

'The Bible,' 'Grace Unplugged' Big Winners at Movieguide Awards

Winners of the annual \$100,000 Epiphany Prizes for entertainment that lifts up positive, godly messages were the TV miniseries *The Bible* and the movie *Grace Unplugged*. Winners accepted their awards in Los Angeles Friday night at the 22nd annual Movieguide Awards event, which is part of a family-uplifting ministry dedicated to redeeming the values of the entertainment industry.

"Stories open people's hearts, and that's when the grace of God can move in," said Roma Downey, who won the Grace Award for TV actress and shared in the Epiphany Prize for the most inspiring television program of 2013 with her husband, Mark Burnett, the accomplished television producer known for the TV programs *Shark Tank*, *The Apprentice*, *Survivor* and *The Voice*.

Ted Baehr, founder of Movieguide and author of the book *How to Succeed in Hollywood (Without Losing Your Soul)*, said, "2013 was the year that the good, the true and the beautiful reached new heights at the box office and in the TV ratings. 2013 was the year that *The Bible* won the ratings and the hearts of America."

One hundred million people have watched *The Bible* miniseries, according to Downey. It has encouraged water-cooler talk about faith and God across the country since it first aired last year. (The next project from the Downey/Burnett duo is the movie *Son of God*, which debuts in theaters Feb. 28.)

Baehr opened the gala event with his annual "Report to the Entertainment Industry."

"I was amazed that the number of movies with positive

Christian content increased to 66 percent of the movies released in 250 theaters or more," he said. "And movies with faith and values continue to win the box office, with 90 percent of the top 10 box office movies containing positive Christian and biblical content. Even Superman went to church in *Man of Steel*. So, the producers, writers, directors and studio executives in this room deserve to be commended."

Baehr told the audience of Hollywood heavy-hitters about the positive box office numbers that movies with faith and values attained in 2013, noting that movies with very strong Christian, redemptive worldviews tend to average three to six times more money in the United States and Canada than movies with very strong non-Christian worldviews.

For the first time ever, Baehr said, 100 percent of the top 10 movies overseas in 2013 had either strong or very strong Christian, redemptive, biblical or moral worldviews with strong moral and spiritually uplifting content. Furthermore, 80 percent of the top home videos in 2013 were Movieguide Award winners in either 2012 or 2013.

Baehr noted that study after study shows the content of movies and television have a profound effect on the culture, especially the hearts and minds and behavior of children and teenagers, but that even these children would rather see positive, uplifting entertainment.

Stunning audiences with poignancy and real-world struggles of faith, family relationships and life choices was the family-friendly movie *Grace Unplugged*, a Christian drama about a church singer (AJ Michalka) who becomes estranged from her father but then reaches a crossroads.

"2013 was the year that the prodigal daughter came home to her family and Jesus Christ in *Grace Unplugged*," Baehr said, citing it as the most inspiring film of the year.

The television program *Shark Tank* walked away with the \$50,000

Friess Free Enterprise Prize. Burnett, who produces the show, said his production company receives letters from many people who say they watch the show with their family and talk to their children about starting a business.

The winner of the \$50,000 Chronos Prize, supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, was Matthew G. Hill and Landon Johnson, of Anaheim, Calif., for *Burning at Both Ends*.

Bill Engvall, the stand-up comedian who hosted the gala, said, "The Movieguide Awards help advance faith-based entertainment, [helping to steer the industry] back to normalcy. Not everything has to be shocking. You can be entertaining without being shocking. Look, I even love that a prayer is said on *Duck Dynasty*."

Duck Dynasty was honored at the gala, winning the Faith and Freedom Award for TV.

"We're so honored, and we want to thank the Lord," said Willie Robertson, one of the stars of the show. "I'm thankful I get to work with my family every day."

Robertson also won the Grace Award for TV Actor.

Also recognized at the awards gala for family-friendly, redeeming content were the movies *Frozen*, *Black Nativity*, *Linsanity*, *Turbo*, *42*, *Iron Man 3*, *Man of Steel* and *The Hobbit*. The TV shows *Blue Bloods* and *Last Man Standing* were also called out for setting a positive example.

For producing the *Jesus* film—a film that reportedly has been seen by more people on the planet than any other film, according to Movieguide—the Visionary Award was given to John Heyman, who described himself as "a nice Jewish boy" who is "a living, walking, talking example of the power of prayer."

In the mid-1980s, Heyman survived a terrible car accident, and while he was fighting for his life, 6,000 letters arrived from

people who said they were praying for him. Three decades later, he readily acknowledges the impact of those prayers.

“Movies should empower us to change; however, not Pollyanna purist,” said actor Corbin Bernsen, best known for the once-highly-popular TV show *LA Law*. “The word *wholesome* [to describe movies] sounds like homogenized milk. We [Christians in Hollywood] are doing a lot more than that.”

The Movieguide Awards ceremony will air on the Reelz cable channel March 1. A musical performance by Joni Eareckson Tada of the song “Alone Yet Not Alone” will be featured on the broadcast. The song received an Oscar nomination for Best Original Song of 2013 until it was revoked under questionable circumstances.