

Victorious Breakthroughs

ser4048, God in the Movies, Pt 2

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by Pastor John Kulikowski

Welcome back to our second week of the sermon series *God in the Movies*. This is the second year we are starting the summer with this great series where we will review movies that align with truths in God's word.

(HOOK)

Speaking of summer, how many of you love summer?

Our family loves summer! A several weeks ago we opened our pool. I knew when we opened it that we had a challenge to resolve. During the winter, a 20-pound landscaping brick fell into the deep end. How it happened is another story for another day. How we got it out is a story for today.

(Tell the story of how Matt miraculously dove in and retrieved it, with one hand, versus all the plans my daughters and I made that had failed.)

You see, what we knew about the brick, how we viewed it and the situation, affected our ability to retrieve it. Matt's been swimming in pools all his life and knew that objects in water were lighter, or as Archimedes discovered, buoyant, and easier to bring to the surface. What he knew about this situation and how he viewed it led him to retrieve it victoriously.

This is the same for all of us. How we view ourselves and others affects everyone's success!

Let's pray.

Today we are going to look at this truth of how our views affect our victories through the movie "Seabiscuit." It was released in the summer of 2003.

I must thank John McFall for being the prophet God used in leading me to select this film. There are so many movies that I could have selected, yet I struggled. I was praying and shared one day in our Lead Team meeting about the struggle passionately spoke about "Seabiscuit" and the biblical truths in the movie. I watched it and was blown away by the transformational truths woven throughout the movie.

(BOOK)

Let's look at this movie which is set during the Great Depression.

One of the main characters is a broken-down, unemployed cowboy named Tom Smith, played by Chris Cooper.

Millionaire Charles Howard, played by Jeff Bridges, is about to engage in a horse racing enterprise. He has a campfire interview with Smith, and asks why he bothered to rescue an old, lame horse that was sentenced to death because of a broken leg.

Tom replies, "You don't throw a whole life away just 'cause it's banged up a bit." Every horse is good for something was Tom's claim. This devotion to horses convinces the millionaire that Tom should be his trainer.

Together they find and purchase Seabiscuit, a horse whose physical shortcomings and temperament make him an unlikely prospect for racing success. Tom's method of training, while unorthodox, is tailored toward curing the horse of its inner demons, a byproduct of the neglect shown by its previous owners.

Tom hires a second-rate jockey named John "Red" Pollard to ride Seabiscuit. At 5' 7", Red is considered too tall to be anything but a bush-league jockey and a bad match for this undersized horse. But Tom notices a mystical connection between Red and Seabiscuit.

Red has another handicap. He is blind in one eye, and he has concealed the handicap fearing that track officials would no longer allow him to race.

During a crucial race, Red's limited vision allows a competing horse, to overtake Seabiscuit on Red's blind side, costing them the victory.

Tom, the trainer, is outraged that the jockey failed to urge Seabiscuit to keep the winning pace. You see, Tom's view towards Seabiscuit is not the same as his view towards Red, the jockey.

Let's see what happens:

Show video: start at 1:07

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUUMXcrO4kw>

The movie doesn't tell us why Tom responded that way to Red. Perhaps his feelings of grace and mercy toward the horses were greater because the animals had no control over how they were treated. Yet, do any of us really have control over how the bumps and bruises in our lives occur from others?

Our God is the only God of the second chances.

"You don't throw a life away just because he is banged up a little" whether the reason for the bangs and bruises is the fault of someone else's decisions or their own.

Seabiscuit's story is the eternal story of God's redeeming love.

Perhaps that explains why the audience bursts forth in applause when Seabiscuit overcomes War Admiral, and also when he wins the last race with John Pollard. We all love the story of the lowly and broken being restored and claiming victory. We love the story because we want it to be our story.

(LOOK)

Just like the paradise God created for us in the beginning in the garden of Eden, each of these men experienced a paradise of their own in the beginning of the movie.

- Charles Howard, a father who seizes opportunity and sets about creating his own Eden.
- Tom Smith, a man of the spirit, who lives in union with the vast open spaces and the horses that make their home there.
- John Pollard, known as Red, a beloved son who is at home in his father's world of beauty, poetry, and grace.

Simone Weil, a French philosopher, said there are two things that pierce the human heart: beauty and affliction. What touches the heart so profoundly in these scenes are the images of Eden and it then being lost, not unlike the fall after experiencing the best we were created to experience.

