

AMAZING GRACE PRODUCER UPDATES CLASSIC BOOK THAT ABOLOSHED SLAVERY IN ENGLAND

Bob Beltz Shares Timeless Principles to Overcome Social Injustice

Los Angeles, Calif: **William Wilberforce** is considered one of the greatest reformers in history for his tireless efforts to abolish slavery in Britain during the 18th Century. In 1797, Wilberforce wrote a book titled *Real Christianity*, which challenged Christians to understand and apply an authentic faith in their daily lives. This book was one of the tireless efforts of Wilberforce that eventually led to the abolition of slavery in England in the 1800's. Wilberforce's life is the subject of the film *Amazing Grace* releasing to theaters on February 23, 2007 (www.amazinggracemovie.com).

Bob Beltz, one of the producers for the film, has released a modern paraphrase of Wilberforce's classic book *Real Christianity*. The revision challenges Christians today to stand bold on the same principles and fight against injustice to mankind. Beltz says, "Real Christianity is my attempt to faithfully take the words of Wilberforce and communicate them in a way the modern reader can understand. I pray this modern adaptation might have some measure of the same effect and outcome as the original."

Readers of *Real Christianity* will discover Wilberforce's passionate examination of what it means to have authentic faith today and discover how the concepts of sin, evil and depravity have been distorted, and how to live out a genuine faith. Although written more than 200 years ago, the timeless truths in this book will speak to readers today and serve as a checklist of the authenticity of spiritual values.

The theatrical release of *Amazing Grace* tells the inspiring story of how one man's passion and perseverance changed the world. Wilberforce was elected to the House of Commons at 21 and took on the issue of slavery, successfully assembling a diverse coalition that went up against the most powerful men of the time. Along the way, Wilberforce meets intense opposition from members of Parliament who feel the slave trade is tied to the stability of the British Empire. Several friends, including Wilberforce's minister, John Newton (Albert Finney), a reformed slave ship captain who penned the beloved hymn *Amazing Grace* urged him to see the cause through.

About the Author: DR. BOB BELTZ oversees film development for the Anschutz Corporation, parent company of the Anschutz Film Group and Walden Media (*Holes*, *Because of Winn-Dixie*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*). Formerly, Beltz spent 20 years in ministry, first as founding and teaching pastor of Cherry Hills Community Church in Denver, Colorado; then as senior pastor of High Street Community Church in Santa Cruz, California. Beltz is a graduate of Denver Seminary where he earned both his Master of Arts and Doctor of Ministry degrees. He is the author of ten books, including *Somewhere Fast* and *Becoming a Man of Prayer*. He and his wife live in Denver, Colorado. In addition to revising the book, Beltz will donate all author royalties to The Dalit Freedom Network (which fights for the rights of the Dalit people of India), carrying on in the spirit and passion of Wilberforce's battle for justice.



Suggested Questions for Bob Beltz:

1. What attracted you to retell the story of William Wilberforce and his work, *Real Christianity*?
2. How much of a challenge was it to revise it 200 years later?
3. How would you define a “Cultural Christian”?
4. What was Wilberforce’s idea on living a genuine faith?
5. How would you describe William Wilberforce and how did society perceive him in the 18th century?
6. What are some obstacles that would prevent someone from living a genuine faith?
7. Is our country in a state of spiritual decline? If so, what can be done to change it?
8. What is the Amazing Change campaign (www.theamazingchange.com)?

Chapter Outlines:

1. The State of Contemporary Christianity: Cultural Christianity, What the Bible Says, the Problem of Ignorance
2. Current Ideas About the Nature of Man
3. Understanding Cultural Christianity: Faulty Thinking About Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, a Few Comments on the Interaction of Emotions and Faith
4. True Standards of Christian Behavior
5. Arguments for True Christianity: The Superiority of Authentic Christian Faith, Evidence of Its Divine Origin
6. The Current State of Christianity: How We Got Here, the Political Importance of This Condition, Ideas About These Facts
7. Practical Hints About Authentic Faith

Notable Quotes from Real Christianity:

I fear for the future of authentic faith in our country. We live in a time when the common man in our country is thoroughly influenced by the current climate in which the cultural and education elite propagates an anti-Christian message.

You have to wonder what God thinks about all of this. I previously made the observation that one day we will have to give an account of how we have lived and what we have done with what God has given us. Because God is concerned about these issues, surely He will also hold us accountable for our stewardship of all the potential instruction we might have taken advantage of to learn the truths of authentic faith.

Carefully studying the Bible will reveal to us our own ignorance of these things. It will challenge us to reject a superficial understanding of Christianity and impress on us that it is imperative not to simply be religious or moral, but also to master the Bible intellectually, integrate its principles into our lives morally, and put into action what we have learned practically.

An authentic faith requires an honesty of mind, the consistent use of the means of knowledge and instruction, the humility that fosters a desire to be instructed, and an unprejudiced conclusion about what this inquiry reveals.

Another example of the most twisted variety is how we can take the truth of the Bible and use it for the most hideous purposes. Christ gets vilified when those who bear His name use it as an excuse for cruelty or persecution.

Cultural Christians might talk about religion or church in generic terms, but you will rarely hear them use the name of Jesus or speak of His death on the cross or His resurrection...they will speak of moral precepts and positive character qualities in the abstract but not as they specifically relate to Jesus.

Film Overview:

From acclaimed director Michael Apted (*The World is Not Enough*, *Coal Miner's Daughter*) comes ***Amazing Grace***, the inspiring story of how one man's passion and perseverance changed the world. Based on the true life story of William Wilberforce, a leader of the British abolition movement, the film chronicles his epic struggle to pass a law to end the slave trade in the late 18th century. Ioan Gruffudd plays Wilberforce, a man born into the age of the Great British Empire when the country's influence around the globe was at its most powerful.

Wilberforce is elected to the House of Commons at the age of 21 and entrusted by England's youngest Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger (Benedict Cumberbatch), with the cause for the Abolition of Slavery. Wilberforce finds himself torn between his successful rising career and his desire to give it all up for a life of spirituality. He seeks the advice of friend and mentor John Newton (Albert Finney), a former slave trader who turned to the Church in order to atone for his earlier life, who suggests that his best way for Wilberforce to serve God would be to fight injustice with his political influence. Wilberforce quickly becomes the rallying voice in Parliament to fight the cause and make the people of Britain, and ultimately the world, acknowledge the horror of the Slave Trade.

Amazing Grace follows Wilberforce's career through his 20's and 30's, as he and his fellow humanitarians make the issue of slavery a talking point, not only in political circles, but also throughout the country.

The Amazing Change Campaign:

William Wilberforce's work is far from finished. There are still an estimated 27 million slaves in the world today. Modern day slavery can come in many different forms. Entire families may work long days in rice-mills, brick kilns or on plantations. Children may be abducted and forced to fight in a rebel's army. All of the people in these examples are slaves—they cannot come and go as they please and are often beaten or threatened with violence. They have no autonomy in their day-to-day lives and deserve the right to be free. In conjunction with the release of the film *Amazing Grace* Walden Media is launching an integrated social justice campaign called The Amazing Change aimed at:

- Increasing literacy about the historical issue of slavery and the abolitionist movement;
- Raising awareness about modern day slavery and other forms of oppression;
- Motivating people to get involved to abolish slavery;
- Raising a new generation of youth who care about suffering in the world and become abolitionists;
- Engaging new activists in a life-long journey to invest their time, influence and resources back in the world;
- Providing much-needed funding to organizations that are working to abolish slavery.

More information is provided at www.theamazingchange.com