

Week 14

3/29/11

James: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to have the author of "Bonhoeffer." I want to read -- I don't normally read bios but I thought this was really interesting because this is quite a provocative and inspiring read. It is a big book but hey, it is so captivating I couldn't put it down. I want to tell you about Eric Metaxas. He is a graduate from Yale University, the author of the NEW YORK TIMES bestseller, "Amazing Grace," William Wilberforce. The power of God through one man changed history, really led to the abolition of slavery. No question about it... One man! Now when we talk about "The Butterfly Effect," what one person can do, keep that in mind. You have no idea what God can do with a life totally yielded. As D.L. Moody put it "totally surrendered to him." He wanted to be that man. You can be that person. It is a tremendous story. They made the book... not only the book, "Amazing Grace" but the movie, "Amazing Grace" from that. He also has written for the NEW YORK TIMES, Washington Post, the Atlantic Monthly. He has been a commentator on C.N.N. and the FOX News. He is the founder and host of Socrates in the City. He is part of the Manhattan series on life, God, and other small topics. He has written many children's books including VeggieTales and some of those stories. What a great gift he is to us today! And what a great gift we have in "Bonhoeffer" to see things that we need to see and learn. We've talked to Erwin Lutzer from Moody Church about lessons we need to learn from Nazi Germany and we do, but we also perhaps must learn some things from Bonhoeffer. Would you welcome Eric Metaxas to *LIFE Today*? Eric, good to see you.

Eric: Thank you.

James: I'm not good with the doctor's degrees or any of those accolades I'm just going to talk to Eric about Bonhoeffer. Now I've got to tell you this, I heard you talking about the book very briefly; as a matter of fact, in kind of an unusual place. You actually were talking about it on the Glenn Beck program and I went and got the book because --

Eric: So I'm glad I was on there then.

James: Yeah, I'm really glad you were too. But I was impressed with the way you represented Christ, the way you represented truth. I detected a very legitimate concern for everyone listening, whether it was Glenn or anyone else in the audience or people all over America listening. You wanted us to understand something about this man.

Of course, we appreciate "Amazing Grace." I would recommend anybody read that, William Wilberforce's influence and impact; everybody inspired by it. But I'm really curious as to why you took on something when we know from theological perspective that German theologians have a pretty liberal bent, which all of us who try to study the word of God and believe in the absolute authority of scripture and the Word of God and the reality of Christ, we didn't particularly like that influence. So perhaps we overlooked some of the aspects in Bonhoeffer's life. So tell me about this book.

Eric: Well, there is a lot to say. First of all as far as Bonhoeffer's theology, he turned away from the standard liberal theology of his day. It's important for people to know that because one of the things that shocked me in writing this book was how misrepresented he has been over the decades. He has been kind of hijacked by theological liberals and many people have been confused to think that's who Bonhoeffer was. I can say bluntly, it is not. I was surprised to find that. When I went to do the research for the book I was very open-minded. I said I'm going to find what I'm going to find; I might not like it. On the contrary, I found a man utterly devoted to Jesus Christ. Folks can read it for themselves and they can study Bonhoeffer for themselves. They can decide what they think. It needed to be corrected. I didn't set out to correct it, the goal of this book was just to tell the story which I did. But how I came to write the story -- do we have time?

James: Go for it!

Eric: I was afraid you were going to say that. Well, you mentioned my background. I never intended to write biographies. When I was at Yale University I was editor of the humor magazine. I wanted to write fiction, novels, so and so forth. And then in 1988, a few years out of Yale I had what's known as a born again conversion experience. I put the video on my web site because that's a long story in of itself but I had a very dramatic conversion experience.

James: And web site if people wanted to watch your video?

Eric: My web site is EricMetaxas.com. If you can spell my name, it is EricMetaxas.com. If you cannot spell my name it is still EricMetaxas.com. I don't know what to tell you.

James: We've got it on the screen.

