



Marketplace Moments

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Bibliophoria

What's So Amazing About Grace?

Philip Yancey

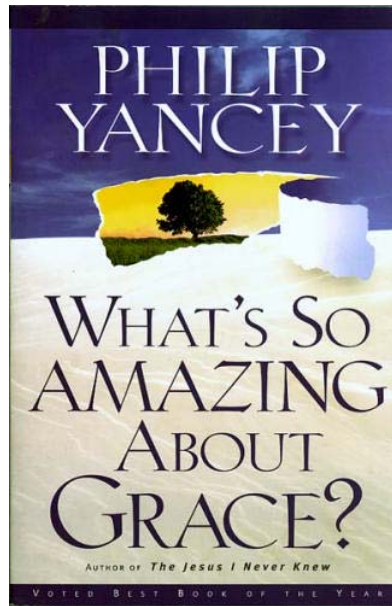
Grace is something many of us Christians have heard over and over again. I remember as a youth learning about being saved by grace alone. Indeed !!! It was unfortunate however, that at some meetings at church, we did not see much grace demonstrated.

I was at a company meeting, sitting with a number of colleagues and one of them, knowing that I am a Christian, related the story of why he detests Christians. Some years back, his son had died of an illness. One of his best friend who was a Christian came to his home and told him that his son died because of his sin. The friend was kicked out of the house. Sounds like the friends of Job?

Then there is the other extreme where grace has lost its' righteousness where in unwitting circumstances, it condones sin rather than lovingly guide away from sin.

Nonetheless, grace is AMAZING. It transforms both those who receives it and to those who offer it. The practice of being gracious, is a learning process.

In this book, Philip Yancey once again writes with stories to illustrate his perspective. Discovering and practicing amazing grace is a delicate balance which requires wisdom and guidance from the



Holy Spirit and a deep understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

But then again, grace by its' very definition, lavishes upon those who REALLY don't deserves it. Isn't that the central story of Jesus and the Cross? Larry Crabb notes, "With prophetic intensity, Yancey successfully nudges aside every other worthy—and not so worthy—agenda and restores 'dispensing grace' as the central mission of the church. His thesis will alienate those whose Christianity centers on something else, and he invites all who thirst for grace to make it the bottom line of their lives. The message of this book has the power to reform the church, one relationship at a time."

Timothy Liu

Highlights

- What's so amazing about grace?
- Love Above All
- Amazing Grace
- Amazing Change
- Events Update

Of the Heart and Mind

Passion for God

This weekend, I attended the musical by Mt. Carmel BP for 'Love Above All'. It was only a year after Jim Elliot graduated from college at Wheaton that he heard of the remote Huaorani tribe of Ecuador (known at that time as the Aucas). He knew immediately that he wanted to be part of the effort to reach them with the gospel, and after a couple of years of preparation, he was in Ecuador.

It was September of 1955 when the first Huaorani huts were located during a flight over the jungle. Jim Elliot and the four other men that joined him in the mission to the Huaorani began making flights over the village, dropping gifts and broadcasting a message of friendship in the Huaorani language. When the response from the villagers seemed to be friendly, the decision was made to begin landing the plane in hopes of making further contact.

On Sunday, January 8, 1956, the men expected some sort of contact to be made in the mid-afternoon, and they radioed to their wives that they would report back by 4:30 pm. That time came without a radio message, and a search began. The bodies of the five murdered men were found on January 13, 1956.

Subsequently, Elizabeth and her daughter returned to the Huaorani tribe to live among



them and the entire tribe came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It was an epic of love and forgiveness, paired with great music and lyrics. Very moving indeed.

I walked away from the theater pondering as I see the crowds dismissed, what kind of impact or thoughts would people walk away with? I overheard one that said, "The sound system was better adjusted after intermission." I hope that was not all that has gone through his mind. I doubt so but it is easy to walk away with a good feeling but with no real soul searching. I walked away with the following questions:

- 1) Can sacrificial love only be achieved or displayed in a foreign missions context such as these? In the like of Hudson Taylor, George Mueller etc.
- 2) Are these just isolated incidents or accounts of unswerving devotion to hearing God's call and passionately pursuing them OR could they happen to 'regular' Christians?

Some will walk away and feel moved but either saying "I cannot do that" or "it is not for me". I am sure not all is called into the foreign missions field like Jim and Betty. However, I am CERTAIN that all is called to live out our own CALL into the world with EQUAL passion and devotion to

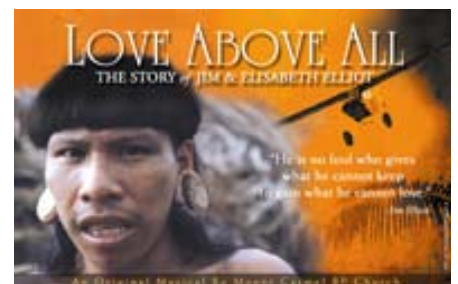
God IN THE WORLD.

