I'm not a robot



Suggest an edit or add missing contentYou have no recently viewed pages A review by M.C. Steffen Part of giving any movie a fair shake is making an effort to grasp the codes it uses to communicate to its intended audience. In a musical, when characters sing, you're meant to understand that they're expressing emotions too overwhelming for mere speech; whether that convention is to your taste or not, you have to appreciate it on its own terms. This means, in a film made by and for evangelical Christians like Jesus Revolution, you have to appreciate that, when a character smokes pot and monologues about Andy Warhol, you're meant to understand that they're a hellbound sinner in desperate need of the redeeming love of Christ to fill the void that drugs and postmodern art only exacerbate. Now, if you're not already on board with this film's worldview, you're probably not going to find that convention persuasive. But I'll say this for Jesus Revolution: at least it parses. Unlike such fundamentalist movies as, say, Kirk Cameron's Saving Christmas, in which a nutcracker is used to represent one of Herod's soldiers, and this is meant to convey that tacky consumerism at Christmas is a moral imperative. The codes in Jesus Revolution may not resonate with someone outside the choir it's preaching to, but they're internally consistent and (mostly) inoffensive. This means that, compared to something like Kevin Sorbo's Left Behind: Now with More QAnon! from earlier this year, Jesus Revolution is a more representative and therefore more edifying missive from the American evangelical movement. It also means, if your interest in this type of film aligns with mine, that it's much less fun. I love a good-bad movie, and poorly constructed fundamentalist propaganda is disproportionately likely to scratch that itch. But Jesus Revolution isn't poorly constructed; it's mainly shockingly generic. In fact, it's so determinedly generic that it ends up saying some very revealing things about how mainstream evangelicals want to be seen by the broader culture – and, perhaps more importantly, how they don't want to be seen. The film's subject is the ministry of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa in the late '60s, which directly aimed its message at disaffected youth, and was led by an unlikely pair: conservative Silent Generation pastor Chuck Smith (Kelsey Grammer), and charismatic street preacher Lonnie Frisbee (Jonathan Roumie, who also plays Jesus in The Chosen). Smith initially looks down on the counterculture, but is impressed after a chance meeting with Frisbee, who preaches to his fellow burnouts that only Jesus can satisfy the spiritual yearning that they've been trying to soothe with drugs, sex, and leftist political action. Smith gives Frisbee a platform, and together they transform the church from a small, staid congregation into a full, fervent house of worship that shares Jesus' message of acceptance and healing to outcasts. Among their number is Greg Laurie (Joel Courtney), a depressed teen from a broken home who finds meaning in the church and is among the first to spread its message as part of what TIME called the "Jesus revolution," which converted thousands of baby boomers to evangelicalism in the early '70s. Laurie, who wrote the book on which the movie is based, has called Jesus Revolution "the most un-Christian 'Christian' movie" he's seen, which he means as a compliment: "most Christian movies aren't up to the standard they should be." Let's set aside titles like The Tree of Life or Scorsese's Silence, granting that when evangelicals say "Christian" they mean "evangelical," and agree that most films designed for this very particular demographic have abysmal production values. And I'll further agree with Laurie that Jesus Revolution raises the bar of what this genre is capable of doing – up to a point. This film is helmed by Jon Erwin, an actual film-school educated director whose credits include I Can Only Imagine, I Still Believe, and American Underdog, and a brief glance at the loglines for all those titles gives us a clear indication of Erwin's specialty: polished, formulaic "inspirational" biopics, whose subjects are all evangelical figures. That's the posture Jesus Revolution assumes: of course it takes an evangelical worldview, but to its credit (its enormous credit, grading these movies on an extremely generous curve), it's less interested in preaching than in telling a story. As I mentioned, that story rests on plenty of conventions that won't resonate with you if you don't share its worldview – but even then, you could theoretically still appreciate it as a simple, feel-good "true story." Here's the rub: I don't enjoy simple, feel-good true stories, either. And, besides its church setting, there's precious little in Jesus Revolution to distinguish it from any other paint-by-numbers narrative about an unlikely team that builds a movement to create a change in the world, and finds that their work also changes them. Almost every beat here feels rotely conventional: Smith grumbles a little at the hippie commune that takes root in his backyard, but his heart softens when he listens to their music and hears that they truly love the Lord; Laurie is anxious about how he'll connect to the congregation in his first sermon, but to his (not our) surprise, he does all right! It's all nice and streamlined and completely predictable. That issue is compounded by the baldly functional dialogue, which continually prioritizes the Big, Abstract Themes over elements like human-sounding speech, or subtext. ("There are so many voices," Smith remarks in one particularly clunky scene, "that it's hard to hear the truth," to which his wife responds, "The truth is always quiet. It's the lies that are loud.") And these conversations are usually assembled with bog-standard shot-reverse-shot continuity editing, making them boring to look