



THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES



Lisa J. Godfrey/The HSUS

*The Humane Society of the United States Presents:*

## **Eric Metaxas: William Wilberforce & Animals**

In association with The Clapham Group

### INTRODUCTION

William Wilberforce is the patron saint for those called to advance God's Kingdom in pursuit of the common good. The Clapham Group is named after Wilberforce's "community of cause," which included addressing the link between animal cruelty and the abuse of "our neighbors." Wilberforce felt that participating in animal sport simply for the purposes of torturing or killing them "fostered every bad and base principle of human nature" and reflected a general coarsening of culture that allowed for other cruelty to take place. Popular at the time were "sports" familiar to us, such as dog fighting; however, bull-baiting was particularly violent and was acceptable at the time. Wilberforce pressed for passage of the Cruelty to Animals Act for 33 years, which paralleled his efforts on human trafficking. The bill finally passed in 1835 and banned the sport, which had included unleashing "bulldogs" that were specially bred and trained to attack and kill chained bulls.

"Wretched indeed must be the condition of the lower orders of Englishmen, if all their happiness was confined to such barbarities," Wilberforce wrote. Something in our soul should recoil at the torture or unnecessary killing of animals. In this series of videos, author and commentator Eric Metaxas discusses the passions and politics of William Wilberforce.

Before watching Video 1, read Genesis 1:28, Genesis 9:1-17, Psalm 8 and Romans 1:18-23. Ask students what these verses say about our relationship to each other and to animals and the world around us.

**Mark Rodgers is principal of the Clapham Group, a public-policy consulting firm based in Washington, DC, which is named after William Wilberforce's community.**

## WATCH: VIDEO 1

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*Notes*

## RESPOND

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1. Is it important for people of faith to stay engaged in a political landscape that can seem increasingly polarizing and unproductive? Why or why not?



## WATCH: VIDEO 3

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*Notes*

## RESPOND

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1. Wilberforce fought against bull baiting and other issues of his day. What are the animal welfare issues that concern us in the 21st century? How would Wilberforce have responded?

