



# RED TAILS™

COURAGE HAS NO COLOR

FAITH STUDY GUIDE



## FROM THE CINEMA TO THE CHURCH

### INTRODUCTION

It was 10:55 a.m. on Sunday morning. Two members James Williams and Ashley Jones met in a quick encounter on the way to the Sanctuary at their home church. Praise and worship was about to begin and only a quick conversation between the two friends was possible.

James asked “by the way did you and your husband see the movie RED TAILS yet.” Ashley answered, “Isn’t that the movie by George Lucas, the guy who directed Star Wars and Indiana Jones.” I haven’t seen RED TAILS yet, but if it is anything like those two, you know, I’ll see it real soon.

James responds, well it’s like those two, but it is very different. Indiana Jones was about one man’s past adventures and you know

...Star Wars is about the future. Both of those films were great art imitating life, RED TAILS is a great film all about real life. This is a message about men who managed to fight a war on two fronts at one time. They were fighting a military campaign against an enemy very equipped and supported by their government, while they were fighting with virtual scraps from reconditioned planes with only marginal support from the United States government.

But they won the battle!

How? These men managed to turn the tide of the battle by employing the most important yet invisible weapon of warfare. FAITH!

The Tuskegee Airmen used comrades to support each other in the face of only apathy and indifference from the government which sent them on these high-flying missions. Every mission was flown in a tight flight pattern, their very survival depended on every squadron member flying and staying in formation. Some of the beautiful aerial displays in RED TAILS were really lessons in how to soar in life’s battles.

Everyone stayed in their lane, each plane carrying the responsibility of being the eyes of the planes to its left and its right. Another principal of the comradery shown in these flight patterns was the simple idea to get everybody home from the mission. One of the brilliant and powerful unstated principles in the film is simply this. We can win, we should expect to win, but we’ve got to aim high and stick together.

“This is a great film that everyone in this church will appreciate, because everybody here has a part of their life connected to the story of RED TAILS.”

## OVERVIEW

### Why is RED TAILS a Great Message to the Church?

There's probably not a person in the church today, African American or Caucasian who is not connected to the story of RED TAILS. Why? Because RED TAILS is a unique American saga. It's a story of men who changed the history of life throughout this country and the world by what they accomplished flying above the sky's of east Africa back in the 1940's.

You remember this story, don't you? America was caught in a fight for survival called World War II. It was a fight in which everybody in America was expected to be involved. But, somehow one group was oddly excluded. There were no African Americans allowed to fly and fight this war because the government and much of the American population had concluded that African Americans lacked both the courage and the high caliber intellect to operate a military fighter plane. It wasn't because African Americans had failed in this effort; it was instead because they had never been given a chance.

### NEVER A CHANCE TO FAIL MEANT NEVER A CHANCE TO SUCCEED.

That all changed when African American civil rights leaders, newspapers, people inside and outside government, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the African American church began to preach one consistent message. The message was "all God's children are created equally."

## RED TAILS WON THE BATTLE WITH FAITH ALONE

The RED TAILS squadron consisted of men who came from across America. Many had no previous family connection to the United States military, few attended or graduated from a military academy without exception none of the Tuskegee Airmen had the opportunity to train on America's first class airplanes. They trained and flew third-rate, mostly discarded airplanes. Despite their lack, they shared one thing in common. They operated in faith; faith in themselves, faith that the statements all were created equal, were true and faith in God.

What can we learn from the God's Word in this epic life struggle of the RED TAILS? The most enduring principle on the theater screen is how these men and how all men manage to overcome doubt and uncertainty to accomplish their goal.

Bear in mind the faith of the Tuskegee Airmen is a faith we preach and practice, not just in the skies above Europe, but on the sidewalks of America and the world. Remember, these men had military commissions that meant more to them than to the government which granted it to them. Let's go to scripture:



Romans 8:28

*"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

God called these men into fellowship with each other despite their obvious lack of weaponry and support from their own government. They fashioned together what could really be called a flying faith. It was the very essence of the faith which we teach, preach and hopefully practice every day. We are called into fellowship; this fellowship calls us into a faith that reaches for more and this faith will set us apart by grace to accomplish what seems to be the impossible.

One of the most powerful scenes from RED TAILS is a virtual display of how this single military squadron so unarmed in the technology of war managed to combat the enemy and win.



One of the things we understand and accept as believers is the necessity of putting our situations in a place where God can display His power. Could it be possible for the Red Tail squadron to remain in the air challenging a superior enemy unless they were being held up by God who supported them on the wings of His reliability? At the conclusion of each mission the Red Tails returned to base, not just counting their victories but also knowing they had overcome with skills and insight they were never taught, but given.

## LESSON LEARNED

Have you ever put together a victory in the absence of the necessary equipment? Have you ever fought a battle without some type of highly organized and researched knowledge? Sure. Most of us have. But that victory was accomplished because of God's influence.



In one scene from RED TAILS a highly decorated and skilled enemy pilot asked the question, are these just Negroes? In essence, "How could mere Negroes accomplish what they are doing; what's holding them up in the sky? What is their secret weapon?" Believers know the answer. Here they are:

2 Chronicles 7:14

*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

2 Timothy 1:7;

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

Ephesians 6:10

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

And there is the most amazing biblical Word on display in the life of the Red Tail Squadron that leaps out of ...

Romans 4:20-21

*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

### TURNING DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

The odds of the Red Tail Squadron ever getting off the ground were not good. Somehow they managed to overcome the gravity of racism, lack of opportunity and perhaps even self-doubt. However, they did get off the ground and managed to fly the skies with courage and skill.

The lesson here is that the real champion never depends on what they have, but rather who they are. The great boxer Muhammad Ali once said that champions aren't made in gyms, champions are made from something inside of them. RED TAILS is a lesson about a squad that got shot at, shot down, but came back flying every day.



