

Bringing Jesus Back to the Big Screen

CHARISMA: Why did you decide to bring Christ's life to the silver screen?

ROMA DOWNEY: This was the prompting of the Spirit. It began as a whisper in the heart in the way the Spirit continues to nudge you and make Himself present. We decided we would do it and do it together. But from that beginning, that whisper, I don't know that either of us could have dared to dream this big.

MARK BURNETT: All believers know people who say, "I don't really believe this. I don't really want to go to church." It's a hard conversation. The question is, how do you open people's hearts and open them up to even consider their faith? It's as simple as asking them to just come to the movies with you. This movie has a profound impact.

CHARISMA: What obstacles did you have to overcome to make this film?

BURNETT: You wouldn't believe the amount of people who told us we were crazy. We were told that people aren't going to watch the Bible on TV when they could be watching something else. We were scared ... but we just felt in our hearts [we needed to]—and of course 100 million people watched.

Two things were happening: We were feeling very clearly the Holy Spirit while shooting the Jesus portion. We'd screen portions of the film for the whole crew on Fridays. Roma said to me this really should be on the big screen. I said I was thinking the same thing. So you know what we did? We turned it into a movie. Seeing the Bible on the small screen is nothing like being in a movie theater and watching this unfold on the big screen.

CHARISMA: What was it like working with your spouse?

BURNETT: It was awful. *[Laughs]* No, really, Roma is my best friend. We're walking down the path together because this would be a very long and difficult road alone. Having two of us with different strengths and different skills, that's the blessing. I think beyond the calling of spreading the Word of God, the byproduct is a stronger marriage.

DOWNEY: We often joke that the real miracle is that we're still speaking to each other. Certainly it has been a big project and it brings with it challenges but so many joys as well. We weren't looking for a job when we took this on. This has really been a labor of love for us.

We are believers and we are just so privileged to bring Jesus to the big screen, which hasn't been on the screen in a decade. His entire life hasn't been told cinematically in almost 50 years, so there is a whole generation out there ready to see Jesus on the big screen.