

### **“Amazing Grace” starring Ioan Gruffudd, Albert Finney, & Michael Gambon, 2006, PG, 118 minutes**

#### **Major Themes:**

- Slavery
- Freedom
- Perseverance & Faith
- Justice & Reform
- Politics

#### **Interesting info:**

- Tagline – *Every song has its story. Every generation has its hero.*
- William Wilberforce (1759 – 1833) was a very gifted statesman, a social reformer, a philanthropist and an evangelical Christian. As well as working to bring about the end of the slave trade, and then to abolish slavery itself, he was concerned about mistreatment of animals (he was a founder member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, later to become the RSPCA), education, the social impact of heavy gin drinking, and the need for missionaries in various parts of the world, including India and Africa (he was a founder of the Church Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society).
- Amazing Grace is the most honored and recorded song of all time. Amazon.com lists some 2000 currently available recordings of Amazing Grace. Nothing else comes remotely close. It crosses all lines—from classical to country, from rock to traditional folk. It is permanently ingrained in the culture. No other song has enjoyed such diverse rendering.
- He headed the parliamentary campaign against the British slave trade for 26 years until the passage of the Slave Trade Act 1807, when Parliament

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passed a bill to abolish the slave trade. (The film's release is a way of marking the bicentennial of that event.) Some years later, just three days before Wilberforce's death, slavery itself was completely abolished in Britain. Part of his epitaph in Westminster Abbey reads: *In the prosecution of these objects he relied, not in vain, on God.* Wilberforce is a model for Christian activism in the face of the wrongs that continue to fill the world. This is a film that can serve as inspiration for all Christians who are involved in the effort to change the world.

- The actor who plays William Wilberforce said about this movie, *"I hope it will inspire young people to stand alone, if need be, for justice, against racism and bigotry. I hope the film will be more than just entertainment. I hope it is educational and an instrument of change. It shows that a person can change history."*
- Abraham Lincoln once remarked, *"Whenever I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally."* William Wilberforce's work is far from finished. There are still an estimated 27 million slaves in the world today suffering under the weight of oppression. [get involved with World Relief, International Justice Mission].

### Scriptures:

Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NLT) – *A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*

Jeremiah 22:13 (The Message) – *"Doom to him who builds palaces but bullies people, who makes a fine house but destroys lives, who cheats his workers and won't pay them for their work."*

Proverbs 16:8 (NLT) – *"Better to have little, with godliness, than to be rich and dishonest."*

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Isaiah 58:6 (NLT) – *“This is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.”*

1 Corinthians 13:6 (NLT) – *“[Love] does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.”*

2 Chronicles 19:7 (NLT) – *“Fear the LORD and judge with integrity, for the LORD our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of bribes.”*

Proverbs 22:8 (The Message) – *“Whoever sows sin reaps weeds, and bullying anger sputters into nothing.”*

Matthew 7:12 (NLT) – *“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.”*

### Major Characters:

- William Wilberforce
- John Newton
- Charles James Fox
- Barbara Spooner
- Thomas Clarkson
- William Pitt the Younger
- Richard the Butler
- Opponents:
  - Lord Banastre Tarleton
  - William, Duke of Clarence

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### Discussion Points:

1. How much of the story were you aware of beforehand, and did this affect the way you engaged with the film?
2. Why is Barbara so effective at re-inspiring William Wilberforce to continue with the struggle? What impact do Wilberforce's friends have on him? What impact does he have on them?
3. How does *Amazing Grace* demonstrate the truth of the biblical understanding of human beings: God created us in His image, and so we are capable of extraordinary good; but we have rebelled against God, and so we are also capable of extraordinary evil?
4. Director Michael Apted says, "*I wasn't interested in making a dull biopic. This is a great period in British politics. I wanted to make a film that showed how heroic and relevant politics can be.*" What impact did the political debates in the film have on you?
5. In what ways do you think our country, and even ourselves as individuals, are still guilty of putting economics ahead of justice?
6. Has watching *Amazing Grace* changed you in any ways? Has it motivated you to get involved in working towards the abolition of human trafficking and slavery?

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### **World Relief**

*Website: [worldrelief.org](http://worldrelief.org), Phone: 404.294.4352 (Atlanta, GA)*

*John Arnold, a long-time member of the Atlanta Vineyard, works at World Relief.*

World Relief stands for the vulnerable (e.g. children orphaned by disease, women widowed by conflicts, families devastated by natural disasters, refugees relocated to new countries). God has equipped the church – the most diverse social network on the planet – to be at the center of these stories, leveraging time, energy, and resources to join the vulnerable in their time of need. World Relief has initiatives in education, health, child development, agriculture, food security, anti-trafficking, immigrant services, micro-enterprise, disaster response and refugee resettlement, and works holistically with the local church to stand for the sick, the widow, the orphan, the alien, the displaced, the devastated, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised. Locally and around the globe, they stand with individuals and communities through the process of healing, reconciliations, transformation and empowerment.

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*Phone: 703.465.5495 (Washington D.C.)*

International Justice Mission is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local governments to ensure victim rescue, to prosecute perpetrators and to strengthen the community and civic factors that promote functioning public justice systems. IJM's justice professionals work in their communities in 12 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to secure tangible and sustainable protection of national laws through local court systems.

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