at and listen to. Erwin does what he can to make something compelling out of such mediocre material. Given the dialogue's lack of depth, the performances are surprisingly sturdy; Grammer in particular sells his arc of quiet desperation giving way to a renewed sense of purpose. And we occasionally get a few original images, such as a striking, metaphorical baptism sequence that reminded me of the sunken place scene in Get Out. But I'm really grasping at straws here: Jesus Revolution is a largely forgettable experience, not really "bad" in any way unique to evangelical indie cinema so much as it's merely mediocre in a way common to many secular, vaguely uplifting family features. Which is never much fun to watch or write about – except when you start to consider the relationship between the film's pointedly anodyne form, and the deeper implications of its fundamentalist content. There's another respect in which Laurie says this movie raises the bar for evangelical cinema: unlike many "tidy and perfect" Christian message pictures, it digs deep into the messy, complex psychology that people going through such profound spiritual change really would grapple with. Or, at any rate, it tries to; unfortunately, it never does so persuasively. Partly this is on the writing. The film overall feels languid, but many pivotal scenes are paced way too quickly, with characters changing their minds about the message and mission of the church in the space of a few lines of blunt dialogue. Another problem lies in one particular filmmaking convention that Erwin seems addicted to, a staple of the "superficial inspirational true story" form: montages. Specifically, "signposting a dramatic change in this character's life through a wordless, slackly edited series of cliché images while the treacly music you'd hear in a commercial for herpes medication assaults your eardrums"-style montages. As a result, those moments I mentioned earlier like Smith coming around on the hippies after hearing their Jesus music, and Laurie delivering his first sermon – already fairly conventional story beats – feel even less substantive because they don't offer any information about what's going on in the characters' heads or hearts. Like the characters' too-easily resolved arguments, the film vaguely gestures toward Point A (character is struggling) and Point B (character's struggle is resolved with a little help from their God) without actually dramatizing the inner action that gets them from one to the other. This is the biggest limitation of Jesus Revolution's aggressively middlebrow aesthetic: given the opportunity to engage with some truly difficult and rewarding questions about the connections between individual faith, the institution of the church, and the struggle between the mainstream and the counterculture, it instead retreats into pat answers and hollow sentimentality. Honestly, if you just swap out "believe in yourself" with "believe in Jesus," the movie is basically trafficking in the exact same set of codes you see in secular feel-good movies that get churned out every year. And that, at least preliminarily, seems to suggest that Jesus Revolution, "the most non-Christian Christian movie," goes out of its way to resemble a non-Christian movie in order to appeal to a wider audience. That reading seems even more compelling when we think about the less-palatable fundamentalist elements of the Jesus movement, like its fearmongering fixation on the end-times, that the film leaves out. Which brings me to my most confounding disappointment with Jesus Revolution: its queer erasure. Lonnie Frisbee was eventually excommunicated from the evangelical church, partly due to doctrinal disputes between him and other leaders, but mainly because he was revealed to have had affairs with men. In 1993, he died of complications from AIDS; at his funeral, Chuck Smith delivered a eulogy comparing Frisbee to Samson – "a man who knew the powerful anointing of God's light," but "who never experienced the ultimate of the potential" because of his sexual sin. In contrast, Jesus Revolution depicts Frisbee leaving Calvary Church of his own volition, after a series of clashes with Smith over their doctrinal disagreements and over the arrogance that the script imputes on film-Lonnie. When he makes a string of self-inflating statements to the media about his role in the church, Smith tells him to "check his ego," prompting an insecure Frisbee to claim that Smith is jealous of him and storm out of his office, and out of the movie. A brief post-film "where are they now?" sequence flatly informs us that Frisbee and Smith "eventually reconciled" before his death, and that is the end of the story. Now, do I wish that Jesus Revolution had faithfully represented Frisbee's sexual orientation and depicted the fallout of his outing for his life and the movement? Honestly, no, given that an evangelical-written and –targeted version of that story would only ever frame Frisbee as a "flawed" saint, as Smith did. And given the film's desire to reach a mainstream audience, it's obvious why Erwin and co. would sidestep any material that the fence-sitters in the audience would find homophobic. But this part of Frisbee's story is a particularly compelling example of the sort of inner turmoil that one of its characters would feel as they grapple with their fundamentalist beliefs, that the film, which aspires toward that kind of psychological realism, dutifully avoids. Moreover, it threatens to put the lie to the movie's whole ethos of radical acceptance and embracing the outcast. And it's frustrating that, rather than attempt to work through this tension, the filmmakers take the coward's way out by striking Frisbee's sexuality from the record. It's ultimately duplicitous: Jesus Revolution wants to be a slick, syrupy advertisement for fundamentalist evangelicalism, so much so that it bends over backwards to avoid the difficult