Eric: But if they go there they will also make sense of my strange career because to go from VeggieTales to this, whatever, I worked for Chuck Colson so-and-so forth. But in

1988 had this dramatic conversion experience and it was during that time, the summer of 1988 that the man who is sharing Jesus with me hands me a copy of this book called, "The Cost of Discipleship." He says, "Have you ever heard of Dietrich Bonhoeffer? He wrote this book called, 'The Cost of Discipleship.' I thought you would be interested in it because you're intellectual." I'm not intellectual but I went to Yale so people assume that you're intellectual.

[Laughter]

He said, "I thought you would appreciate this. Have you heard of Bonhoeffer?" I said, "No, I haven't heard of Bonhoeffer." At Yale University they are not in the habit of telling you about heroic Christian figures. Did you know that? It is a sad truth.

James: Too bad!

Eric: I said, "I've never heard of this guy. Who is he?" And I'll never forget it. He says to me, "Oh, he was a German pastor, man of God who got involved in the plot against Adolf Hitler. And he was killed by the Nazis in a concentration camp in 1945." I said, "What?" I couldn't believe it, a man of God standing up against the Nazis? A man who because of his faith in Jesus stood up for the Jews? How come I've never heard this story before? So I was amazed by the story but then I was annoyed that I'd never heard this story. I said this is an amazing story! But I was thirdly amazed because I am German. My dad is Greek, Metaxas; my mom is German. They met in an English class in New York City in 1956, the American dream. They came from war torn Europe and this has been the background of my life. My parents lived through this. My mother lived through it particularly in Germany. When she was nine years old she lost her dad. He was 31 years old. He was a genuinely reluctant German soldier. He would listen to the BBC -- my grandmother would tell me -- he would listen to BBC on the radio with his ear literally pressed against the radio speaker because if you were caught listening to the BBC, anything other than German propaganda you could be sent to a concentration camp. So he was one of many, many reluctant Germans. They were not on board with this whole thing but my grandmother was a guileless woman. I remember her telling me this. And of course, he was killed at age 31 in 1944, my mom was nine years old. So this is part of my story. So when I heard this story about Bonhoeffer in '88, the summer I came to faith in Jesus, I said, "This is an amazing story and I wish the whole world could know this story." Now at the time I never had a dream that I would write a biography. I got on -- this is strange. I got on C.N.N. to talk about my book, "Everything about God." I'm on there talking about scripture and all this stuff and the anchor says, "Well, what about this Wilberforce thing? What about this?" I said, "Well, Wilberforce --." I just had one paragraph about Wilberforce as a

man who believed the Bible and changed history because he took the Bible seriously. So that led to somebody contacting me and saying, "Would you like to write a biography of Wilberforce?" Foolishly I said, "Yes."

[Laughter]

And I wrote that biography and it did reasonably well and I felt that I enjoyed it. It allowed me to tell a story about a man that I knew; this man was sold out to Jesus Christ and he changed the world. And inevitably, to get to the end of the story here, people kept saying, "Eric, who are you going to write about next? You've got to have another biography." They just assumed that for the rest of my life I'm going to write biographies. I said, "I don't want to write anymore more biographies, I'm tired." But they kept asking. And you know if people keep asking, you think maybe that's the Lord. Well, I said, "Well, there is only one person who ever lived besides Wilberforce that I think I would write a biography about and that is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. And lo and behold, I waded into those waters. They were a lot deeper than I ever thought. It was very difficult. But I can say bluntly, especially to an audience such as yours, the Lord called me to write both these books; I have no doubt about that. I don't have any ambition to write another biography but these two stories needed to be told and I genuinely believe the Lord created me and prepared to write these stories.