Charles Howard had everything he wanted and then lost his only son to death, which brought separation and divorce from his wife.

Tom Smith, the man of spirit, who lives in open space taking care of God's creatures, is confined to a railroad car, separated from everything he loves.

John Pollard, a beloved son becomes an orphan, separated forever from his father's love. His only inheritance is a bag of poetry, memory of his family, and the home he lost. He scrambles to survive under a cruel taskmaster. The name change is significant; he goes from John¹, "the beloved", to Red, "the angry".

Where do those forced out of Eden go?

To a place absent of God's presence. Charles Howard went to Tijuana, Mexico where alcohol, sex, and gambling numb the pain of his lost and broken soul. But Charles Howard got a second chance through the love of Marcela. She is a woman of faith who sees and understands his broken heart. She introduces him to life, to getting back on a horse which is a giant shift from automobiles and the pursuit of making money. Because she viewed him for who he was created to be instead of where he was, Charles Howard changed his view on life, others, and how he lived.

Tom Smith received a second chance through the faith of the Howards. They didn't judge him by his external circumstances, but they saw his heart when he spent his last five dollars to save a broken horse.

Together these three acts: the faith of Tom Smith, the hope of Charles Howard, and his love with Marcela, worked together to give Seabiscuit and Red Pollard their second chance.

They lived out **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** that says:

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

When Tom Smith found Seabiscuit and Red Pollard, they were both at their lowest points. Both were broken, wounded, and angry losers. They seem incorrigible to everyone except Tom Smith. He saw something of their original beauty, something worth redeeming. What he says of Seabiscuit is the same for Red, "He's so beat up it's hard to tell what he's like so screwed up running in a circle forgotten what he's to do.... he needs to learn how to be a horse (son) again."

The first step is to break the circle and let them ride free. In other words, let them be or become who they were created to be.

Charles Howard viewed people this way and looked for opportunities to free them and break them loose from all that kept them from being who they were created to be.

At one-point Red lost a race because another jockey fouled him, and in anger Red retaliated and lost the race. When asked “How this happened?” the truth set him free. Let’s take a look:

(**Show Video**) start at 1:57

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0BWxrXdhAY>

There’s another scene where he returns in humility to Howard to ask for help when he needed \$10. It is another powerful scene in the movie because it reveals the Father’s heart toward a lost son, much like the story of the Prodigal Son found in **Luke 15:18-24**. Not only is Red still wanted, but he is also given more than what he asked for. Howard gave him \$20, smiled and said, “Let me know if you need more.”

Red not only learned to trust Charles Howard because of this act of kindness, but also because of how he responded to the press when he lost the race because of his blindness. Instead of receiving a beating, which is what he had gotten from the previous taskmaster he worked for, he received kindness and felt valued. Howard stated to the press when everyone learned about Red’s disability, “He won't be discarded because he is blind in one eye; he will remain Seabiscuit's jockey.”

Isaiah 54:8

“But with everlasting loving kindness I will have compassion on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.”

(TOOK)

Do we view our scars and those of others through God’s eyes or through our own?

The enemy wants to define you by your scars. Jesus wants to define you by His scars.

All of us have been bruised and damaged in some way in the story of our own lives. You and I need to believe that we are not defined by our bruises but how we respond to our hurts.

Psalms 139:14 says:

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Do you believe this truth?

We may be misunderstood and mishandled. We may even lose our way for a time, but God has created us with purpose. God “doesn’t throw away a whole life just ’cause it’s banged up a little.”

It has been said, it’s never too late to be who you might have been. God believes our lives are worth redeeming, that is why He sent Jesus to die for our sins, our scars, with His scars and death on the cross.

He believes we are worth a second chance and provides a redeeming way out if we trust Him, follow His lead, and learn to see what He sees.

Where are you?

INVITATION:

For those of you who have never trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, it’s as easy as ABC.

Admit that you are a sinner and that you chose to live your life in the way you’ve seen yourself.

Believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins so that you can be in a relationship with the God who loves you, who will help you see yourself in the way you were created to be.

Commit your life to Him today and to the pursuit of becoming who God created you to be.

Do it today.

Words: 1985 (15.2 minutes w/o video clips)