implications of that worldview. All this could launch a thousand thinkpieces, but I'd be remiss as a critic if I didn't end by emphasizing that this movie is far, far more interesting to talk about than it is to watch – at least for an apostate like me. I said earlier that my beef with Jesus Revolution – its tendency to gloss over the psychological events that drive its characters' development – can be read as a feint toward mainstream feel-good filmmaking, but I'm not actually convinced by that interpretation. When I think about those fluffy montages that remind me of generic "things get better because the protagonist believes in himself" beats from secular movies, I wonder here they instead constitute another code, one uniquely aimed at an evangelical audience. What if we're not meant to understand, or even feel like we understand, what's going on inside the character's head in these moments? What if these sequences are trying, even in a banal way, to instead gesture toward a supernatural change in the character's heart that defies understanding? "It's not something to be explained," film-Laurie says to the TIME reporter who serves as the skeptical audience's surrogate. "It's something to be experienced." If you're already on this movie's wavelength, I don't doubt you'll experience what it wants you to. I couldn't. And, to be fair, I don't expect the film to explain that experience to me, either. But to explore it, in its living, breathing complexity? Nah. That's where Jesus Revolution would rather do the evangelical equivalent of turning on, tuning in, and dropping out. M.C. Steffen is a writer, storyteller, and teacher based in Chicago. He loves writing and thinking about stories that challenge the ways in which we think about stories. As a movie buff, he enjoys obscurant arthouse films and surreally terrible B-movies in equal measure. You can see him performing autobiographical monologues on Chicago stages, and writing overly theoretical movie reviews on Letterboxd. Jesus Revolution takes a fascinating period of American history – the hippie movement and its associated fallout within the Christian community – and transforms it into a bland, TV movie-of-the-week experience. While neither badly made (the period detail, for example, is strong) nor unwatchable, there's the sense of both a missed opportunity and a commitment to "family friendliness" over truth. Anything remotely sexual is whitewashed with hippies being defined primarily as young people who have decided to drop out of society and experiment with drugs. Their search for spiritual fulfillment is shown only through the lens of those who comprised the group of so-called "Jesus freaks" – completely ignoring larger segments of the hippie population who followed the tenets of various other religions. The film's myopia is understandable – it has been made by a Christian production group and is targeted not at a mainstream audience but at church-goers. The movie focuses on characters who were instrumental in the genesis of the Cavalry Chapel movement – something that started with a single evangelical church in the late 1960s and has grown to nearly 2000 nationwide locales in a span of less than 60 years. Unfortunately, Jesus Revolution becomes so enamored with the rather lackluster lives of the characters that it loses sight of the bigger picture. One of the most fascinating aspects of the era – the struggle of mixing mainstream, old-school Christian mores with the values espoused by the hippies (which typically included free love) – is reduced to little more than a footnote. Jesus Revolution has the level of cast one might expect from a made-for-TV movie. The biggest name, and the actor who gives the most polished performance, is Kelsey Grammar. Grammar plays Chuck Smith, the old-school pastor of an old-school church who becomes convinced that the way to expand Jesus' message is to embrace the hippies rather than shunning them. Grammar's interpretation of Smith is that of a smart tactician as well as a man of God. It's an idealized version of the real man whose anti-homosexual beliefs are well documented and whose end-of-the-world predictions predated those of the disgraced Harold Camping. (In the late 1970s, he wrote that the world would end in 1981.) Other than Grammar, the only somewhat recognizable name in the cast is Kimberly Williams-Paisley, the now-married (hence the hyphenated last name) woman who played the daughter in the Father of the Bride remake and its subsequent sequel. The other primary players are Joel Courtney as the central figure, Greg Laurie, a young man whose spiritual quest leads him to the movement; Anna Grace Barlow as Catherine, his free-spirited girlfriend; and Jonathan Roumie as Lonnie Frisbee, the charismatic preacher who "converts" Smith to the value of expanding his congregation. All three have sizeable filmographies filled primarily with episodic TV work. Their performances – at least a notch below that of Grammer's – are evidence of why none has thus far "broken out." When the movie opens in 1968, Chuck Smith presides over a small congregation in his Costa Mesa chapel. Smith's daughter introduces him to Frisbee, a wandering Pentecostal evangelist who travels the nation with his wife, Connie, spreading the good word. Smith brings Frisbee into his fold and opens the door of his church to the hippies who flock to see and hear the newcomer. Calvary Chapel becomes a Christian commune that attracts young people far and wide. Two of them are Greg Laurie and his girlfriend, who eventually become key cogs in Smith's wheel. In addition to proving himself to be vital to Calvary Chapel's expansion, Laurie must demonstrate to Catherine's father that he is more than a ne'er-do-well so he can ask for her hand in marriage.Jesus Revolution doesn't feel like an inherently theatrical venture. Although the production design is impressive for the limited budget and the