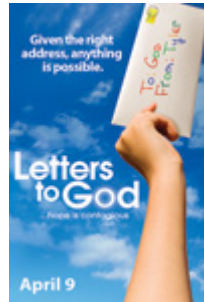




## The Strength of Faith: Letters to God Review

“You are a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Corinthians 1-4). These words aptly conclude the wonderful Christian family drama *Letters to God*, directed by David Nixon (*Fireproof*) and Patrick Doughtie. Inspired by the true story of Doughtie’s son, who was diagnosed with brain cancer, *Letters to God* is a tale of redemption, faith, and love, one whose message is unparalleled by any other film.



Eight-year old Tyler Doherty (Tanner Maguire) is a cancer patient whose love of God and complete faith in His will provides Tyler with a peace that he is able to instill in the community, even reaching his troubled mailman Brady McDaniels (Jeffrey S.S. Johnson).

A veteran of the Iraq War, McDaniels is an alcoholic whose behavior caused him to lose the love and faith of his wife and son. Once he lost his family, McDaniels began to spiral out of control, drinking away his sorrows nightly until his faithfully Christian supervisor changes McDaniels’ mail route. The change allows McDaniels and Tyler to cross paths, and McDaniels grows inspired by Tyler’s relationship with God.

Tyler views God as a friend, a teacher, and most importantly, a pen-pal. He composes and mails a letter to God on a daily basis. It is through these letters that McDaniels learns of Tyler’s unwavering faith and discovers that faith is what he has been seeking all along. Tyler’s letters are his prayers to God, and surprisingly, the prayers are less preoccupied with Tyler’s condition and more concerned with the people in Tyler’s life. More than anything, Tyler trusts in God’s will, and feels certain that God holds a place for him in heaven. In order for him to acquire true peace, however, Tyler wants to know that his family and friends will find comfort and happiness after he is gone.

In the face of hardship, Tyler’s family struggles with their own beliefs. Tyler’s mother (Robyn Lively) begins to lose faith that she and her family are part of an ultimate plan, and even rejects her own mother’s offerings of Biblical inspiration. Tyler’s teenage brother Ben (Michael Christopher Bolten) too believes that his family has been abandoned by God.

Ultimately, Tyler’s unfaltering faith and courage are contagious and impact all those around him. He becomes an inspiration to his family, community, and eventually, the country. Tyler can rest peacefully knowing that he has helped others open their hearts to God.

*Letters to God* has all of the elements of an inspirational film, though it crosses into “preachy” territory at times. Unlike other Christian-themed films like *The Blind Side*, *The Book of Eli*, or those of Tyler Perry, who allows for humor and even some romance in his films, there is very little else to *Letters to God* aside from the message that prayer and faith can provide hope and salvation. This may potentially put off non-churchgoers who may fare better with a subtler message. At times, the religious message even seems a bit forced. For example, in the middle of Ben’s angst-ridden “woe is me” speech, Ben’s grandmother stops him to engage in prayer. Even to the most pious churchgoer, it does not appear to



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 13, 2010

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be authentic.

The film also leaves a lot to be desired in the realm of acting. Both Tyler and Ben toe the line between sympathetic characters and melodramatic protagonists.

Likewise, the cinematography suffers at times. For example, towards the end of the film, there is a musical montage that bizarrely recaps already-seen moments from the film. More than one moment in the film could have been characterized as an ending, except that the film continued. Additionally, some of the transitions between scenes are awkward and abrupt.

Despite these issues, the film is redeemed in a variety of ways, including by its soundtrack, which is inspirational and features Christian bands ranging from rock musicians to country artists.

Overall, the powerful message in *Letters to God* far surpasses any critique of its theatricality. *Letters to God* closes by sharing real-life stories of cancer patients whose faiths have been a source of inspiration and hope throughout their traumatic ordeals. Nearly every moment of the film is a tearjerker, either invoking tears of hope and love, or those of grief. In any event, it forces viewers to face their own faith and for this reason alone, it is a must-see family film.



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