

# What Viewers Are Saying About



Angels are real. Some even have fur.

## THE MOVIE

“A wholesome family movie. A wonderful story which features a young boy named David Hyler and the struggles he faces over the years into his adult years. The themes are great: **forgiveness, loyalty, second chances, and love. Catch this one!**”

—THE DOVE FOUNDATION

“**Entertaining. Inspiring. Encouraging.** My wife and I found ourselves laughing and crying, and even getting a little upset at times. Other audience reactions have been anywhere from ‘WOW!’ to ‘AMAZING’ and ‘This movie will change your life.’ It’s the wonderful kind of story our troubled times need more of.”

—BOB KEMP, *Renew America*

“**Well worth watching!**”

—DR. TED BAEHR, Publisher, *Movieguide.org*

“A good, heartwarming storyline. **A modern tale of redemption.** Offers a message of hope. It encourages the audience to step out in faith and work to make a difference to others and demonstrates how God’s hand is always guiding us, even when life appears to be nothing but repeated pain and rejection. Appropriate for all ages. Even a cat person will love this one.”

—DARYL MADORE, *The Times Record*

“**Well told and beautifully executed,** with numerous heart-warming scenes that will not be easily forgotten. A wonderful movie.”

—MICHELLE COUCHON, *Woonsocket Patch*

“We have long been waiting for a movie that teaches, gives hope, reveals faith, and entertains. *Footprints* is a true story that will certainly touch the heart. **A movie no one will want to miss.**”

—DAVID THERRIEN, Pastor, New Hope Christian Church,  
Swansea, MA

“A heartwarming story of man and animal that **presents evangelism in a refreshing, challenging venue** both edifying and entertaining.”

—ARCHIE P. EMERSON, Senior Pastor, Ocean State Baptist  
Church, Smithfield, RI

“**Communicates the power and love of Jesus Christ in a heartwarming, yet poignant way.** A breath of fresh air. *Footprints* will broaden one’s perception of ministry. Everyone should ‘paws’ and see this movie.”

—RANDALL WARD, Vice President, Boston Baptist College,  
Boston, MA

## OTHER AUDIENCE REACTIONS

“This movie will change your life.”

“A great story. Demonstrates that God can work through any channel.”

“A source of inspiration, comfort, guidance, and light for me in my new discovery and appreciation of God.”

“A very powerful message...a message we should all be paying attention to and the type of thing this world needs to help turn it around.”

“Wow! Absolutely amazing! Brought tears to my eyes!”

# *footprints*

Angels are real. Some even have fur.

J I M H U G G I N S

Based on the screenplay by Jim Huggins and Russ Dougherty  
Adapted by Terry Burns



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**Footprints: Angels are real. Some even have fur.**

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The critically-acclaimed movie *Footprints: Angels are real. Some even have fur* is available at [www.footprintsmovie.com](http://www.footprintsmovie.com) on DVD. Visit New Shepherd Films at [www.newshepherdfilms.com](http://www.newshepherdfilms.com) for more information on this movie and other family-friendly productions.

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*Footprints* is based on actual life events. Names have been changed to protect privacy.

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FOR CADIE  
1997-2008



Sometimes losing everything you value  
can lead to an outcome  
greater than you could ever dream.



# Prologue

Journeys begin one step at a time.

In every life there comes a defining moment. That moment when everything changes. A time when things that appear so dark, grim, and hopeless are irrevocably transformed by the light of faith and hope.

For David Hyler and for the German shepherd Cadie, that moment began when they met each other. Theirs is a stunning story of hope and love, of rescue and redemption—not only for each of them, but for countless thousands of others, whose lives they touched.

But to tell of their transformation, and to experience the wonder and miracle for yourself, I must go back to where the story first began....





# 1



*Summer 1967*

**F**ive-year-old David sat in the driveway playing with Ginger, his beloved stuffed dog, oblivious to the muted cursing and clanging of tools behind the garage.

On the other side of the building his father, Gerald Hyler, struggled to repair a lawn tractor, his lack of success escalating his temper rapidly.

