



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on March 16, 2021

“My Brother’s Keeper,” a Soldier’s Story of Salvation in Wartime, Hits Theaters March 19

U.S. Army Sergeant Travis Fox (T.C. Stallings) has spent 10 long years fighting in the Iraq War. After eight tours and three purple hearts, the decorated war hero battles a host of personal demons. Confiding to best friend Ron “Preach” Percy (Joey Lawrence), he admits, “War is my life.” It’s what he does, all he knows. But Percy, a man of deep religious faith, has always believed that the Lord has greater plans for Fox’s life.



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One fateful night, as Percy is preparing to leave the Army patrol base in Fallujah to complete a mission from which he and his entire platoon will sadly not return, he asks Travis to pray for him. Travis’s refusal ignites an intense exchange between the two men, with Percy confronting his friend about his lack of faith. “Your soul is lost, you’re lost,” Percy tells him. In a moment of desperation, Percy’s final words to Fox pose the question: “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Whether meant as a rhetorical question or to start Fox thinking about who will be there for him if Percy is gone, the words echoing the Genesis story of Cain and Abel, also the movie’s title, resonate with viewers. Are we our brother’s keeper? Where does our responsibility to others begin and end? Cain’s disquieting line is repeated throughout the film in varying contexts, leaving its meaning largely open to viewer interpretation.

From this stirring opening scene, viewers are placed in the middle of Fox’s winding journey to salvation. Having lost his parents to a mysteriously fatal car accident, Fox is convinced God has turned His back on him, and any seeds of faith have all but been extinguished by a series of tumultuous years filled with loss and suffering.

In the wake of Percy’s tragedy, Fox decides to return to his hometown of Mount Moriah to investigate his parents’ untimely deaths. Shortly after arriving at the family home, he notices a necklace he gave his mother before one of his deployments, which she wore religiously, is missing; he starts to wonder if what happened to his parents was truly an accident.

As a primer to a soldier’s life in the aftermath of trauma, [My Brother’s Keeper](#), a story loosely based on screenwriter Ty Manns’s father’s experiences after returning from Vietnam, deftly illustrates the wide range of emotional and psychological effects of combat. While Travis is never officially diagnosed with



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[post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#), vivid scenes depicting debilitating episodes of flashbacks of violent incidents on the battlefield convince viewers that he suffers from the condition.

Stallings's indelible performance as the tough soldier with a troubled soul propels the plot forward. Visceral emotional scenes of Fox's inner struggle also somehow manage to energize the equally compelling secondary plot lines, creating a narrative tinged with mystery and drama that feels wholly cohesive and original.

Back in the tight-knit community of Mount Moriah, Fox for a time finds new purpose by performing odd jobs at the church and developing a friendship with the charming and intelligent psychologist Tiffany Roberts (Keshia Knight-Pulliam).

In spite of this, Fox's condition worsens, climaxing in a powerful moment of brokenness that leads him to begin to find his way back to God via the compassionate and empathic Pastor Quentin Hood (Jeff Rose), whose keen and captivating sermons, for Christian viewers, will alone be worth the price of admission. Rose's nuanced acting evokes a leader who is gracious and sincere; indeed, viewers believe his message that "God turns tragedy into miracles."

In an [interview with dove.org](#), Manns described the church's role in "saving his family, and his dad's life, as well as providing salvation from the 'PTSD demon.'" He explained that he "wanted to write a story that wasn't an indictment on anyone. I didn't want it to be an indictment of the military. You hear these football players talking about 'I know what I'm doing, getting concussions, making millions.' The military men and women are very smart and know what we're putting ourselves in front of." For others, Manns has this advice: "if you suffer from PTSD ... and you can't get the support you need through the medical field, there's a church door that will open up for you."

Another engrossing character is Fox's misguided childhood friend, Donnie "Sweat Suit" Berry (Robert Richard). Viewers who have made similar mistakes of cheating, lying, and hurting others despite having the best intentions, will easily identify with many of Berry's reckless decisions.

One minor quibble with this otherwise exceptional film is its rushed denouement, which, following an evenly paced opening that beautifully sets up the story unfolding Fox's transformation, wraps up a little too quickly several intricate storylines a little too neatly.

In theaters March 19, *My Brother's Keeper*, directed by Kevan Otto (*Forgiven*) and written by retired Army Major Ty Manns (*The Turning Point*) has been "dedicated to those who served and those who continue to fight, the relentless enemy, PTSD." Heavily faith-based and rich in themes of redemption, hope, and renewal in Christ, this compassionate, at turns action-packed adrenaline rush, is an absolute must-see for Christian viewers, though its reach will extend to open-minded secular audiences as well. Highly recommended for the promise of its enduring message that regardless of our circumstances, God will always love us.



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