

Filmmaker Spotlights God's Grace on the Big Screen

Brad J. Silverman was climbing the ladder of Hollywood success as an actor, producer and screenwriter when he discovered his vocational success wouldn't lead him to the happiness he was searching for. After giving his life to the Lord and finding lasting joy, Silverman made the difficult decision to walk away from the movie industry. Almost a decade later, he's back in action as the writer and director of a new mainstream film, *Grace Unplugged*, geared to families. *Charisma* sat down with the filmmaker to discuss his latest move.

Charisma: Why did you initially walk away from the movie industry?

Silverman: I was just so unsatisfied with life. Nothing was bringing me joy. My career was actually doing fine, and I thought if I got to the next level of success, then I'd be happy.

Failure was easy for me; but success is tough. Every level of success just didn't bring the happiness I thought it would. And I went through a couple of years where I was just crying out, saying "What is real in this life? What is true?"

I had a sense of desperation: "Nothing is making me happy and I don't even know up from down anymore." I questioned everything.

Through that process a friend of mine invited me to church. And over time, it was like, what do I have to lose? Then I started reading the Scriptures and going to church. And I decided it was time.

Charisma: So what made you return to the film industry after being away for 10 years?

Silverman: I came from Hollywood. I got saved in Hollywood. I walked away for a decade and the Lord just opened up a door for me that I never saw coming.

Charisma: Your new film, *Grace Unplugged*, opens in theaters Oct. 4 and is a modern-day retelling of the prodigal son story. As the screenwriter, what were you wanting to accomplish by basing it on that narrative?

Silverman: I'm hoping we prompt a lot of dialogue between families, and that this movie can be a conversation starter. At the end of the day, I don't miss the fact that this is entertainment—and I think we've made a very entertaining movie. But when the movie is over and the audience reflects on what they've seen, I want Christians to say, "Wow. I love God."

Charisma: The film is about a worship pastor's tumultuous relationship with his talented daughter, who wants to leave the church and explore a career in the secular music business. Why was this story important for you to tell?

Silverman: This is a big issue in churches today—kids growing up and struggling with making their faith their own. That's the journey [the lead character] Grace goes on. But I also had to tell that story in a PG way. I have four children, and if I can't make a film that my teen daughters can watch, I don't want to make it.

Charisma: On that note, how difficult is it to be a Christian making films that honor Christ in Hollywood?

Silverman: It's important that Christians don't give up creative control. As believers, we must have that contractually, because we are the light in the darkness. On the flip side, Hollywood is so much a part of my life. I was an actor here, and it was a faithful brother in the Lord who led me to Christ here, so I don't shy away from that. I believe I'm called to go into battle; I don't believe I'm

called to hide in a bunker and only deal with Christians. If some people are called to that, great. Personally, I feel I'm called to be in the streets with the tax collectors and to do my job as a filmmaker.