My heart weighs heavy as many bright, gifted and able in the pews week after week, living life from day to day, lacking a passion and clear call of God in their lives. We often 'know' what we need and is required of us. But how often do we ACTUALLY seek it, much less live it?

Then there are those of us who struggle to bridge what calling and passion in urban Singapore actually means. Being able to articulate our calling is the most crucial first step. How would you articulate your calling by God?

Further, how much are we willing to pay to commit our time, money and energy to follow God? If we are certain about God's call in our lives, how come so many lead mediocre lives? Or have we so far removed true love and devotion from daily life that we no longer see or feel the link? William Diehl wrote a classic titled 'Christianity and Real Life' Consider the irony of the title of this book. Why has it come to a point in the history of Christianity, that our faith is so far removed from the reality of life that someone has to write a book to reconnect them again?

By Timothy Liu



Eyes in a Darkened Room

Amazing Grace

The abolition of slavery was achieved through the passion and perseverance of William Wilberforce and others.

Amazing Grace, based on the life of antislavery pioneer William Wilberforce, is directed by Michael Apted (The World is Not Enough, Coal Miner's Daughter) from an original screenplay written by Academy Award® nominee Steven Knight (Dirty Pretty Things).

Gruffudd plays Wilberforce, who, as a Member of Parliament, navigated the world of 18th Century backroom politics to end the slave trade in the British Empire. Albert Finney plays John Newton, a confidante of Wilberforce who inspires him to pursue a life of service to humanity. Benedict Cumberbatch is William Pitt the Younger, England's youngest ever Prime Minister at the age of 24, who encourages his friend Wilberforce to take up the fight to outlaw slavery and supports him in his struggles in Parliament (From official website)

This will be a classic for all Christians in years to come. At least it should be. I am captured by several scenes in the movie.

Wilberforce was struggling which he should choose, to choose God's call in his life do 'God's work' or to choose a political life. The wisdom of the response reveals that it is an imaginary choice. The reply simply came as, "It is both". Wilberforce was so captured by the



plight of the slaves (through the influence of John Newton who wrote the old time hymn 'Amazing Grace') that he could not rest until it was accomplished. It was his calling. Here lies the parallel to Jim Elliot where both are equally called; one to the Aucas, and the other to the British Parliament. It is a prime example of marketplace Christians in action 200 years ago.

The other thing to note is that Wilberforce could not accomplish it alone. He had the help of others less prominent but nonetheless, critical in understanding that any struggle or major changes require a community rather than an individual.

In our own struggle against injustices in society, liberal challenges and societal challenges, we cannot operate alone but requires the dedication and perseverance of a community of brothers and sisters who are willing to lay down their lives with us.

OK, I cried. Not only because I am touched by the plight of the slaves and the dedication of the Wilberforce team, but also because, in our contemporary society, where we are very blessed (perhaps too much), that we be-

come complacent and will not step forward to address issues challenging our society and faith. Just because we are too busy with our own lives, the issue doesn't affect us or fearful of the repercussions if we get involved.

The part which really peaked my interest is the way the got the bill to pass. It was a creative way by plugging legal loopholes which enables the slave trades after years of failing to directly pass a bill. More often than not, we Christians see things too plainly and in black and white terms. In our cultural struggles, Christians need to address real physical concerns as well as the 'high moral grounds' with which we often portrays. We have to find creative ways in which we communicate our concerns to those who do not see our perspective.

History also teaches us that legislation though very helpful is not the entire story. We find this to be true that discrimination of the blacks continues up till the days of the Civil Rights Movement in US and more recently, Apartheid in South Africa. Even now, racial discrimination continues to be a major hindrance to social cohesion in the US and South Africa. The only answer lies in transformed hearts through relationship with Christ.

Questions for reflection.

- 1) What are the challenges facing your society today?
- 2) What are you going to do about it?

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Coming Events

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Amazing Change

<http://www.theamazingchange.com/>

If you think slavery is a thing of the past, you are wrong. According to The Amazing Change, there are still an estimated 27 million slaves 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.

(Amazing Change web-site).

This web-site is an online continuation of the work started by Wilberforce and the Clapham circle.

There are books and resources that helps to further track the plight of modern day slaves in the world. What I believe that is most helpful is a timeline to the development and subsequent critical milestone of the slave trade.

Just the section of 'Slavery Then and Now' is a great introduction to the magnitude of the problem. There are Q&As, stories, statistics and key partners in the fight.

There are also real life cases and their stories. Here are some stories abstracts:

James

An abducted child kept as a slave in the Lord's Resistance Army, James was forced to brutally kill his own brother who had been abducted with him. He was rescued from captivity, but demonstrates the fragile psyche of a child victim forced to kill or be killed.

Nagaraj

For Nagaraj, the hope of a life of freedom was stronger than the threats and abuses he and others endured in the brick kiln. The worst part, he says, was seeing his children there, getting sick from excessive work in the searing heat, knowing that they could never go to school and would grow up to become another's property. Nagaraj himself was a slave since the age of 12.