A powerful moment in the film occurs with one of the Red Tail airmen gets shot down. It may be one of the most instructive moments in the movie. It vividly displays that there are absolute moments in life when things literally will turn upside-down in life. However, this airman who was shot down managed to immediately change his

focus from a prisoner of war to an enemy combatant on the ground, still trying to fight the battle.

And he won!

One of the great privileges of watching this film is to know that many of the men whose lives are being portrayed are still very much alive. It's one of the rare opportunities that we have to actually talk to the men who made the history that is being shown on the screen. These airmen all had one thing in common, they came back to fly every day. They fought to fly one more mission.

What can we utilize from this struggle in the struggles we combat in life?

### LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

There is a picture of Jesus in the cockpit of one of the planes from the RED TAILS Squadron. That picture was a symbol of the five important lessons to people of faith throughout the world, then and now. Those lessons sustain us now in our times of incredible challenges and changes.

**Lesson 1** – It was their attitude that produced their altitude. Remember a greater attitude produces a greater altitude. That statement is somewhat of a cliché but nonetheless true. The men of the RED TAILS squadron never became comfortable with hand-me-down equipment. They were never satisfied with missions that did not challenge their courage or the caliber of their ability. The United States government throughout the movie was more than willing to allow these men to settle for less. These men however were never satisfied.

“My granddaddy flew better equipment than this.” It takes a believing spirit to look at poor circumstances and aim higher than where you start.

THERE IS ALWAYS A WORD OF GOD SPEAKING TO YOU,  
ASKING YOU TO FLY HIGHER.

Genesis 13:14... "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward;"



The believer has to always expect God to do a greater thing in every situation. A believer is always higher than his circumstance. Believers look higher, dream higher, think higher. Ordinary men in this movie dared to fly, literally to extraordinary heights. Their planes were never intended to go as far or as fast but the life changing energy in their mission came from God and not from their engine.

**Lesson 2** – In life's situations you must fly above the gravity of discrimination that would hold you down. How? Think in military terms as these men displayed. They defied gravity not just in their planes but in their spirits. Isn't this the direction that comes from our general?

There is an encouraging word to every one of God's enlisted believers. It comes from Ephesians 6:10,

*"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."*

Can you revisit the words of these two scriptures? Words like strong, fight, power. Each one of them is a challenge for today's Christian to be fortified. To face today's enemy.



**Lessons 3** – The American story of overcoming odds is a spiritual story. Before these men flew they first prayed, *"Heavenly Father send your angels down as we fly through the sky."*

If you are looking for a secret weapon, that's it. Before they went up in the air they looked down to the ground.

The most powerful hand in the arms of a Christian soldier is prayer. Prayer was daily, sometimes hourly; prayer was sometimes minute by minute. Today's Christian has to have an unceasing and unfailing prayer life. Tuskegee Airman had to pray on the ground but think of this, they had to pray while flying. Not an easy task but the formula that allowed them to fly had allowed them to land.

Psalm 91:1

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

**Lesson 4** – The story of the Tuskegee Airman and your story is a story of success and failure. The good guys won in this story. However, the fact that they won might obscure the losses along the way. There were losses. Planes crashed. People died. Some relationships fell

apart yet at the end of the fighting they won the war. The lesson here for the believer is simply this... you may lose some battles but you will win the war. How can you remain consistent in that belief? The believer has to trust and believe that the "ultimate plan" for winning has already been designed.

Make this your word for today:

Jeremiah 29:11-12

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."*



**Lesson 5** – RED TAILS reminds us that there is a great value in invisible faith even when the enemies are very visible. Each of the characters in RED TAILS were dramatically ordinary men. The commanding officer (Terrance Howard) fought his battles in the suites and not in the sky. His battles were no less fierce and treacherous. He overcame doubt and disbelief to complete the mission.

The squadron leader (Cuba Gooding Jr.) operated in this life struggle of RED TAILS with one common response, "Command received" and led his men to follow the plan. Today's believer has to follow the plan.

## WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU? TO FIND AN ANSWER GO TO THE WORD OF GOD.

Three important scriptures:

Isaiah 42:8-9

*I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; Before they spring forth I tell you of them.*

Isaiah 46:9-10

Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,

Psalms 119:160

The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.

The world has already made a judgment about the success of America's fight against her enemies in World War II. That judgment generally says that this country was successful because of a coalition of nations to whom we refer as the allies. They include the United States, Soviet Union, France, China and many others. What it does not mention is the colossal contribution of just under one thousand men who flew fifteen-hundred missions at a time when America was long on airplanes but short on airmen.

The RED TAILS only now are receiving the honor and notice of their heroic accomplishments. They started out considered only an unlikely experiment. It was an experiment designed to fail.

But they won.

One of their squadron leaders died in a crash, but his legacy and those of many other survived. Imagine fighting for a nation over



CUBA GOODING JR.

TERRENCE HOWARD



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TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX PRESENTS A LUCASFILM LTD. PRODUCTION RED TAILS™ NATE PARKER DAVID OYELOWO NE-YO ELIJAH KELLEY WITH CUBA GOODING JR. AND TERRENCE HOWARD DIRECTED BY MICHAEL CHALLORAN AND BEN BURTT PRODUCED BY NICHOLAS PALMER MUSIC BY TERENCE BLANCHARD EDITOR JOHN ARONSON VISUAL EFFECTS BY INDUSTRIAL LIGHT & MAGIC EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GEORGE LUCAS PRODUCED BY RICK MCCALLUM AND CHARLES FLOYD JOHNSON STORY BY JOHN RIDLEY SCREENPLAY BY JOHN RIDLEY AND AARON MCGRUDER DIRECTED BY ANTHONY HEMINGWAY

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