soundtrack includes some immediately recognizable pop/rock songs from the era, there's nothing in the film that screams "big screen." For those who see it, however, the narrative is numbingly agreeable, with likable characters working through a drama with no real teeth. It's forgettable and mushy but digestible. There's no rule that Christian-leaning movies have to be so limp and vanilla. Mel Gibson's controversial The Passion of the Christ was anything but that, courting an NC-17 rating with the graphic nature of its violence. Still, it's doubtful that Jesus Revolution aspires to appeal to anyone outside of its core audience. It feels like it was made with members of the Calvary Chapel Association in mind (in fact, pastors from that denomination were invited to comment on work prints of the film to suggest changes). For them, this will likely hit the cinematic sweet spot. For everyone else, it's at best a late-night, streaming time-waster. Half a century ago Hollywood was frantically trying to figure out the newly-dominant "youth market." Since some of that market had recently found Jesus, there was a brief spate of related films: Zefferelli's hippie-fied St. Francis biopic "Brother Sun, Sister Moon," adapted stage musicals "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "Godspell," the Billy Graham-produced "A Time to Run" chief among them. But as the "Jesus Movement" got absorbed into more mainstream institutions, the brief vogue flickered out. For a moment there, however, counterculture and Christ had a groovy thing going on, one that promised both salvation for those who'd gone overboard on sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, as well as a healthy shakeup of churches that had lost touch with younger generations. Dramatizing that moment is "Jesus Revolution," an engaging, upbeat new effort from co-directors Jon Erwin ("I Can Only Imagine") and Brent McCorkle ("Unconditional"), adapted from Greg Laurie's memoir. This inspirational take on a Southern California ministry's eventually far-reaching impact may not be a definitive representation of some real-life participants' roles. Nonetheless, it's one of the most appealing faith-based big-screen entertainments in a while, polished and persuasive without getting too preachy. Kelsey Grammer's presence may lure some patrons not typically drawn to this kind of attraction, while co-star Jonathan Roumie will help draw those who are — he plays J.C. in the well-received Biblical TV series "The Chosen." Lionsgate opens the feature on 2,000-plus U.S. screens this Friday, after a more limited Wednesday night "special preview event." After an opening mass-baptism sequence the film returns to about an hour later, the narrative proper begins in 1968 Newport Beach, where fatherless teenager Greg (Joel Courtney) is unhappily enrolled at a local military academy, and no more happy at home with alcoholic mother Charlene (Kimberly Williams-Paisley). He's more than ready to be liberated from both when his path crosses that of several turned-on public high schoolers, notably Cathe (Anna Grace Barlow), with whom he's immediately smitten. But the downside of druggy escapism frightens her off before he hits a freaked-out bottom of his own. Meanwhile, staid pastor Chuck Smith (Grammer) presides over a dwindling congregation. When he expresses prim disapproval of the hippie phenomenon scrutinized on network TV news, his own teen daughter Janette (Ally Ioannides) scoffs such lack of understanding may be "why your church is so empty." Picking up a hitchhiker one day, she sees a golden opportunity in the form of shaggy Lonnie Frisbee (Roumie). With "Jesus Loves You" hand-painted on his poncho, he announces he's "down from San Francisco spreading the Good News to whoever wants to hear it." "You've got to meet my father," she grins. Their meeting is one of "Jesus Revolution's" high points, as the guileless evangelical positivity of this Jesus-looking (and more importantly, -acting) guy duly wins over the resistant Chuck. Saying his generation is on a "quest for God" — whether they realize it or not — but that "We can only go through doors that are open to us," Lonnie persuades the older man to invite his kind into his suburban church. That influx ruffles some preexisting parishioners. But the trickle of newcomers, drawn by Lonnie's charisma and message, soon becomes a flood, with Greg and Cathe prominent among them. Like a born-again version of Ang Lee's "Taking Woodstock," "Jesus Revolution" revisits the "turbulent" '60s to praise rather than bury, celebrating the essential optimism of its nonconformist youth. Most of this new effort effectively channels that same effervescent spirit, while extending empathy to parental figures struggling to comprehend offspring who've suddenly turned alien. It's to the filmmakers' credit that there's at least as much period flavor in scenes of communal hanging out amongst subsidiary characters (some deploying old-school psychedelic visual effects) as in a larger-scale set-piece involving stand-ins for Janis Joplin and Allen Ginsberg. The infectious welcome provided by Frisbee's brand of religious outreach, bolstered by "Jesus music" from seminal Christian rock band Love Song, helped turn Smith's Calvary Chapel into the incubator for an explosively growing movement. By 1971 it, and the principal players depicted here, landed on the cover of "Time Magazine" (DeVon Franklin plays its investigative reporter). But art echoes life here in shunting Lonnie Frisbee out of the picture under questionable pretenses, at which late point some of the air goes out of the movie. We're left stuck with Smith and Laurie, their boring self-doubts and the underwritten women in their lives, whom Erwin and John Gunn's screenplay finally gives something to do — they get to tell our remaining heroes how wonderful they are, and how important their mission. Even Frisbee has a torch-passing speech