

# Viewer's Guide

FAITH  
REDEMPTION  
SURVIVAL

DAVID  
OYELOWO

KATE  
MARA

# CAPTIVE

BASED ON THE INSPIRING TRUE STORY

PARAMOUNT PICTURES PRESENTS A PIVOTAL FILMS PRODUCTION A GORVISIS/SEE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION A DODS ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION A TORBIA SUTTON PRODUCTION  
ANITA CA TILAS PRODUCTION A JERRY JANUSZON FILM DAVID OYELOWO KATE MARA "CAPTIVE" LEONOR VARELA JESSICA OYELOWO WITH HANNA ROSSERS AND MICHAEL K. WILLIAMS  
CASTING BY BRADLEY FENTON AND ANA FREEDRICK COSTUME DESIGNER MATTHEW SPEER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PAULINE BAILEY AND BRUCE CAMERON BOYLE PRODUCED BY ANELISA KACI DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LUIS SANCHEZ, A.C.S.  
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IN UK CINEMAS FROM 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER

## A message from Nick & Carol Pollard

In this viewer's guide, we have told some of the true story behind the film *Captive* (in UK cinemas from 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

Much of this is drawn from the book *Unlikely Angel*, in which Ashley Smith tells, in her own words, what happened that fateful night in March 2005 when Brian Nichols held her hostage for seven hours.

We have also included some quotations from two books that were central to the events of that night: *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Bible*. We hope these will help you in your reflection, whether on your own or in discussion with others.

Most of all, we hope that this small booklet will enrich your life as you reflect upon the inspiring true story behind the powerful film *Captive*.

**Nick and Carol Pollard**  
co-founders of Ethos Media

**ETHOS  
MEDIA.org**

Get more copies of this booklet and other resources  
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*'This film shows two broken people who unexpectedly  
find light in the darkest of places.'*

David Oyelowo

# CAPTIVE



## Captive is based on this inspiring true story...

In March 2005, Ashley Smith made headlines around the globe when she talked her way out of the hands of Brian Nichols, after he took her hostage for seven hours in her home.

Like her captor, Ashley experienced self-destructive darkness and distress – in her case, after she watched her first husband being murdered. In her despair she turned to drugs. ‘Instead of... facing my feelings,’ she says, ‘I took drugs so I didn’t have to feel.’ As a result, she lost custody of her then three-year-old daughter and was jailed several times for drink-driving, shoplifting and drugs.

***‘I had been there at the bottom with no hope. Feeling dead in my heart, dead in my spirit, just dead.’***

Ashley Smith

Yet even during her most desolate times, she yearned for something better, seeking a new life.

***‘I was a struggling single mum trying to battle drug addiction, regain custody of my child, and put my life back together.’***

Ashley Smith

Then Brian Nichols took her hostage. He was facing trial for rape at the Fulton County courthouse in Atlanta, Georgia, but he had overcome his guard and grabbed her gun. He then killed the judge and other court officials before escaping on foot.

Through the long dark hours of the night, while Brian held Ashley hostage, she read to him excerpts from *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Bible*, which provided a message of hope for two broken people.



Brian (David Oyelowo) held Ashley (Kate Mara) captive throughout the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005.



Download video featurettes from [www.ethosmedia.org/captive](http://www.ethosmedia.org/captive)

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Ashley (Kate Mara) reads Brian (David Oyelowo) excerpts from *The Purpose Driven Life*.

***'The greatest tragedy is not death,  
but life without purpose'.***

*The Purpose Driven Life*



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When Brian pointed his gun to her head, Ashley cried out, ‘My name is Ashley Smith, I’m a mother.’ Despite her weaknesses and failings, she knew that her life had purpose and meaning because she was a mum. As they talked together, Brian revealed that he also had a child, whom he had not yet seen. ‘I’m never going to be able to raise him’, he said. ‘I’m going to prison for the rest of my life.’

***‘When I heard I had a son I had to break out.’***

Brian (David Oyelowo)

As the night wore on, Brian told his story to Ashley. He spoke of his seven-year relationship with a girlfriend. He told of his sense of betrayal when she started a relationship with another man, and how she then accused him of rape – the charge he was facing in court that day.

As an unusual bond developed between these two parents, both separated from their child, Brian asked her to read to him from the book on her table. ‘If you want to know why you were placed on this planet you must begin with God,’ she read from *The Purpose Driven Life*. ‘He shaped you for a purpose, and he expects you to make the most of what you have been given.’