James: I saw the effort that it took to pull and compile together when in fact the Germans destroyed what would have been considered his classic messages so often. You had to piece together from notes and the testimony of others and you had to go back and even talk to family and people who were connected in some relationship. The thing I saw here was a man who had come to America actually and attended school, saw the American way, and then went back literally knowing he would likely be facing this horrible enemy and die. The thing that really impressed me and I just want to cut to the chase on the end but I want to come back and ask you what your hope is that we as believers all over the world and anyone concerned about the horrible things that can happen when the wrong powers begin to overwhelm the people with really false hope that no man can ever give and that no government can give when they take the place of God. I saw a man who was caught up in what I refer to as the presence of God's kingdom being at hand. I saw a man, even when he could go to the gallows with such peace and composure that he said for him it is the beginning, and in that last moment. But yet it was as though he was already living with the presence of heaven on him so that he had this incredible peace. I saw a man being carried by the spirit but he was also opposing the evil that could have overwhelmed the world, including the United States and U.K. -- all of Europe. Here it was, this incredible power. I was inspired by this presence of God in his life, this

devotion. He really moved me. What I want to ask you because we saw something here, what was going on in Germany or in the church that he wanted to get out but it was kept back? He was obviously in it. What was going on in the church that they could be so silent in the face of such horror?

Eric: Well, there is a couple of things going on. First of all when we say the church -- Bonhoeffer was asking his question as a theologian because folks would not know that maybe he was a brilliant theologian, but he was also a simple man of God, a pastor. He was asking the question theologically, "What is the church?" And in a way that question haunted him his whole life, what is the church? And we have to ask ourselves in America, what is the church? Who is the church? Just because you go to a church, because you say that I have this doctrine and this is my doctrine, God is not interested. God looks on the heart. You cannot fool God with a fig leaf of theology, you cannot fool God with a fig leaf of church attendance, you cannot fool God. This man was living at a time when he saw the church was not being a church and like every prophet called by God he was trying to call the church to be the church of Jesus Christ, to be obedient unto death, to be 24/7 given to the Lord for his purposes. And he saw many people thought of themselves as good Lutherans, good protestants, whatever it was, there was kind of a spiritual pride, a theological ignorance, a theological shallowness, in some cases it was theological liberalism, that was a big problem in the church in Germany but also among theological conservatives, he saw that they were in love with being Lutherans, being good Lutherans, as opposed to really thinking what is Jesus calling me to do today? Is the Lord alive in my life today? And that's the difference between religion and a relationship with Jesus Christ. And I believe that this man was alive at a time when the devil wants to sift us. He understood that unless I'm standing on the rock, Christ Jesus I'm dead. And when the evil rises up, the Nazis were palpable, clear explicit evil, when that kind of evil rises up, your church-ianity, your church attendance, your good deeds will not stand against satanic evil. The only thing that stands against satanic evil is Jesus Christ. So he was really calling the church to really be disciples of Jesus. That the phony morality -- morality is not going to fight the devil. Morality is a fruit of knowing Jesus but you can also have morality and not know Jesus. This man was -- he was a lonely voice at a time when even good people got fooled by the Nazis. I really believe, I was saying this to you earlier that his cry was not heeded in his day. The German church did not heed his cry that the Lord was trying to speak through him. My prayer and my hope is that his voice would be heard today, especially in the American church. That we would wake up and really be the church. If the church will be the church, if we will have the faith that Bonhoeffer had and that every single person -- God calls everyone to have this faith, not just a few select ministers or pastors or holy people -- every human being made in the image of God is called to live this life. I really believe that Bonhoeffer was trying to wake up the

church in his day. My prayer is that through this story people would wake up today, that the church would be the church today. If the church would be the church the world will change. That's the long answer. You want the short answer?

[Laughter]

James: That was -- I have said we've got to stop just going to church and start being the church. We've got to reveal this present power and release the effect of that love.

Betty: I haven't had an opportunity to read this big book, yet, but I'm looking forward to it. I have not been the avid reader that my husband is. He has about four or five books laid out all at once. I'm proud of myself because I'm reading two at one time, but I'm going to get to this book. But he gives a great book report. So he has really inspired me and I'm looking forward to it. But one thing that I did, just from what he has shared with me about the book is the courage that he drew from the Lord. Can you talk about that just a minute because he had to have great courage in his confidence in his relationship with the Lord?