Gerald straightened and wiped sweat from his forehead with the back of a greasy hand and onto his filthy T-shirt. “Will, get out here! Now!” he bellowed in the general direction of the aging white house.

The heat and the humidity were taking their toll on him as he glared at the offending piece of machinery. When it dawned on him that his older son wasn’t coming, he yelled louder. “William, I said for you to get out here, right now!”

Gerald stalked around the garage and spotted his younger son. “Where’s your brother?” he demanded.

David smiled and pointed across the street. “He’s playing with his friends.”

Gerald sighed deeply. “Just what I need.” He grimaced. “Well, you’ll have to do. Come over here and be quick about it.”

In childlike innocence David missed the danger signs of his father’s anger and followed after him, glad to have a chance to be a helper for once. It was always his brother, Will, who got to help, so this would be a special treat.

“Yay! I’m going to help Daddy,” David said happily out loud to himself. “And I’m going to be the best helper ever.”

The boy raced to stand beside his father, who disdainfully studied the disabled mower sitting amidst half-mown grass at the rear of the back yard. He ran his hand through his short-cropped hair, depositing more grease and dirt there, and pondered. “I guess you aren’t strong enough to hold this up while I fix it. I’ll have to find another way.”

Gerald was the kind of man who didn’t have the patience to work on things as a rule. He grew frustrated easily, and his close-to-the-surface temper soon made whatever project he was working on more difficult, if not impossible. Add to that the fact that his work had been interrupted when he ran over a piece of cable, wrapping it around the twin blades of the mower and locking it down tight. That alone had pushed his emotions close to the boiling-over point.

After carrying a couple of cinder blocks out to the mower, Gerald found a long board he could use as a lever to lift the side of the machine. He positioned the blocks close to the mower and inserted the board. He looked over at his small son, who was watching with great interest.

“Get over here,” he ordered.

With one swift motion, Gerald grabbed David under the armpits and plopped him none too gently on the end of the board as if he were making him walk the plank but from a seated position. It raised the front of the lawn tractor sufficiently off the ground. He pointed a finger in the boy’s face and barked, “Sit still. You’re gonna hold this up. Don’t you move!”

David smiled his shy smile. He would do anything to please his dad, and it had always been that way. Besides his mother’s light-brown hair and soft brown eyes, he shared other attributes with her too—her gentle nature, her quick smile, her wanting to make everyone, and especially her husband, happy.

David’s brother, Will, was more like his dad.

Gerald crawled under the mower deck and began to work. The cutters he was using didn't make any headway on the heavy wire.

David fidgeted with his little stuffed friend in his hands, swinging his legs back and forth, causing the mower to move slightly.

With exasperation, Gerald slid out from under the mower deck, got to his feet, and stalked over to David. Jerking the stuffed animal away from his son, he tossed it aside. "Boy! I told you not to move."

David froze, the vehemence in his father's voice scaring him. He hated it when his father got angry. Then bad things happened.

Gerald squatted down, crawled back under the mower, and continued to wrestle with the repair.

A minute later the cutters he was using got away from him and bounced out from under the mower. Eager to please his father, David jumped down to get them.

The mower slammed down, barely giving Gerald time to get out of the way.

David walked over to his dad and held out the wire cutters. "Here, Daddy, I got these for you."

Gerald's anger boiled over, and he jerked the tool from the boy's hand. "I told you not to move, and I meant it. Can't you do *anything* right? All you had to do was to *sit still!* How hard is that?"

David erupted in tears. "I'm sorry, Daddy. I was just trying to help."

Towering over his son, Gerald continued to berate him, yelling and cursing, ignoring the boy's sobbing apologies. "You could have killed me." His eyes narrowed. "Here, I'll show you. This could have happened to me."

His face a mask of rage, mere inches from David's face, Gerald grabbed the stuffed dog and ripped the head off.

Staring in shock at his treasured toy, David began to scream and cry uncontrollably.

Gerald threw the decapitated toy aside. "Take that infernal noise out of here. I don't have time for it. You're useless!"