to Greg, which feels labored. As well it ought, since as detailed in David Di Sabatino's 2005 documentary "Frisbee: The Life and Death of a Hippie Preacher," Lonnie didn't leave the ministries he co-founded so much as he was pushed out. Disinterested in money, by all accounts a truly charismatic figure (some claimed to witness "miracles" he performed, ambiguously portrayed here), he apparently clashed with the more assimilationist values of colleagues who went on to long, high-profile evangelical careers. At least his memory is done justice by Roumie's persuasively magnetic, touched-by-the-spirit performance. Grammer's sincere turn puts some nuance into the somewhat pat portrayal of Chuck's evolution from hippie-allergic to hippie advocate, while Courtney and the other younger players do well, even if they seem a mite mature for high schoolers. (For that matter, Roumie looks about twice the age Frisbee was at the time.) And the film does clamber back onto higher ground after a turgid 20 minutes or so by ending with a montage of footage from the era, showing the extent to which so-called "Jesus People" fueled a global phenomenon. That considerably helps close "Jesus Revolution" on the buoyantly proselytizing note Erwin and McCorkle intended. Their Kingdom Story Co. production is pleasingly assembled in all departments without seeming over-slick, its throwback vibe nicely conveyed by production designer Aimee Holmberg and Anna Redmon's costumes — even if Alabama locations must pass for So. Cal. ones. There's a sufficient soundtrack sprinkling of more-or-less timely archival tracks by Rare Earth, Edwin Star, America, the Doobie Brothers and others amid contributions from latter-day Christian pop artists. Synopsis JESUS REVOLUTION is the story of one young hippie's quest in the 1970s for belonging and liberation that leads not only to peace, love, and rock and roll, but that sets into motion a new counterculture crusade--a Jesus Movement--changing the course of history. Inspired by a true movement, JESUS REVOLUTION tells the story of a young Greg Laurie (Joel Courtney) being raised by his struggling mother, Charlene (Kimberly Williams-Paisley) in the 1970s. Laurie and a sea of young people descend on sunny Southern California to redefine truth through all means of liberation. Inadvertently, Laurie meets Lonnie Frisbee (Jonathan Roumie), a charismatic hippie-street-preacher, and Pastor Chuck Smith (Kelsey Grammer) who have thrown open the doors of Smith's languishing church to a stream of wandering youth. What unfolds becomes the greatest spiritual awakening in American history. Rock and roll, newfound love, and a twist of faith lead to a JESUS REVOLUTION that turns one counterculture movement into a revival that changes the world. Director Jon Erwin, Brent McCorkle Producer Kevin Downes, Andrew Erwin, Jon Erwin, Greg Laurie, Josh Walsh, Daryl C. Lefever Screenwriter Jon Gunn, Jon Erwin Distributor Lionsgate Production Co Sony Pictures, Kingdom Story Company, Lionsgate Rating PG-13 (Strong Drug Content|Some Thematic Elements) Genre Drama, History Original Language English Release Date (Theaters) Feb 24, 2023, Wide Release Date (Streaming) Apr 11, 2023 Box Office (Gross USA) $52.0M Runtime 1h 59m Sound Mix Dolby Digital Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. The issue with the new drama film "Jesus Revolution" is that it is too watered down and preachy to be convincing enough unless one is absolutely sure that Jesus loves them. Adapted from Greg Laurie's book of the same name, the film follows the evangelical Jesus Movement that took place in California in the latter half of the 1960s. But "Jesus Revolution" categorically leaves things out of true history and also restricts itself purely to spiritual matters, therefore taking away from the historical value of the events. Overall, "Jesus Revolution" is definitely not the most preachy Christian film possible, but the treatment used in the work does make it targeted to specific audiences. Spoilers Ahead In 1968, the country of the United States was experiencing a constant growth in groups of young people questioning the government, traditional moralities, and value systems and wanting to live a free life. Better known as hippies, these youths were considered a threat to the American way of life by the older generations and the government itself. Being labeled communists and anti-nationals, the hippies were despised by conservative families and households, and pastor Chuck Smith was no different. Working as the pastor at his Southern California Calvary Chapel, Chuck was extremely faithful to his religion and therefore wanted the hippie movement to end. But the problem was his young daughter, Janette, who was of the same young adult age as most hippies and therefore found more relatability with them than the likes of her father. One day, during a heated argument, Chuck dismissively told Janette that he wanted God to send one hippie to meet him. Surely as fate would have it, soon after this, Janette came across a man with long hair and a long beard while on a drive. This man introduced himself as Lonnie Frisbee, and his way of speaking instantly won over Janette. Confident that Lonnie was the perfect man to introduce to Pastor Chuck, Janette brought the man home to meet her father. Initially livid with his daughter's actions, pastor Chuck was determined to figuratively kick Lonnie out of the house, but as soon as Lonnie started speaking, Chuck noticed something about him. Using Biblical references and quoting sermons, Lonnie had a natural charm in his words and expressions that soon won over pastor Chuck as well. Not only did the pastor open up his house to Lonnie and his ever-increasing group of followers, but he also now wanted the man to preach at his church. Around the same time, a young man named Greg Laurie finds new interest in the hippie movement and the associated free use of