***‘I haven’t been given anything.’***

Brian (David Oyelowo)

***‘You have a son.’***

Ashley (Kate Mara)



David Oyelowo plays Brian Nichols in *Captive* from Paramount Pictures.

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When Brian said, 'I had to do whatever it took to get out,' Ashley understood. She had been married to someone who could be impulsive and violent. For two and a half years, her husband Mack had been a hard working and faithful provider, but with a capacity to lash out – even at her. She recalls how one New Year's Eve, when Mack was drunk and angry, he knocked her out cold and left her lying on the pavement. She understood how Brian might have been overcome with rage.

***'Maybe he just exploded with frustration and anger. Maybe he just wanted out so badly he went crazy, totally flipped, and started shooting. I could understand how that could happen.'***

Ashley Smith

Ashley and Mack had worked at their marriage. When their daughter, Paige, was born prematurely and fighting for her life, Mack became a devoted and loving father.



Ashley Smith with her husband Mack.



The first time Ashley saw Paige was in this Polaroid taken in the special-care nursery.

But one night Mack had been overcome with rage at someone who had bad-mouthed him. Ashley could not hold him back from fighting. 'Something inside him had just exploded and taken over,' she says. Reluctantly, Ashley went with Mack and saw him fall in the fight. As he hobbled back to the car, she knew something was wrong. Mack had been knifed and the wound had punctured his heart. While waiting for an ambulance, Ashley cradled her 23-year-old husband as he died in her arms.

***'What you've done... it's really terrible, and I know firsthand because someone killed my husband... but to God it's no different than what I've done by lying to my family or doing drugs or stealing from a department store or cheating on my boyfriend. It's no different... not to God. And if he can forgive me, he can forgive you.'***

Ashley Smith



*'When life has meaning you can bear almost anything; without it nothing is bearable.'*

The Purpose Driven Life

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After Mack's death, Ashley really lost control of her life, taking drugs to be constantly high. 'One batch of pills would wear off and I would take another handful.' At every opportunity she left the house to get high, telling her daughter, 'Mummy will be back later.'

***'I used ice [crystal meth] because I was scared to death after Mack died.'***

Ashley Smith

Eventually, she took her daughter to her Aunt's house to leave her there for good. 'I'm not stopping', she told her aunt, 'I would rather die than quit doing these drugs.'

***'Fear is a self-imposed prison that will keep you from becoming what God intends you to be. You must move against it with weapons of faith and love.'***

The Purpose Driven Life

By now she was trying to get her life back on track. She spent time in rehab. She was holding down two jobs and studying for a medical training program. Most of all, she was creating a new home for her young daughter, Paige. When Brian took her captive, Ashley had not seen Paige for two weeks. Throughout that night, Ashley wanted to make sure she didn't miss her meeting with her daughter the next day.

***'I've made bad decisions and I've had to face those. And now I'm learning to correct the bad decisions with good decisions.'***

Ashley Smith

*The Purpose Driven Life* contains quotations from *The Bible*, which Ashley also read to Brian through her night of captivity. She encouraged him to see that it was possible for his life to be turned around. She said to him, 'One thing that helps me sometimes is this verse, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".'





*The young Ashley Smith in her first year at Augusta Christian School.*

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Ashley knew what it felt like to face loss, failure and powerlessness.

***'I lost everything, they said I was an unfit mother  
and took away my little girl.'***

Ashley (Kate Mara)

She was taking responsibility for her actions and finding hope for the future, and she explained this to Brian. 'You killed some people... You've got to pay for that,' she told him. 'God can still forgive you. You've got to believe that.'

***'You have a son.'***

Ashley (Kate Mara)

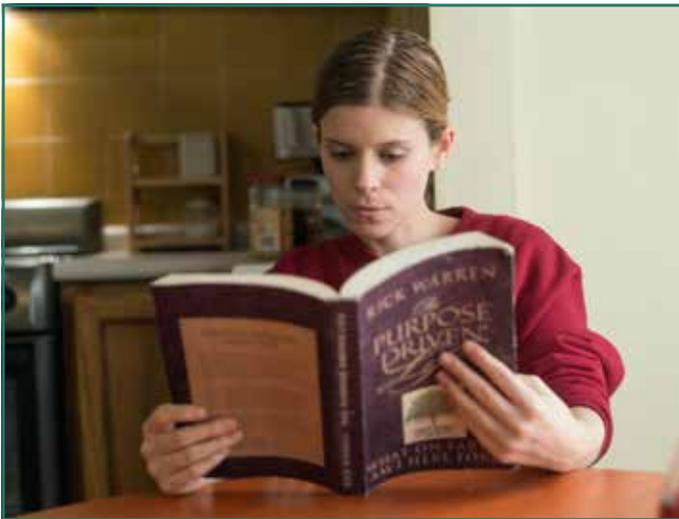
***'I'm never going to see him again, am I?'***

