



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on February 20, 2015

## Movieguide: Rewarding Movies With Heart and Soul

*Heaven Is For Real* took top honors in the category of Best Movie for Families at the 23rd Annual *Movieguide* Faith & Values Awards Gala at the Universal Hilton in Hollywood. Based on the best-selling book about a four-year-old boy, Colton Burpo, who recalls visiting Heaven while on an operating table and comes back to talk about his experience, the film stars Greg Kinnear as Todd Burpo, his father. Other films that contended in the “top ten” family category included, among others, *Son of God*, *Big Hero 6*, *Penguins of Madagascar*, and *God’s Not Dead*.



*Unbroken*, the gripping, inspirational story of real-life World War II hero Louis Zamperini, a Christian Olympic athlete and soldier who endured unimaginable hardship as a POW, came away as the winner of Best Movie for Mature Audiences. It was up against stiff competition from a strong lineup that included *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, *The Giver*, *The Hobbit: Battle of the Five Armies*, and *Divergent*, among others.

Known as the “Crystal Teddy Bear Awards,” the *Movieguide* Faith & Values Awards Gala also presents awards for inspiring performances, as well as movies and television programs promoting traditional social values such as liberty, religious freedom, patriotism, representative government, the right to life, and free market principles. Created by Dr. Ted Baehr, media critic and founder of the Christian Film & Television Commission and *Movieguide: The Family Guide to Movies and Entertainment*, the annual Awards Gala program has grown over the years into an institution that is having a tremendously positive impact on the content and direction of film and television entertainment. This year’s awards ceremony, which took place on February 6, will be carried on the REELZ Channel on February 21, with a repeat on February 23.

Highlights of the Awards Gala included presentations of the \$100,000 Epiphany Prize for the Most Inspiring Movie of 2014 and the \$100,000 Epiphany Prize for the Most Inspiring TV Program of 2014; the \$50,000 Kairos Prize for Spiritually Uplifting Screenplays by First-Time and Beginning Screenwriters; and the \$50,000 Chronos Prize for Inspiring Screenplays by Established Artists.

The Epiphany Prizes, supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, are given every year to the best, most inspiring movie and television program that resulted in a “great increase in man’s love or understanding of God.”

The winner of the \$100,000 Epiphany Prize for Most Inspiring Movie this year is *God’s Not Dead*, a movie from Pure Flix about a Christian college student who stands up for his faith against an atheist bully professor played by Kevin Sorbo, best known for his *Hercules* TV series. Other nominees were:

*The Giver* — The Weinstein Company  
*The Good Lie* — Warner Bros. Pictures



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*Heaven Is for Real* — Affirm Films/Sony

*Little Hope Was Arson* — The Orchard

*Son of God* — 20th Century Fox

*Unbroken* — Universal Pictures

*Love Finds You in Sugarcreek*, a romance/murder mystery from UP TV set in Ohio's Amish country, captured the \$100,000 Epiphany Prize for Most Inspiring TV Program. The other nominees were:

*Duck Dynasty: A Home for the Holidays* — A&E Channel

*The Gabby Douglas Story* — Lifetime Channel

*The Last Ship* — Turner Network Television (TNT)

*Louis Zamperini: Captured by Grace* — Fox News Channel

*Paper Angels* — A&E Channel

*When Calls the Heart* — The Hallmark Channel

"This year, we had even more top contenders for the Epiphany Prizes than ever before," Dr. Baehr said. "It was very hard to narrow down the nominees. 2014 was a tremendous year for Godly, inspirational content."

Past movie winners have included *Grace Unplugged*, *Les Misérables*, *The Blind Side*, *Fireproof*, *The Nativity Story*, *The Passion of the Christ*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Amistad*, and *Courageous*.

Past TV winners have been *The Bible*, *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*, *7th Heaven*, *Touched by an Angel*, *Amish Grace*, *Doc*, *Love Comes Softly*, *Christy*, *J.A.G.*, and *Walker, Texas Ranger*.

The Grace Award for Most Inspiring Movie Performance went to Portuguese actor Diogo Morgado, who portrayed Jesus Christ in *Son of God*, a standalone theatrical film crafted by the husband-wife team of Mark Burnett and Roma Downey, producers of *The Bible*, the successful miniseries on The History Channel. Imani Hakim won the Grace Award for Most Inspiring Television Performance for her role in *The Gabby Douglas Story*, an inspiring saga about a girl's quest for Olympic gold as an American gymnast.

At the awards ceremony, Dr. Baehr also presented highlights from *Movieguide's 2015 Report to the Entertainment Industry*, a comprehensive financial analysis of the movie business showing what types of movies and what types of movie content moviegoers favor the most with their hard-earned money.

For the 23rd year in a row, the Annual Report notes, the bottom line "shows clearly that moviegoers prefer clean, heroic, family-friendly movies with Christian, biblical, redemptive, conservative, and patriotic faith and values."

"This was also true in 2014, despite a significant decrease in box office earnings for Hollywood in general," said Dr. Baehr.

For example, he noted, "Ninety percent of the Top 10 Movies in the United States, overseas and home video sales in 2014 contained strong or very strong Christian, redemptive, biblical, and/or moral content, values or worldviews, including such movies as *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 1*, *Big Hero 6*, *Frozen*, the last two *Hobbit* movies, *The Lego Movie*, *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Thor: The Dark World*, and *Guardians of the*



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*Galaxy.*”

Each year *Movieguide* analyzes and reviews 275 or more major theatrical movies according to basic biblical principles, morality, and theology, from a Christian perspective. “In 2014, movies with very strong Christian, redemptive worldviews following biblical principles and values averaged \$66.79 million at the domestic box office in 2014, but movies with very strong Non-Christian worldviews averaged only \$20.13 million,” *Movieguide* reported, noting further: “In fact, movies with humanist/atheist worldviews did the worst, averaging only \$1.98 million! Also, movies with absolutely no foul language, sex, explicit nudity, or substance abuse earned the most money.”

## **Fifty Shades of Green**

But don't the boffo returns for the “erotic,” sadistic *Fifty Shades of Grey* demolish the *Movieguide* thesis that virtue is more profitable than vice at the box office? Not really, even though this glamourized misogynist porn offering from Comcast NBC/Universal packaged as a romantic “chick flick” raked in a hefty \$94 million-plus in its opening four-day weekend. *Movieguide* has never said that porn doesn't sell; obviously it does. But the general movie-going public still desires entertainment that bows to the nobler aspirations, rather than pandering to the baser instincts.

The attendance and earnings numbers for *Fifty Shades of Grey* were bolstered by the fact that it was marketed to the college-age crowd and debuted on a weekend with very little competition. Nonetheless, the numbers “are saddening at the very least,” notes *Movieguide's* managing editor Ben Kayser, who asks the questions that, obviously, are nagging all who deplore our society's descent toward the abyss: “Why would so many people put their money toward a movie so disgraceful? Have we as a nation stooped this low? What does this mean for Christians who desire to make a difference in culture?”

“The fact is,” [says Kayser](#), “the mission of the Church is no different this week than it was last week. People still desperately need the transforming and redeeming love of Jesus Christ.... For many who are dissatisfied with various elements of life, *Fifty Shades of Grey* presents an option that sounds enticing, but as many of us know, ultimately leaves one feeling empty.”

“*Fifty Shades of Grey* may have won the weekend box office,” Kayser notes, “but the year is just starting, and, as usual, moviegoers in 2015 are still going to show Hollywood that what they really want is stories with real heroes and positive messages that move their hearts and feed their souls.”

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