psychedelic drugs. Greg's initial introduction to the lifestyle is through a woman named Cathe, whom he is genuinely attracted to, but Cathe soon discovers the frightening possibilities of drug abuse when her younger sister almost dies from an overdose. Cathe keeps herself away from the lifestyle and from Greg as well, much to the man's woe. However, Greg also soon has a disillusionment with drugs, fearing that he is going to die from an overdose when he runs into Lonnie Frisbee on the streets. Greg Laurie had always had a difficult personal life, because of which he was directionless in his own life too. His mother struggled with alcoholism, and even after a string of lovers, she could not find anyone to settle down with. This had impacted Greg from a very young age, right from when he was a teenage boy, and his mother had a falling out with his father. While Greg always believed that his dad, who had left them, would surely return someday soon, it was his mother who made him believe that relationships in the modern era do not last. Young Greg was disillusioned with love and family life at that very young age, and since then, he has been the one who has had to ensure that his mother stays out of any trouble. But the boy's words were often not paid heed to by his mother, and she still spent most of her days drunk in their caravan parked near Newport Beach, California, making Greg spend most of his days outside. The boy was enrolled in a Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, but he never found interest in matters of military warfare. Greg was, instead, very passionate about drawing comic strips and illustrations, wanting to make it big in this field. It was at this time that he met with a group of hippies in a park, which also included Cathe, in whom he immediately took an interest. Cathe also showed interest in Greg, and the two attended a concert by Janis Joplin along with the group. This generation was obviously finding themselves more involved in music festivals and concerts, which eventually led to the iconic Woodstock festival. At the concert, Greg tried out psychedelic drugs for the first time and gradually started to enjoy their effects. Within a short time, he and Cathe also grew close to each other, despite the girl's conservative father not agreeing with her choice of partner or lifestyle. While Cathe remained unfazed by her father's words, she started to see things differently after her younger sister Dodie had a terrible episode of overdosing. It was this incident that turned Cathe against drugs, and she tried convincing Greg of the same too. When the young man finally turned against drugs as well, the emptiness that he once again found himself in was filled by Lonnie Frisbee. Even though Greg was never a believer in God or religion, he started listening to Lonnie's preaching at the Calvary church. In this aspect, too, it was Cathe who first started visiting the church, and Greg just followed to seek her company. Within some time, Lonnie held his first mass baptism at Pirate's Cove together with pastor Chuck Smith, and Cathe got baptized during the event. Although Greg had his reservations about the matter, seeing Cathe's belief encouraged him to give it a try as well, and the man got baptized too. The effect was rather instant, as Greg started enjoying this newfound faith and also the group around him. Instead of drug-addicted hippies, he was now surrounded by peace-loving and free-minded individuals who spent their days with music and discussions of the life and struggles of Jesus Christ. Eventually, Greg felt interested in preaching too, and he was selected to hold a youth service at a different church in the vicinity. Although Greg enjoyed this experience greatly and wanted to continue with the work, the church did not want to keep employing him. The man had expected pastor Chuck to support him in his wishes, but that did not happen either, and Greg once again started to feel lost and directionless. The physical appearance of Lonnie Frisbee was something that particularly stood out to traditional churchgoers and critics of the hippie movement. With sharp facial features, long hair, and a beard, Lonnie looked almost like an impostor of Jesus Christ himself. The man was never fazed or conscious about this and even turned it into a part of his religious side, claiming that he would rather look like Jesus Christ than anybody else. It is with this charm in the way he talks and presents himself that Lonnie wins over everyone and has a similar impact on the conservative-minded pastor Chuck as well. Lonnie does not hide the fact that he was once living the exact life of a hippie, trying out psychedelic drugs as a means to find purpose and spirituality in life. But he also admits that he had ultimately realized how ineffective these methods were and instead now believed that it was totally through the Christian religion that the youth could find purpose and themselves. Lonnie asked Pastor Chuck to be more welcoming and accepting of young hippies who would want to make this transition, and he convinced him to open up the Calvary Church to such people. Although the more traditional and orthodox members of the chapel, who were all elderly individuals, were strongly opposed to this happening, pastor Chuck was by now totally convinced of Lonnie's mission. On one occasion, an old member of the church complained about how the young hippies, who roamed around without any shoes, were making the new carpet at the institution dirty. Appalled by the member's concern about a carpet as opposed to the youth of the times, pastor Chuck decided to expose the triviality of the matter by personally wiping the feet of every hippie follower before they entered the church. Very soon, the entire Calvary Chapel was taken over by young hippie followers, as more and more kept flocking to hear the sermons of Lonnie and pastor Chuck. Within some