Brian (David Oyelowo)

***'If you stop what you are doing and give yourself up,  
maybe you will.'***

Ashley (Kate Mara)

Reflecting back on the events of that night, Ashley says, 'God had something for me to do, and I was doing it. I was telling Brian what he needed to hear, trying to help him quit hurting people and turn himself in.'



***'If God only used perfect people, nothing would get done because  
none of us are perfect.'***

Rick Warren, author of *The Purpose Driven Life*



***'Wherever you are, there's hope.'***

Ashley Smith

Ashley helped Brian to face the truth about himself, his choices, his actions.

He felt betrayed and desperate because of what he saw as a false accusation of rape. But he also felt ashamed about shooting people to escape.

When he watched the news coverage on TV he thought of his family. 'My mother', he said to Ashley, 'she's probably watching this going, "What's he doing? That's not my son".' Even he found it hard to accept what he had done. He said, 'I just can't believe that's me up there – on that TV.'

Through the night, Ashley helped Brian on a journey of self discovery. He recognised the bad things he had done. 'I deserve a bullet in the back,' he confessed. And he acknowledged the effect this had on his soul. 'Look at my eyes,' he said, 'I'm already dead.' But the quotes from *The Bible* in the book Ashley was reading seemed to offer a new start.

***'He's the God of the second, third, fourth, and fifth chance;  
he never gives up on anyone.'***

Ashley Smith

Ashley read Brian extracts from *The Purpose Driven Life*, which includes quotations from *The Bible* such as these:

***I am your Creator.  
You were in my care even before you were born.***  
(Isaiah 44:2, CEV)

***Smile on me, your servant;  
teach me the right way to live.***  
(Psalm 119:135, MSG)

***Come close to God,  
and God will come close to you.***  
(James 4:8, NLT)

***Offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from  
death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an  
instrument of righteousness.***  
(Romans 6:13, NIV)

***Love means living the way God commanded us to live.  
As you have heard from the beginning,  
his command is this: Live a life of love.***  
(2 John 1:6, NCV)



***But where sin increased,  
grace increased all the more.***

(Romans 5:20, NIV)

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When Ashley Smith came face-to-face with Brian Nichols on the night of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005, it seemed that her life would soon be over. However, she believes that being held hostage was an experience God used for good.

Today, Ashley is married and working as a medical technician at a hospital in the city where she lives. She is an active member of her church, and enjoys running, painting and crafting.

She says that her favorite job in the world is being mum to her daughter Paige (16), stepdaughter Riley (14), and son Cole (4).



*Ashley Smith on the set of Captive.*



## Digging Deeper: Finding Hope

Many people lose hope through their experiences in this life. That is why poets and other writers often talk of 'faint hope' or 'desperate hope', because disappointments destroy hope.

According to *The Bible*, which is quoted in the book Ashley read to Brian through that night, there is a different hope. It doesn't depend upon our experiences, or our emotions, or our circumstances. It depends upon God.

If one believes in a living God who is real and active in our lives, and who offers us eternal life in his presence, then a very different type of hope is possible.

This is a hope that depends upon God, not upon what we possess, or might be able to do for ourselves, or what another person may do to us.

Faith in God offers a hope that our lives are in his hands, that nothing can separate us from his love, and that ultimately we will be with him in glory.

Biblical hope is not at the mercy of changing circumstances. It is a confident assurance that, whatever happens in this life, God will be with us - and the very best is yet to be.

***On him we have set our  
hope that he will continue to  
deliver us.***

(2 Corinthians 1:10, NIV)

***Be joyful in hope, patient in  
affliction, faithful in prayer.***

(Romans 12:12 NIV)

***The glorious riches of this  
mystery, which is Christ in  
you, the hope of glory.***

(Colossians 1:27 NIV)

## The Filmmakers

### David Oyelowo: Producer and plays Brian Nichols

David Oyelowo (pronounced – “oh-yellow-oh”) is a classically trained stage actor who graduated from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. After successful roles on stage (notably in *Henry VI* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he was the first black actor to play a King of England in a major Shakespearean production) he came to prominence playing Danny Hunter, an MI5 agent in the popular BBC drama *Spooks*.

