

God Breathes on 'The Bible' as 14.8 Million Tune In to Premiere

Roma Downey and Mark Burnett, executive producers of *The Bible* miniseries, thanked the nation for making the show's Sunday premiere on The History Channel the No. 1 cable television event of the year with more than 14.8 million viewers.

"We know God moved last night," Downey said Monday. "People of all denominations showed the power that can be unleashed in our culture when we band together, individual believers with a shared purpose and vision. The world is won when the church is one."

Night one of the five-part *Bible* series—which airs each Sunday in March—was the most-watched TV program of the night, even beating out Burnett's perennial ratings hit *The Celebrity Apprentice*. It also dominated social media, trending as No. 1 Twitter topic throughout most of its two-hour run. Additionally, the ratings grew every 30 minutes. The numbers are likely to go even higher in the next week as DVR viewings are factored in, especially since many families were in church during the show's broadcast time slot.

"This book is alive. Today, more Americans and Canadians are talking about God's chosen people," Burnett said. "They're talking more about the faithfulness and perseverance of Noah, Abraham and Moses than any time in recent history."

The response to the series, Downey added, is exactly what she and Burnett hoped for when they conceived the project four years ago.

"We have received emails all day from people who had not

thought about these stories in years,” she said. “They are the foundation of our faith, they are the foundation of our laws and they are the foundation of this nation.”

Following the premiere, calls flooded in to Burnett’s One Three Media offices about the series.

“The world is talking about *The Bible*,” said Scot Cru, Head of International Distribution and Production at One Three Media. “People all across the globe are asking for the series to air in their countries. One Three Media will distribute this show to television stations around the world.”

Downey and Burnett expressed gratitude to Christian leaders and pastors all across the country who helped them share their vision for the series over the last year. Many of them, in fact, contacted Downey and Burnett on Monday, when the ratings figures were released, to congratulate them on the show’s success.

“What an amazing accomplishment!” said Joel Osteen, senior pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston. “We celebrate your dream coming true.”

The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Council, told the couple, “This is the beginning of something big. If this nation begins to re-engage God’s word,” he said, “it carries the potential for a new awakening.”

Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church said of the series’ success, “We all know what good and faithful servants Roma and Mark have been in making this series. And now the world is responding with overwhelming support. God is at work! One can only imagine what the ratings will be when the real star of the show appears onscreen.” (Jesus, played by Portuguese actor Diogo Morgado, makes his first significant appearance in the series March 17.)

Downey and Burnett share Warren's hope for the rest of the series' run.

"When God starts something, He finishes it," they said. "Clearly, He's started something with this series and we're honored He's allowed us to be His instruments in sharing it with the world."