

**Dear BIBLE STUDENT Parents,**

As our 8<sup>th</sup> grade Bible class is finishing up our unit on Christ vs. Racism, we are watching one of the finest movies on the subject: **AMAZING GRACE**, 2006. I strongly recommend you consider watching it as parents to be able to dialog with your child about what Christ did through faithful believers in the past and what Christ can do today – if we are equally faithful. It's PG-13 so some parts might be a bit too much for preteens. It's a historically accurate, award-winning film that was highly acclaimed by critics, and it stars some of the best and most well-known actors in our day. It's the story of the man, William Wilberforce who was the single most power force to help end the trans-Atlantic African slave trade that is still the root of much of our ongoing cultural conflict. By the way, Wilberforce also started the first SPCA to combat cruelty to animals. These passions, anti-slavery of humans and anti-cruelty to animals, grew out his commitment to the true message of Christ, the Good Shepherd: Self-sacrificial love for any of His creatures who suffer under the oppression of others.

The title of the film, **AMAZING GRACE**, is a reference to another man, John Newton, who was Wilberforce's pastor when he was a young man. John Newton is the author of the hymn, Amazing Grace, which is the most famous hymn in the world, even among non-believers. Many decades before becoming a Christian and pastor, John Newton had been a slave ship captain and was responsible for the suffering and death of thousands of slaves. God convicted and converted Newton as dramatically as the apostle Paul. So, when John Newton wrote the words, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me", he was confessing his personal grief over the horror of what he once was and what he once did. He lived a life of voluntary poverty as a pastor, giving all he had to the poor as he served them as Christ served us, self-sacrificially (Matthew 20:20-28). Though Wilberforce was born a small, sickly boy and suffered from physical ailments all his life, the character of his soul became a powerful force to change the world of his time. John Newton's pastoral influence over William Wilberforce as a boy planted the seed in his heart that grew up and became like a strong oak tree of character that stood strong in the face of unrelenting cultural pressures against him. Much of that pressure came from the worldly "Church" of his day that was full of men and women and even "pastors" who called themselves "Christians", yet lived lives focused on loving and pleasing self, more than God and their neighbor. Wilberforce wrote a powerful, convicting book, **TRUE CHRISTIANITY**, that though written in the 1700's, reads like he was preaching to much of modern, worldly "Christianity" today. It is a small book, with a life-changing message.

**Prayerfully and gratefully,**

Mr. Galloway BS, M.DIV. Just an OLD sheepdog of our Good Shepherd Creator and Savior, CHRIST

**LINKS** to Resources about the movie & the history:

- [FREE COPY of the DVD](#) & background to the film
- [BEST BOOK](#) about Wilberforce and his work for God
- .. *Amazing Grace*, by Eric Metaxas
- [REAL CHRISTIANITY](#). Wilberforce's book confronting PHONY Christianity. This book helped end slavery in England.