

Narnia for a New Generation

✖ As the third installment, The

Voyage of the Dawn Treader, opens in theaters, *Charisma* takes a look at how the Narnia movies have ignited a resurgence of interest in C.S. Lewis' writings.

At the very end of the world—in a breathtakingly beautiful place beyond the sea of lilies and an endlessly frozen wave shimmering in a rainbow of colors—Lucy looks up at Aslan and asks, “Will I see you in your world?”

“I’m in your world as well child, but I go by a different name there,” Aslan says. “That’s the whole reason you came to Narnia. So by knowing me here, you would know me better there.”

The heart-touching scene from the new Chronicles of Narnia film, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, is an especially meaningful one for Walden Media President Micheal Flaherty.

“That’s always been one of my favorite lines all seven of the books,” Flaherty told *Charisma* while unveiling a clip of the film during the Biola Media Conference at CBS Studios in Studio City, Calif.

“It’s something I think that is really packed with emotion and I know for a lot of people whose testimonies I’ve heard, that line itself has played a real significant role in their faith walk.”

As the third movie in the Narnia series is released in

theaters nationwide on Dec. 10, experts say it is igniting renewed interest in C.S. Lewis' books and all things Narnia as people discover—or rediscover—the spiritual truths embedded in the enigmatic tales.

“We’re just riding the wave,” Flaherty says. “We are just tapping into the love and passion that has existed since Lewis first wrote these books.”

Over the decades, the seven-part Narnia series has sold more than 85 million copies worldwide and introduced multitudes to the central doctrines of Christianity.

“We’ve seen a huge spike in the sales of the Narnia novels themselves,” says Michael Maudlin, the vice president and editorial director at HarperCollins Publishers. “In fact, we’ve seen an across-the-board uptick in sales of Lewis’ other books too.”

Although he wrote *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *Miracles* and dozens of other books in the 1940s and 1950s, the literary work of “God’s Storyteller” continues to land on the top 50 best-selling religious book lists even today. Lewis—one of the intellectual giants of the 20th century—had a unique ability to speak simultaneously to the deep, mature Christian and someone who is not familiar with the faith, Maudlin says.

✖ As the movie hits theaters, HarperOne is releasing *The C.S. Lewis Bible*, the first Bible that pairs Lewis’ spiritual writings with

corresponding Bible passages. Drawing upon the distinctive wisdom and spiritual insights of one of the most thought-provoking and influential Christian writers in modern times, the Bible includes introductory essays on Lewis' views on Scripture and more than 600 of his selections for contemplation and devotional reading.

In preparing the Bible, Maudlin says he and the other editors didn't want to produce something "gimmicky or faddish, but something Lewis himself would be proud of." As it turns out, Lewis was so thoroughly informed by his daily Scripture reading that his writings often correspond perfectly with biblical passages.

"Everything Jack wrote was affected by his own biblical study and theology," says Douglas Gresham, executive producer of the Narnia films, a consulting editor on the Bible and Lewis' stepson. "I think it will be a lovely Bible for people to read and study."

The growing excitement about the movie comes as theaters and fans are planning parties and other events. In addition, the official soundtrack—the score of which was composed and conducted by David Arnold of *James Bond* fame—is scheduled for release on Dec. 6. Nihilistic Software is also releasing a video game for the Nintendo, Wii, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 on Dec. 10.

Paul Martin, the Webmaster for , says there is a "ton of excitement" as the movie

release date approaches. Fans are very optimistic this film will be closer to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in the way it “follows the book,” Martin says.

“From what I have seen so far, the movie more than meets the goal,” Martin says. “It’s going to blow people away. Different theaters across the country are preparing parties that will be thrown across the country as the film is released. There are many line-parties that are going to be happening, and everyone is buzzing about another new Narnia film to see at Christmas with their families.”

Meanwhile, the C.S. Lewis Foundation is working to open the C.S. Lewis College on a beautiful campus in Northfield, Mass. The fully accredited institution of Great Books and Visual and Performing Arts is expected to commence instruction in the fall of 2012. (Photo credit: Sharon LaBella-Lindale) 

“Today, as never before, young people are seeking an education that fully prepares them to understand and engage contemporary culture in a meaningful and creative way,” says Stan Mattson, founder and president of the C.S. Lewis Foundation. “The scenic and historic Northfield campus is an ideal setting for such a journey.”

An Epic Adventure

In the new film, Edmund and

Lucy Pevensie, along with their cousin Eustace and King Caspian, go on a fantastical journey when they are swallowed into a painting and find themselves aboard the Dawn Treader—the most prized ship in the Narnian fleet. King Caspian has built the ship to save the seven banished Lords of Narnia. Embarking on an “incredible adventure of destiny and discovery,” they travel to the Eastern Islands, beyond the sea of lilies and toward Aslan’s country at the “very end of the world.”

✖ “It’s a tremendous adventure story with oceans, dragons, fights and all sorts of exciting things,” says David Hollander, webmaster at . “I think it’s going to be very memorable for families and for children, just as the book is.”

Phil Cooke, president and creative director of Cooke Pictures, says fans expectations about the new film are very high and he doesn’t believe they’ll be disappointed. While *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* made \$745 million worldwide, the second film, *Prince Caspian*, took in \$420 million—still a huge sum, but a disappointment for Walt Disney Pictures. Experts expect the new movie—an action-packed adventure on the high seas—to do much better at the box office.

“I think [these films] tap into our fascination with epic adventure,” Cooke says. “These stories are big. They celebrate powerful virtues and great heroes. Christian or not, people love

those great mythic values.”

In a book released Oct. 1, *Inside the Voyage of the Dawn Treader: A Guide to Exploring the Journey Beyond Narnia*, Asbury University English Professor Devin Brown guides readers through the third novel in the class series, illuminating the features of Lewis’ writing, providing supplemental information on Lewis’ life and uncovering the work’s rich meanings. This new movie—perhaps the most theological of the seven novels—is focused on overcoming temptation and growing spiritually.

“Perhaps one of the greatest, if not the greatest, thing Lewis does is he reminds us the spiritual journey is an adventure,” Brown says. “The spiritual life, or the virtuous life, has gotten a bad wrap lately, that it’s boring and not very interesting; that the other kind of life, the self-centered life is the cool life. Lewis reminds us the self-centered life leads to nowhere; it leads to misery, isolation and ultimately destruction. The virtuous life is really a great adventure. He doesn’t sugarcoat it. He doesn’t say it’s without pain and hardship, but he says it’s an adventure you don’t want to miss.”

At one point in the movie, Eustace, a “pretentious, pompous and arrogant” bully is transformed into a dragon, but doesn’t realize what he’s become because he never read the “right

books,” Brown says.

Flaherty says he’s always been fascinated by this part of the story and how Lewis believes “you are what you read.” On six occasions when the characters go back to Narnia, Lewis mentions how they deal with situations based on books they had read. Peter is able to figure out a puzzle because he read detective novels. Lucy is able to show compassion because she read fables. But Eustace is helpless when he transforms into a dragon because he’s been reading the wrong books.

“He read books about green elevators and fat kids doing exercises, but he didn’t read books about dragons and courage and knights and heroism,” Flaherty says. “One of the messages I love about this book is reminding us that when we read stories it’s not just for our enjoyment. Stories prepare us to face tough battles, they teach us how to behave, and they teach us how to live and how to treat other people.”

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