time, similar churches and groups started cropping up all over the United States, and it was all collectively referred to as the Jesus Movement. But as the Calvary Chapel kept growing, Lonnie also started developing strange behavior, acting like a supernatural healer during his sermons, which were now being video recorded too. The first time Lonnie tries such a thing in "Jesus Revolution," it seems like he, too, is not sure of what is going to happen and gives it a blind try. After touching a man who says that his life is being destroyed by physical and mental turmoil, Lonnie claims that he is now healed. As the man also starts to believe that he has indeed been healed by what he believes to be the latest coming of Jesus Christ, Lonnie continues trying such things in public. The man's personal relationship with his wife, Connie, also starts to deteriorate at this time, and Connie keeps claiming in public that he is losing grip over his work. According to Connie, everything that Lonnie had been doing was for himself and to create an image of himself in the minds of people, but she wanted him to genuinely do religious work. Around this time, pastor Chuck started to grow wary of Lonnie and his decision to present himself as a magic healer with supernatural abilities. During one confrontation, Chuck directly tells Lonnie to stop with such "spectacles," which offends Lonnie as he seems to genuinely believe in his abilities. The man now also claims that there would be no religious movement without him, which further irks pastor Chuck, and he reminds Lonnie of how he had brought him into the church. The disagreement between the two took an ultimate form when Lonnie decided to leave the Calvary Church along with Connie, saying that they were moving to Florida to work on their marriage. After being unable to start his profession as a church preacher, Greg Laurie also got affected in his personal life when he started believing that nothing good was ever going to happen to him. To Greg, everything and everyone he had put genuine interest and love into during his life had all abandoned him or led to grave disillusionment. This had been the case with his biological father, the spiritual effects of psychedelic drugs, and now religion as well. Along with this, his desire to marry Cathe was also not supported by the girl's father since Greg did not have any job or livelihood. But ultimately, things took a very different turn when pastor Chuck bought an unused church building and gave it to Greg to start his own preaching. Chuck admitted that he had made a mistake in not supporting the young man's wishes, and Greg soon started his own church. He soon mends relations with his mother as well and then gets married to Cathe. "Jesus Revolution" is actually mostly based on true events and characters, as is also made clear in the ending scenes of the film. There was a time when large numbers of youths started converting from hippies to "Jesus freaks," finding purpose in the Christian religion. Known as the Jesus Movement, this evangelical movement started in California and then spread all over the US, reaching its culmination point in 1972. Pastor Chuck Smith remained at his job at the Calvary Chapel till his death in 2013, and there are noted to be more than a thousand Calvary Chapel churches now. Lonnie Frisbee was one of the first leaders of the Jesus Movement, and despite their fallout, he and pastor Chuck later reconciled and continued to minister together. The characters of Greg and Cathe are also real people, and they continue to be married with children and grandchildren of their own. The church that Greg was offered to start at the end of the film was named Harvest, and today it remains one of the largest churches in California. But despite being so close to the actual truth, the decision in "Jesus Revolution" to leave out aspects of the truth makes it seem inauthentic. Most crucial of these aspects was the fact that, despite Lonnie Frisbee's preaching against homosexuality and drug usage, he himself would sometimes use drugs and he was also a closeted gay man. ProducerAdditional CrewActorJosh Walsh is a film producer based in Franklin, Tennessee. In his teens, Josh began his work in film and by age 30 he had produced almost a dozen films with over $170M+ in combined box office. His 10+ years with Kingdom Story Company and the Erwin brothers saw consistent top 10 box office hits including I Can Only Imagine, Woodlawn and Jesus Revolution. A lifelong documentary enthusiast, Josh also produced Steve McQueen: American Icon, Johnny Cash: American Icon and The Jesus Music, a doc about the history of CCM that he championed and considers one of the highlights of his career. Josh partnered with the Grammy award winning band For King + Country on the 2024 hit film, Unsung Hero, that surprised the industry with a $20M box office. Josh is often joined on the road by his wife Abbe and their son. Together, they serve cast and crew and share their passion for faith and film.Suggest an edit or add missing contentYou have no recently viewed pages Cast & crewUser reviewsTriviaFAQThe true story of a national spiritual awakening in the early 1970s and its origins within a community of teenage hippies in Southern California.The true story of a national spiritual awakening in the early 1970s and its origins within a community of teenage hippies in Southern California.The true story of a national spiritual awakening in the early 1970s and its origins within a community of teenage hippies in Southern California.197User reviews52Critic reviewsSign in to rate and Watchlist for personalized recommendationsSign inSuggest an edit or add missing contentWhat was the official certification given to Jesus Revolution (2023) in Spain?AnswerYou have no recently viewed pages Warning: The following article contains spoilers from Jesus Revolution. Jesus Revolution is a Christian drama film that depicts