

The Life-Changing Message of the Cross



As today is Good Friday and we are thinking about Christ's death on the cross, I decided to devote the Strang Report to sharing my thoughts about Matt Crouch's new documentary: *The Cross: The Arthur Blessitt Story*.

I found this documentary to be very moving when I saw it at a pre-screening on March 24. If the movie is still playing in your area, I urge you to go see it. When it comes out on DVD, I urge you to buy it. You can [click here](#) to watch the four-minute trailer.

If you want to read more about this movie you can [click here](#) to read the news story we wrote on March 24 in our Charisma News Online newsletter or you can [click here](#) to read the review we did in our newest e-newsletter, The Buzz, on March 25.

Charisma's assistant editor, Leigh DeVore, did a great job reviewing the documentary, so that's not my goal here. Instead, I want to focus on how moved I was by the documentary. In the movie's promotional video the question was posed, "How do we walk out our God-given purpose and destiny?" The answer given was: "One step at a time."

Matt Crouch, who directed and narrated the film, best summed it up by saying, "It's not about the cross carrier, it's about what the cross did to the cross carrier."

I'm old enough to remember when Arthur Blessitt first became famous as a minister on Sunset Strip in Hollywood, Calif. I was in college when I first started hearing about him carrying the cross, first across America and later to virtually every

nation, territory and major island group in the world. It's been a 40-year trek. It has been amazing to see how many people this ministry has touched, including those in Muslim countries or in other places that are typically hostile to the gospel. The documentary is full of miraculous stories about how he escaped what should have been certain death. It's also full of humor and it's touching on a human level. I feel that my friend Matt did an outstanding job recreating this story in 93 minutes.

There is also a very personal tie to this. When Arthur was in Florida in 1976, less than a year after *Charisma* magazine began, he came to Orlando and I interviewed him for the cover story in our third issue. The cover is pictured here. During that time, he was trying to use every means possible to evangelize. He decided to run for president in the Florida primaries at the same time Jimmy Carter, an unknown peanut farmer from Georgia, was running.

Not everyone who wants to run for president can get his or her name on the ballot. Only serious candidates are considered. In order for Arthur to show he was a serious candidate, he addressed the Florida legislature and presented a copy of *Charisma* as proof that the press was taking him seriously. Interestingly, he received 2 percent of the vote even though he spent no money whatsoever campaigning. Because he ran as a Democrat and I was a registered Democrat at the time, I remember voting for him.

I remember he stayed at a Holiday Inn not far from the *Orlando Sentinel* where I was a reporter. I went to the hotel with a photographer, interviewed him and met his ex-wife and several of his then young children. We took the cover photo of him kneeling in the grass in the hotel's courtyard near the new swimming pool. That's how we did things back then! Since then I've followed his ministry. I know he deeply impacted my friend R.T. Kendall when he was a minister at the famous Westminster Chapel in London. R.T. has written about that.

I know that Arthur went through a rather public divorce, he seemed to drop out of sight for a while, but I guess he was just carrying the cross through remote locations.

I had occasion to reconnect with him not long ago when he was in Orlando. Of course he remembered the time I interviewed him, and he told me the story about speaking in front of the Florida legislature and presenting a copy of *Charisma*. I don't remember how many subscribers we had back then, but we printed only 10,000 copies and we were still affiliated with Calvary Assembly of God.

I don't think anyone can watch the documentary without being deeply touched. Even the *Charlotte Observer* wrote, "*Blessitt's adventure is an inspiration to all those who believe in its life-changing message.*"

Thankfully the story of Christianity does not end on the cross. It really begins with the story of the resurrection that we will celebrate on Sunday—not only Easter Sunday but every Sunday.

Please leave your thoughts on our Web site about what the cross and Easter mean to you.

Next week we'll start sending The Strang Report twice a week, and I will focus more on contemporary issues and especially about some of the very serious things that seem to be happening in the cultural war in our nation.

Steve Strang