Returning his attention to the mower, he muttered under his breath, "Worthless kid" and slung the tool he was holding across the yard.

Then, realizing the tool was what he needed to continue working, he cursed and went to retrieve it.

\* \* \*

David scooped up his toy and ran for the house. "Mommy! Mommy!" Heading straight for his bedroom, he threw himself on his bed.

His mother raced in to him. "David, what is it?"

He looked up at her, eyes filled with tears, and held out the decapitated animal. Ginger was his favorite companion, more of a security blanket than a stuffed toy.

She sat on the bed beside him. "My, my, what happened to this?"

"Daddy."

"Daddy did this?" She stroked his head. "Don't you worry. I'll fix your puppy. She'll be good as new."

Just then the engine of the lawn tractor revved in the yard, and the sound moved closer to the house.

His mom got up. "You rest now, honey. I have to go make dinner. I'll come get you when it's ready."

\* \* \*

As Katherine entered the kitchen, Gerald came in the back door, slamming the screen behind him. She moved to the cabinet, removed some utensils, and began to prepare dinner. He ignored

her and went to the sink to fill a glass with water.

She stared at his back, sweat-stained and greasy. His face and neck were flushed. All of the signs of the anger she knew so well were there. She knew it wasn't a time to cross him, but in spite of her fear, she knew she had to defend her son. Busying herself opening a can of green beans, she said in a quiet voice, "You were too harsh on David."

He didn't even bother to turn when he addressed her. "If he isn't treated like a baby, he won't grow up to be one," he said matter-of-factly.

Abandoning the act of preparing the meal, she put the back of her hand to her forehead in frustration. "He's only five, Gerald. You expect him to be like William, but he can't be. It's not fair for you to ask him to be like his older brother. If you keep beating him down, he'll never grow up."

Pivoting viciously toward her, he spat out, "And if you keep treating him like he's God's gift to the world, his big brother will do the beating instead."

"Me?" She clasped her hand to her chest. Her voice escalated. "You're the one turning William against his younger brother! How dare you—"

He jabbed his finger at her, raising his voice to be heard over the top of her objections. "How dare me? He can't do anything right, and you tell him everything is okay. How dare *you*?"

He turned his back on her. Then, after a few moments' silence, he swiveled his head in her direction. His voice was softer, but full of menace. "How dare you stand there and preach to me about how to raise *my* sons."

Gerald aimed the glass toward the sink, shattering it, then stormed past Katherine out of the room.

The mower's motor revved immediately, and Gerald continued his task of mowing the yard.

Woodenly Katherine went to get the dust pan, fighting back the tears without success. After she swept up the broken glass,

she stumbled to the kitchen table. Hanging her head, she began to weep silently.

She was exhausted.

It was just too much.

It had been too much for a long time, but she was trapped.

Trapped in a loveless, abusive marriage.

Trapped by her love for her sons, and especially her love for her sensitive young son, David.

\* \* \*

In the doorway David stood and watched his mother cry, tears on his own cheeks as well.

## 2



*September 1967*

Gerald drove into the driveway in his old Ford Fairlane. Katherine watched from the porch as he got out and opened the door. Two young German shepherd pups shot from the car as if propelled out of a cannon. They had dark coats, gangly long legs, and boundless energy. As they scampered past the porch where she was standing, she stepped down and raised an eyebrow at Gerald. “Pups?”

He nodded. “Pups.”

“For the children?” she asked, concerned.

The smile on his face faded. Gerald didn’t have discussions. He lectured or ordered. “Of course for the children,” he said sarcastically. “I had dogs when I was a kid. It’s just what they need—to teach them responsibility. We’ve been through this already.”

Gerald pushed past her and followed the pups to the back yard, where the boys were playing. “Hey boys,” he called, “look what I have.”

The boys came running.

Katherine frowned as she came around the corner. “Are you sure this is a good idea?” She folded her arms across her chest. “I mean, Will is certainly old enough, but I think David is too young. A dog is a big responsibility, and that pup will grow up much faster than he does.”

Gerald didn’t take his eyes off the boys. “I said we’re getting