



Amazing Grace: The Story of America's Most Beloved Song

Steve Turner

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Behind our most beloved hymn is a fascinating story spanning continents, cultures, and centuries. Inspired by the way "Amazing Grace" continues to change and grow in popularity, acclaimed music writer Steve Turner embarks on a journey to trace the life of the hymn, from Olney, England, where it was written by former slave trader John Newton, to tiny Plantain Island off the coast of Africa, where Newton was held captive for almost a year, to the Kentucky-Tennessee border and other parts of the South, where the hymn first began to spread.

Newton had been rescued from Africa by a merchant ship when, during an eleven-hour storm on the Atlantic, he converted to Christianity. Years later, as a minister, he wrote the hymn for use among his congregation. Through the nineteenth century, "Amazing Grace" appeared in more and more hymn books, and in the twentieth century it rose to a gospel and folk standard before exploding into pop music. It has been recorded by artists as varied as Elvis Presley, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Tiny Tim, Al Green, Johnny Cash, Rod Stewart, Chet Baker, and Destiny's Child. *Amazing Grace* closely examines this modern history of the hymn through personal interviews with recording artists.

From John Newton's incredible life story to the hymn's role in American spirituality and culture, *Amazing Grace* is an illuminating, thorough, and unprecedented musical history.

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