Eric: Again, I'll be blunt, I think if you have faith, if you know Jesus you have courage because you realize that you're living in a different reality so there is no fear. In fact, Bonhoeffer preaches a sermon in 1933 -- whenever I speak on Bonhoeffer, I've been going around the country talking about Bonhoeffer, I always close with the fact that he went to his death with peace but we are all meant to go to our death with peace because guess what? If you actually believe in Jesus, if you actually do, maybe a lot of people maybe they think they do but they don't -- but if you do, then you know he has overcome death. Death is dead! We have no fear of death because we will not die. Now if you really believe that, that's what is called being a Christian, and Bonhoeffer had that. When you have that kind of faith, whom shall I fear? Whom shall I fear? That's -- he was calling the church to have that kind of faith. And if the church will have that kind of faith, nothing can frighten us, death cannot frighten us. He lived that.

James: He had the reality Eric that you point out so clearly in his testimony, and the testimony of all the people observing him, he had the reality of that life, that eternal life present prevailing. He was in that life. He had already entered that life. So death has no power, and fear could not take him because perfect love, which he walked in, cast out fear. I just love the quotes that he says here. These are some quotes from 1928, "Where a people praise, there is the church. And where the church is, there is never loneliness." Why? Because it is not the presence of all the people around you, it's the presence of Jesus. This is relationship that you were talking about that academic Yale or anybody else couldn't ultimately keep from you. When you got into it, everything

the world has to offer paled in comparison. He says this, and this is where he talks about this false piety that the church was in in Germany, in defending their beliefs, while never demonstrating the power of what they claim to believe. "It is much easier for me to imagine a praying murderer, a praying prostitute than a vain person praying." People that have self-righteousness who have not recognized and received his righteousness, they are full of vanity. Who do they need to talk to? This is just incredible! Nothing is so at odds with prayer as vanity. We've got a lot of people who are vain in religion. Listen, this is a powerful book. Eric, I want you to talk -- in another program, I want to talk to you some more about the lessons that I feel like the church today must grasp right now. What needs to happen to the church in this day. What needs to happen to us today because we can't even imagine the horrific things that took place in Germany happening here but I'm going to tell you something, we're as guilty in so many ways all over the world, in the free world, what we call the free world, the advanced communities of the world in depending upon some source of sustenance other than God. And I really believe it is because the church has not stood like Bonhoeffer to demonstrate the real source of life and hope. Do you appreciate Dr. Metaxas? Do you appreciate Eric sharing with us the book Bonhoeffer and that story? Do you appreciate him doing that? I appreciate the effort. You know when I read books like this I think God, thank you for the man but thank you for someone who will take the time to share this journey with us for the inspiration that we draw from it. I want to show you something right now that I believe calls as directly as it is possible for God the father to call to his children, to the church, to people who say, "I believe in God, I believe in his love," as clearly as anything you'll ever hear. This is a cry. I want you to hear that cry and respond to it because you are capable of extending the very hands of a loving God to those who hurt. Watch this closely.

On the mission field:

>> At 12 I was sold by my mother to a man who kept me locked in a room and raped me every day for a week. After the first time I begged him to let me go because it hurt so much. I went back to my mother because I was so afraid but all she asked was, "Did he give you any more money?" A girl receives hope from her mother; I have no hope.

Jeanne: I want to be the mother. [Weeping] She's been diagnosed with H.I.V. I don't think it is too late. I think there is lots of time for love. And there is a lot of ways for us to show that to her. This girl is worth rescuing.