On the big screen, after roles in *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), *Red Tails* (2012), *Middle of Nowhere* (2012), *Lincoln* (2012), *The Butler* (2013), and *Selma* (2014), David has quickly become one of Hollywood’s most sought-after talents.

### Kate Mara: plays Ashley Smith

Kate Mara was born and raised in Bedford, New York and began acting at age fourteen in local theatre projects. At fifteen, Kate made her feature film debut in *Random Hearts* (1999), for director Sydney Pollack.

Kate’s impressive list of film credits include *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) for director Ang Lee, *Transsiberian* (2008) with Sir Ben Kingsley, *127 Hours* (2010) for director Danny Boyle, as well as multiple appearances in the TV series *House of Cards* alongside Kevin Spacey.

### Jerry Jameson: Director/Producer

Jerry Jameson is a partner in Brightside Entertainment. His motion picture and television career began in post-production at Warner Brothers, where he held positions as an assistant editor, film editor and post-production supervisor before earning his stripes as a director.

Jerry directed countless episodes of popular TV series such as *Murder She Wrote* and *Magnum P.I.* as well as the television pilot for *Touched by an Angel*. He has recently completed an adaptation of the novel *Seaside* by best-selling author Terri Blackstock.



Kate Mara filming a tense climactic scene.



David Oyelowo talks with the director Jerry Jameson.



## A Tribute to the Victims

Ashley Smith describes herself as a very fortunate survivor of this tragedy with Brian Nichols. The film *Captive* is dedicated to the public servants who were not so fortunate.

On 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005 Brian Nichols took four lives.

**Judge Rowland W. Barnes** (aged 64) was serving his seventh year on the Fulton County bench. Widely regarded as one of the most loved figures in local government he was often described as jovial and warmhearted.

**Julie Ann Brandau** (aged 46) was a dedicated court reporter, working long hours to transcribe everything said in the courtroom. However she always found time to make cakes and biscuits for the jury members.

**Hoyt Teasley** (aged 43) was sergeant with the County Sheriff's Department and a member of the Georgia Air National Guard. He was known for his protective instinct since childhood, when a firecracker exploded at a family gathering and he immediately threw himself over his sister to protect her.

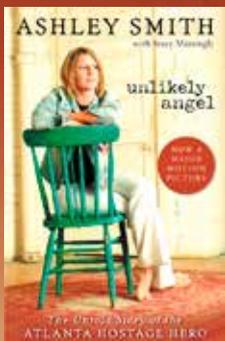
**David Wilhelm** (aged 40) was a special agent with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. With a talent for DIY (he was laying tiles at his home when he was murdered) he was known as someone who was honest and hardworking.



*David Oyelowo plays Brian Nichols and Kate Mara plays Ashley Smith in Captive from Paramount Pictures.*

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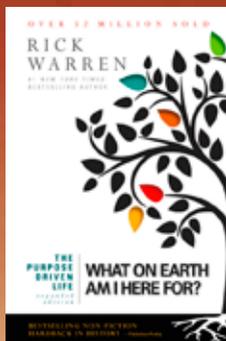


*Unlikely Angel*  
9780310346623  
PB £8.99

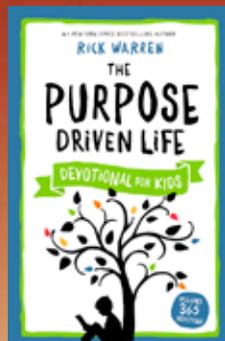


Film tie-in edition of *Unlikely Angel*

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9780310335511  
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(Coming November 5, 2015)

Experience the original story of the Atlanta hostage hero. This is Ashley's inspirational, news making life story when in 2005, she single-handedly talked the infamous Atlanta courthouse killer, Brian Nichols, into surrendering peacefully by gaining his confidence through her prayers and personal faith, and by reading passages to him from the Christian blockbuster *The Purpose Driven Life*.

Also available, Rick Warren's expanded 10th anniversary edition, and a new release for children, of his #1 international bestseller, *The Purpose Driven Life*, with over 32 million copies in print.



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*Captive* is in UK cinemas from 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
Certificate 12A



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