

once upon a night at THE MOVIES



I'm not sure why, but I'm often the last one in my circle of friends to see a new movie. Maybe I like to wait until the fuss has died down. Or maybe I'm just badly organised. Yeah, that's probably it. Anyway, a few weeks ago, on its final night at our local cinema, I went and saw AMAZING GRACE. And I'm so glad I did ...

IT'S THE STORY OF WILLIAM WILBERFORCE AND HIS lonely campaign in 18th century England to abolish the slave trade. It's a story of good versus evil, moral conviction versus political correctness. And it's a story that raises the age-old question: *"What can one man do?"*

The answer, to cut a long movie short, is ... *"Just about anything!"*

Backed by some unlikely friends, 21-year-old Wilberforce (played by Welsh dreamboat Ioan Gruffudd) takes on the powerful House of Commons. But he's up against men who are getting filthy rich, thank you very much, on the backs of a zillion African slaves – and again and again his bill is defeated.

Exhausted, frustrated, he's ready to throw in the towel. But something – call it faith, hope, amazing grace – won't let him. And finally, remarkably, he achieves his goal.



Today, William Wilberforce lies buried in Westminster Cathedral ... but history won't let us forget him.

Stirring stuff, that movie. Gave me goosebumps, it truly did. But it wasn't until I was driving home that it hit me: he couldn't have done it without his wife!

She was gorgeous. She was gutsy. And, knowing that her man was right, she inspired him to see the thing through.

I've got a wife like that. Maybe you have, too. We're lucky, eh ...

ANOTHER OLDER MOVIE THAT'S ONE OF MY ALL-time favourites is CAPTAIN CORELLI'S MANDOLIN. If you've seen the film you'll know how it goes, but if you haven't ... well, it's like this:

The year is 1940 -- World War 2 – and the tiny Greek island of Cephalonia is invaded by Italian troops. Pelagia (played by Penelope Cruz) is a young Greek girl who's engaged to be married to a local fisherman. But instead, she falls in love with this Italian soldier, Captain Corelli (played by Nicholas Cage). And what follows is a compelling mix of love, tragedy and survival.

At one point in the movie, the girl's father Iannis (who's also the village doctor) gives his daughter this advice:

"Love is a temporary madness. It erupts like volcanoes and then subsides. And when it subsides, you have to make a decision. You have to work out whether your roots have become so entwined together that it is inconceivable that you should ever part. Because this is what love is.

"Love is not breathlessness; it is not excitement; it's not the desire to mate every second of the day; not lying awake at night imagining him kissing every part of your body. No, don't blush," says Iannis. "I'm telling you some truths. That is just being 'in love', which any fool can do. Love itself is what's left over, when being in love has burned away, and this is both an art and a fortunate accident.

"Your mother and I had it. We had roots that grew towards each other underground; and when all the pretty blossom had fallen from our branches we found that we were one tree and not two."



Inspiring stuff, eh! Can you see why this movie's on my "don't miss" list?

BUT WAIT ... THERE'S MORE! I'VE SEEN ANOTHER movie in recent weeks, a DVD that we watched at home. And I'm not embarrassed to say it pushed all my buttons – even got me a bit choked-up at times!

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE was released in 1999. But like many people, I guess, I never got to see it back then. Based on a best-selling book by Mitch Albom, it's the surprising, touching story of a successful sportswriter who suddenly learns that one of his old professors, Morrie Schwartz (played by Jack Lemmon), is terminally ill. Mitch visits Morrie and the two form an emotional bond, as Morrie shares from-the-heart and Mitch discovers what's really important in life.

The dying professor throws down the challenge: *"Study me in my slow and patient demise. Watch what happens to me. Learn with me ..."* And his Tuesday discussions with the young reporter get increasingly close-to-the-bone. Morrie keeps bringing the conversation back to those uncomfortable nitty-gritty questions most of us would rather avoid: about living ... about dying ... about loving.

Just listen to some of his remarkable insights:

- ◆ about dying: *"The truth is, once you learn how to die, you learn how to live ..."*
- ◆ about friendship: *"Death ends a life, not a relationship ..."*
- ◆ about love: *"The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love, and to let it come in. Love is the only rational act ..."*
- ◆ about trust: *"Sometimes you cannot believe what you see; you have to believe what you feel. And if you're ever going to have other people trust you, you must feel that you can trust them, too – even when you're in the dark, even when you're falling ..."*
- ◆ about meaning: *"So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half-asleep, even when they're busy doing the wrong things. The way you*

get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to something that gives you purpose and meaning."

Does Grapevine do that for you – **give you purpose and meaning**? I hope so, because it does for me. We're privileged – don't you agree? – to be on the 'giving-end' of something so good ... to be part of the solution (instead of just moaning and complaining about the problems) ... to be making such a positive, practical difference in the lives of so many New Zealanders.



For 26 wonderful years, we've been rewarded with the knowledge that every time another new Grapevine has gone out into streets and letterboxes we've 'GIVEN FAMILIES A LIFT'. And I've lost count of the hundreds – *no, thousands* – of grateful readers who've told us of relationships strengthened ... marriages restored ... parenting skills improved ... lives put back on track ... Kiwis encouraged – because of Grapevine.

Those words from Morrie say it all, I reckon: *"The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to something that gives you purpose and meaning."*

And, on behalf of all the Keepers of the Vine, I want to thank you for the part you keep playing in that ...

On Friday last week I 'signed-off' our latest edition – gave it the final green light. And I've got to tell you: it's another beaut! In typical Grapevine fashion, it tackles two equally important questions:

1. **WHEN YOUR PARTNER'S GONE AND YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN ... WHAT THEN?**
2. **SAVINGS-INVESTMENTS-RETIREMENT ... HOW TO RIDE THE MONEY-GO-ROUND?**

It's being printed now. It'll soon be delivered to sponsored homes all over New Zealand. And your generous, warm-hearted September donation will help us place this special edition in homes and streets and suburbs that might otherwise miss out.

Can I ask you, yet again, to *"devote yourself to something that gives meaning and purpose"*? Whether it's \$1000 or \$100 or \$10 ... your donation will make a difference, I promise you.

We appreciate you! We couldn't do it without you! And we look forward to hearing from you!

Cheers ...

John