the Jesus movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, focusing on real people like Greg Laurie, Lonnie Frisbee, and Chuck Smith, who influenced the religious movement. Greg's journey in the film involves struggling with addiction, finding a purpose through preaching, and ultimately starting a church after Chuck supports his dreams. The film highlights how the Jesus movement spread throughout the United States, with Chuck Smith, Lonnie Frisbee, and Greg Laurie playing central roles in attracting young people to evangelical Christianity and providing a place for them in Calvary Chapel. The 2023 Christian drama film Jesus Revolution is based on the book of the same name by Greg Laurie and chronicles the Jesus movement that took over California in the late 1960s and early 1970s before spreading throughout the United States and the world. The movie focuses on the characters of Laurie, played by Joel Courtney, Lonnie Frisbee, played by Jonathan Roumie, and Chuck Smith, played by Kelsey Grammer, who are all based on real people that influenced the religious movement. The film shines a light on their separate journeys and how they came together in Calvary Chapel. Jesus Revolution begins with Greg, a teenager who got introduced to hippie culture after he met Cathe and started using psychedelic drugs. Greg and Cathe began a romantic relationship that got strained due to his addiction. Meanwhile, Chuck struggled to keep his church open and connect with the next generation until he met Lonnie, a young hippie who helped him build favor with a younger audience. Greg ultimately crossed paths with Lonnie after he and Cathe heard him preach, and they joined Calvary Chapel. Later in the film, the church grew exponentially, Lonnie left after a falling out between him and Chuck, and Greg became a pastor. Greg's Decision To Start A New Church Explained After Lonnie Frisbee inspired Greg Laurie to go down a different (more religious) path in life in Jesus Revolution, he and Cathe were baptized by Lonnie at Pirates Cove in California. Greg was taken with the church and even started dreaming about becoming a pastor one day. Unfortunately, Chuck Smith did not support Greg's desire to begin preaching, which sent him down another dangerous path as questions of identity started to plague Greg's mind again. However, Greg's dreams came true after the end of the Christian drama film. Chuck saw the error of his ways and extended an olive branch to Greg during one of the final scenes of Jesus Revolution. The pastor bought an abandoned church and gifted it to Greg so that he could lead his own congregation. As anyone could imagine, Greg was surprised by the offer but eager to say yes. He had finally found his purpose in life, and he had Cathe, Lonnie, and Chuck to thank for it. The final scene of Jesus Revolution featured Chuck Smith showing Greg Laurie and Cathe the 1971 Time magazine cover highlighting the Jesus revolution movement. Chuck explained how the movement had spread to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and the southern states of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. The three of them remarked on how they felt it was the beginning of something rather than the end before the movie ended on news clips that reported on the events of the Jesus movement in the United States. Although the Jesus movement had many faces, as Jesus Revolution stressed, Greg Laurie, Lonnie Frisbee, and Chuck Smith were at the center. Chuck was able to grow Calvary Chapel thanks to Lonnie, whose teachings and methods spoke to the younger generation. They welcomed hippies into the church at a time when hippies weren't regarded in a positive light, so they gave them a place to go. As a result, the Jesus revolution movement spread like wildfire as more young people turned to evangelical Christianity, as depicted in Jesus Revolution. Even though Lonnie Frisbee played a significant role in the Jesus movement, he left Calvary Chapel toward the end of Jesus Revolution. His views and beliefs on religion and God started to stray from Chuck Smith's, leading to a falling out between the two friends and co-workers. Lonnie claimed he had supernatural healing abilities, which didn't sit right with Chuck. As a result, Lonnie left California behind and moved to Florida with his wife, Connie, to work on their marriage and find a purpose elsewhere. Greg Laurie was heartbroken by Lonnie's decision, but there was nothing he could do or say to convince Lonnie to stay at Calvary Chapel in Jesus Revolution. One of the main conflicts in Jesus Revolution was between Greg and Cathe and their future. They wanted to be together, but Greg's self-doubt and Cathe's parents' disapproval of the couple's relationship held them back time and time again. Greg and Cathe's relationship had numerous ups and downs throughout the 2023 Christian drama film as it showed how they met, how Cathe began to object to Greg's drug addiction following her sister's terrifying overdose, and how Greg's struggle to find purpose in life affected their dynamic. Thankfully, after Chuck Smith gave Greg the keys to the abandoned church, Greg sought out Cathe to repair their relationship. He went to her house, where he apologized for his behavior and for pushing Cathe away before he (technically) asked for her hand in marriage. She said yes, and Greg and Cathe married and lived happily ever after in Jesus Revolution. Jesus Revolution's end credits updated the audience on what happened to Lonnie Frisbee, Greg Laurie, and Chuck Smith following the film's events. Lonnie and Connie divorced in 1973, and he hopped around between churches and eventually made amends with Chuck. He even signed back on as a minister at Calvary Church for a short while before he helped start the Vineyard Movement. Lonnie aided in the Vineyard Christian Fellowship's growth worldwide. Sadly, Lonnie died from complications of the AI