

MOTHER TERESA

Topic: The Power of Christian Self-Denial

Prepared by Ted W. Fuson and Deborah Upton as the seventh of seven topical studies in the Summer of 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic for Bon Air Baptist Church

This the seventh of seven studies based on Scripture and Eric Metaxas' 7 Men and 7 Women and the Secret of Their Greatness, Nelson Books, 2013, 2015, & 2016.

Some Scripture References:

Matthew 6:12, 14-15—Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, you Father will not forgive your sins.

Titus 2:11-12—For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “NO” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright godly lives in this present age....

Luke 10:26-28—“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Matthew 25:44—“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

Luke 9:23—If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Matthew 20:26b—Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant....

Luke 10:30-37—In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road,

and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus Told him, "Go and do likewise."

The Topic is The Power of Christian Self-Denial.

"It's okay. You deserve it." How many of us have used that saying or one similar to rationalize spending money or time on something we wanted, but didn't need?

When last year, we were asked to donate coats, how many donated a really warm leather coat or another coat of like expense? We gave lots of coats, to be certain. However, how much sacrifice was involved? Dr. Stocks talked about his leather coat.

Self-denial is not a popular lifestyle except for someone else. Of course, we know the stories of wealthy persons giving large sums of money for worthy causes, even for Christian mission work. Many persons of significant financial resources use them for Christian causes. A friend of mine, now deceased, had a place on a lake. He regularly allowed pastors or Christian workers to stay there at no expense since most of them could not afford a vacation somewhere else besides where they lived. He gave away thousands and thousands of dollars with no publicity.

Mother Teresa lived as did Jesus, thankful for others who gave to support her and her ministry. Roman Catholic priests own nothing, but live in places owned by the church, drive vehicles owned by the church, and are cared for as long as they live, technically owning nothing. Theirs is a vow of poverty, expenses paid by the church. 'Other examples? Missionaries?

Mother Teresa's spoke clearly about her opposition to abortion, without apology (Pages 400 and 418-420). Her saying, "Faithfulness, not success." was on Chuck Colson's desk (Page 401). She really lived what the Bible taught her. The Lord Jesus compelled her.

Read about her facing an angry crowd of Hindu people (Pages 410-411)? She did it with courage and grace, much like Jesus faced his accusers. I can see our pastors doing that.

Of course, we all know that a saint is one who has been saved by the grace of God and is therefore made holy. Salvation is not of works so that none of us can boast. Mother Teresa did not boast, but the whole world could see that she was a saint. (See 1 Peter 2:9-12, Ephesians 1:15-23 especially verse 18, and Hebrews 2:11.) We are not shocked that Pope John Paul II beatified her in October 2003.

Two other topics are suggested in her biography. First, she spoke of spiritual poverty in wealthy nations. We need a spiritual awakening of historic proportions. Second, she spoke of aging lonely relatives in nursing homes. She spoke of children whose parents worked and were not always available for their children (page 419). ‘Sound familiar?

Here are some issues for discussion:

1. Discuss “Faithfulness, not success.” Was she successful because she was faithful? What leadership qualities did she have?
2. Abortion was a major issue with her. See page 419 at the bottom continued on 420. Are 61 million-plus abortions since the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision just numbers, or did that many babies die because it was legal to end their life before they were born? It was not murder according to the legal system. Was it immoral, by Christian and biblical standards? Why or why not?
3. Note how she was able to work with Muslim officials and Hindu officials to obtain places to minister to those in need. Are we able to cooperate in that manner here in the Richmond area? Examples are needed. Opportunities for BABC?
4. She started a hospice for AIDS victims. Has anyone ministered directly, physically to a person with AIDS? What about persons caring for those with Covid-19?
5. What most challenges you by the testimony, lifestyle, and ministry of Mother Teresa?
6. What would Mother Teresa do here in Richmond to minister to homeless people? How many do we have? Are the majority African American?
7. What about the high ration of Covid-19 victims being African-American?
8. What most warmed your heart after reading Mother Teresa’s story?
9. Talk about what led her to hear God calling her to her ministry? What influences made the largest impact? Any other such stories that you know like her calling?
10. How did the Lord lead you to your ministry(ies)? Any self-denial required?