uplifting part of book was left out of the movie - Louie's triumph over depression and alcoholism by finding God and spending the rest of his life helping thousands of troubled young boys turn their lives around. Good movie, great book.

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konsidine Dec 27, 2014

well just compare sharptons delivery and franklyns ,ye shall kno them by their fruit, which one do you want to eat, which one satisfies, the proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof

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KM1151 Dec 27, 2014

Was Graham a messenger of good news or a charlatan taking money from trusting people?

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agcat44 Dec 28, 2014

@KM1151 He took in a bundle of money that part is fact. He said he was saving souls, That has never been proven.

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ancienttexas Dec 28, 2014

@agcat44 @KM1151 sad....just sad.

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1LikeReply



Eli Jackson Dec 30, 2014

@agcat44 @KM1151

Billy Graham never saved a soul.

It is the redemptive work of Calvary, and the precious flow from the fount that will never run dry which cleanses to the uttermost and purifies the sinner.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth ALL sin. (1st John 1:7)

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. - (Rom. 5:8)

Amen. Hallelujah, As He died for me I'm gonna live for Him.

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1HonestJohn Dec 27, 2014

BOYCOTT Hollywoods' half baked movie and read the book. Author Laurie Hillenbrand (wrote Seabiscuit as well) did a marvelous job research and writing the book. It's one of the best I've ever read. Even though many times you are reading about hideous torture, you can't put it down. And when you're forced to put it down, you can't wait to pick it up again.

I'm not surprised that Jolie/Hollywood would omit the most inspirational part of his life story. It's tragic and I'm sure Louie would agree.

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joebk Dec 27, 2014

I must see this movie.

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1HonestJohn Dec 27, 2014

@joebk The book is better because Jolie/Hollywood, never bothers to share with the audience what the torture did to him--PTSD and how God saved him. Not surprised that the best part would be omitted.

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hoaremerica Dec 27, 2014

He fought for our countries womens right to be a Hoar.

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joebk Dec 27, 2014

@hoaremerica Happy Holidays! Go find some peace for yourself.

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konsidine Dec 27, 2014

@hoaremerica so pray tell me in that time, where would one go, where it's not like that, for who looks on a woman with lust commits adultery, are you telling me you are born without sin, can you cast the first stone, it's funny issues kill for adultery, and then rapes women, so who do you stand for?

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usefull Dec 27, 2014

Got the chance to see the interview the other morning on TV of his torturer - "the Bird" as the prisoners called him. The one thing that was missing was his inability to take responsibility for his personal acts during WWII. He just talked about how the Japanese had "different" views of torture and how the captured Americans were "enemies" of Japan. This is how he attempted to justify his actions during the war. He apparently has yet to find the forgiveness that Louie found after the war.

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lightfightersix Dec 27, 2014

Saw the movie yesterday, it falls way short of the book and robs it of its spiritual inspiration. If you are going to have a scene that depicts Zamperini committing his life to God upon his physical and spiritual salvation then the movie needs to close loop on this promise in its conclusion.

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1HonestJohn Dec 27, 2014

@lightfightersix Agreed and because Jolie/Hollywood omitted the most inspiring part of his story, I'm BOYCOTTING!

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konsidine Dec 27, 2014

@1HonestJohn @lightfightersix maybe it will inspire people to know more cause I never heard of him till now, so things lead to another, we eat the chicken and throw away the bones, maybe even Angie some day can be led, everything does not happen all at once, unless you want a McDonald's experience

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weldorman Dec 27, 2014

Just wished she would have finished his life story. Outstanding man!!

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BRASS Dec 27, 2014

Following the Ten Commandments is never a bad thing, even for non-believers.

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pablonz Dec 27, 2014

@BRASS What? Why would a non-believer follow the first 4?

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Kathleen Smythe Dec 27, 2014

What a tragedy that Jolie chose to leave out the most important part of Zamperini's life - his commitment to Jesus Christ. I'm not surprised.

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pablonz Dec 27, 2014

@Kathleen Smythe That's not the most important part of his life.

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litemup Dec 27, 2014

@pablonz It is to him.

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Scarpia Dec 27, 2014

Maybe his family Catholic upbringing created the problem.

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1HonestJohn Dec 27, 2014

@Scarpia What problem?

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litemup Dec 27, 2014

@Scarpia You mean that upbringing that helped him survive what someone like you wouldn't have lasted a week through?