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A Classic Tale Modernized – The Pilgrim's Progress

By Lisa M. Hendey

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Author Interview with Tim Dowley, Pilgrims' Progress

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A man, burdened by the weight of the world on his shoulders, sets out on an epic journey to find salvation for himself, his wife and family. Along the way, he meets dark characters, scary situations, and a shady personality or two. Ultimately, he attains his goal and the gates of heaven swing open to welcome him.

Prolific author Tim Dowley has made the old new again with his wonderful retelling of John Bunyan's classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Kregel, November 2004, hardcover, 80 pages). Twenty-first century kids (and their parents) will find themselves captivated by Dowley's modernized version of this seventeenth century classic. Illustrator Steve Smallman's brilliant artwork combines with Dowley's storytelling to create a fresh, vibrant effect. While some of the prose (and wardrobe) have been updated, this version of *The Pilgrim's Progress* remains a wonderful way to emphasize morality and values with your children in a manner that will capture their attention and imagination.

I recently had the opportunity to interview Tim Dowley on the process of revisiting this time-honored tale.

Q: Tim Dowley, author of the newly released *Pilgrims' Progress* and so many other wonderful Bible resources, thank you for your time and for participating in this Book Spotlight interview. Please tell our readers a bit about yourself.

A: I am a full-time author and book editor, and have written many Christian children's books and adult Bible reference volumes. I live with wife and family of three young children in Clapham in south London, England.

Q: John Bunyan's *Pilgrims' Progress* is indeed a classic. What prompted you to take on this project?

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A: Bunyan's story has been published in countless versions and editions since Bunyan first wrote it in Bedford Jail, where he was imprisoned for his beliefs over 300 years ago. I wanted to create a version for the 21st century that was faithful to Bunyan's story and language, but attractive and readable for today's children.

Q: For readers who haven't read your book or *The Pilgrim's Progress* please tell us about the story?

A: In brief, the story tells of Christian's dangerous and often lonely journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City (Heaven). On the way he has countless adventures and meets any number of extraordinary, odd, unpleasant and sometimes helpful people, including Faithful, Evangelist, Giant Despair and Apollyon, the Foul Fiend! The story is a picture (or "allegory") of our progress through life.

Q: Please share some of the circumstances surrounding Bunyan's writing of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

A: John Bunyan was a seventeenth century English tinker, who made pots and pans to sell. He became a Christian and began to pastor his own church. At that time, it was forbidden to preach unless you were an "official" preacher – and so John Bunyan was thrown into prison at Bedford, a town north of London, England. He had always loved stories, and while he was in prison, he started to write *Pilgrim's Progress*, using his knowledge of the Bible and the folk tales and nursery stories he knew and loved.

Q: What steps and challenges went into adapting this wonderful tale for young and contemporary readers?

A: I have tried to retell all the main events in Bunyan's book, and selected the most dramatic episodes. Like Bunyan, I have tried to tell the story in direct speech wherever I can, so that it reads more like a play than a novel. (Young readers might like to try acting it out, or getting different friends to read different parts.) I have kept most of Bunyan's wonderful character names – but some I have modernized, where today's reader wouldn't understand the old language.

Q: The illustrations in your new book are a wonderful complement. Do you feel they capture the essence of the message you were trying to share?

A: We asked Steve Smallman to illustrate the book because he is very good at portraying unusual and characterful people. He has illustrated many children's books, and I believe stands in a tradition of English art that is particularly suited to a book that has its roots in the English countryside and English history and storytelling.

Q: Why is it important that today's generation hear and appreciate John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*? Is Pilgrim's burden as heavy today as it was in the 1600's?

A: It's important for today's generation to read *Pilgrim's Progress* not only because it is a classic, but also because it is an extraordinarily readable and exciting story, and teaches us great truths and values.

Q: Do you have any future writing projects in the works?

A: I am at present working on a new first Bible for children and an exciting book for grown-ups about archaeological discoveries and the light they shed on Scripture.

Q: Tim Dowley, thank you so much for your time and for this wonderful book and so many of the other great resources you've written for children and adults. Are there any parting thoughts you'd like to share with our readers?

A: I hope you enjoy reading Pilgrim's Progress and one day can visit England and see the place where John Bunyan lived and preached.

For more information on Pilgrim's Progress visit

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0825472741/digitalcropper-20>

Lisa M. Hendey is a mother of two sons, webmaster of numerous web sites, including

<http://www.catholicmom.com> and <http://www.christiancoloring.com>, and an avid reader.

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5 Christmas Movies For The Whole Family To Enjoy!

By Nicole Dean

Christmas is coming! And, Christmas time is all about family and togetherness. We've put together some recommendations for movies to have on hand for the Christmas season that the whole family will enjoy. These are all movies to buy and watch year after year!

A Christmas Story (1983) All Ralphie wants in the entire world is a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas. This 1940s family is hilarious. You'll love Ralphie's irritable father, his whiny brother, and his all-American mother.

Elf (2003) What could be more fun for a kid to watch than a six foot tall elf? Between Will Farrell's great performance and the wacky concept of an Elf on the loose in New York City, this is destined to become a Christmas classic.

It's a Wonderful Life (1946) No list of "Must See Holiday Movies" would be complete without this James Stewart and Donna Reed classic. Share this timeless story with your children.

The Santa Clause (1994) Every kids dream is to go to the North Pole, but how many kids can say that Santa is their Dad? Watch an unwilling Tim Allen become Santa.

The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992) Great Gonzo as Charles Dickens? How can you go wrong? This lighthearted, humorous version is a perfect introduction to the classic Charles Dickens tale.

Nicole Dean invites you to visit

–a fun site to inspire parents to keep

the lines of communication open with their children, making memories that last a lifetime.



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