James: Boy, you can't imagine the images that flash through my mind. I led Jeanne Rogers, who was weeping with that girl to Christ when she was a teenager. I was a young man. Jeanne is now a grandmother with ten beautiful grandchildren; three sons that are just incredible Christian witnesses. And Jeanne is holding that girl, and Betty, she said, "I want to be her mother." Her mother sold her. What I heard in Jeanne was the heart of the father, God's love saying, "I want to put my arms around her." And really and truly what Jeanne is saying is we want to give girls like this, women like this, we want to give them a home, we want to have take them out of that pit of destruction and bondage and we can do that. And viewers like you built the most incredible *LIFE* Center there in Thailand and we're establishing incredible *LIFE* Centers in other parts of the world where we're taking people out of the sex traffic and we can literally rescue a child like that and a girl like that, Betty, the average cost is \$128, that's what it takes. We're asking you to help us rescue as many as you can. What goes on in your heart when you look and you see something like that that's happened where a mother has in desperation and for whatever reason sold her girl into slavery like that?

Betty: You know, just like Jeanne said, there's enough love for her too. I think of the words to a song, an old song that says "Oh, what love that Jesus died for me." He died for these children too. He gave his life for them and he loves them. And we have the opportunity to reach out in that love and show them how much value they are to Jesus. And I think that's a great opportunity, James. Let's put our arms of love around these children and let them know that someone cares.

James: You know when we first came to our viewers with the sex trafficking issue, we found it almost like it would be embarrassing to show you what is really going on. And we were really a little bit concerned about how you might respond. Maybe you would just turn it off. But you know what you did? You said, "We can help." Ladies, you're incredible. Mothers, grandmothers, and all the men that care, you're amazing! The way you've reached out to help us rescue thousands and thousands of children. Right now we're asking you to make a gift to help us share an opportunity, literally to rescue life. Did you know that for \$1280 we can rescue ten of those precious girls and children from the sex trafficking? Put them in a beautiful home, a setting and teach them a way of life and go back and minister to the families and the settings from which they were either sold or came. Many of them went off thinking they were going to learn a trade and get a job. That's what they were told, and then they were taken into bondage and slavery. But love will set them free. But we need your help not only to build *LIFE* Centers but to sustain them and to give the opportunity to literally

rescue some. Would you help right now? Would you make the gift God put on your heart? Take your bankcard, use it like a check, or write a check, make it to *LIFE*. Or you can go online and make the gift God put on your heart. We have some gifts to bless you as you are literally helping us rescue lives. All over the world where people are trapped, literally trapped in the sex trade and being used, help us rescue them. Please do it! Do everything you can to help.

Begin video clip:

Announcer: Human trafficking... it's hard to believe it is happening! But at this very moment innocent children, many very young are being sold and forced into sexual slavery and exploited in every way imaginable and someone must save them! With your support of mission rescue life you can help rescue more than 5,000 children from the horrors of the sex trade in parts of Thailand, India, Cambodia and other targeted nations. Together we can reach vulnerable families and children by providing much needed food and relief. We can rescue those already ensnared by offering them a way out and we can restore their hearts, minds and bodies to enable them to enjoy life as God intended. Your gift today of only \$128 will help rescue a child and change their life forever. And with gifts of \$64 or \$32 we will combine your gifts with others to help rescue one more child from the shame and pain of this lifestyle. As our way of saying thank you, please request "The Butterfly Effect," how your life matters. The story of this book reveals how you were specially created by God to make a difference and have the power to change the world. As a special challenge, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1280 to help rescue ten children. With your gift be sure to request "Heart of the Father," our beautiful new bronze sculpture that demonstrates God's fatherly love for us as his children. Call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Well, from the bottom of our heart we just say thank you so much for your help. I want to say thanks again to Eric Metaxas for writing the book, "Bonhoeffer." I thank God for letting us see the beauty of Christ in a man who was held as Paul was in prison for much of his ministry really, the last years of his life but what an impact his story can make. I really recommend it to you. Would you join Betty and me again saying thanks to Eric for being with us? Will you continue to join us? God is using you to be such an inspiration and I thank God for you. Thank all of you so much for your help. Thanks for helping us share *LIFE Today*.

Beth: Did you do it for others or do we get so absorbed in our own worlds that we miss the victory?

Announcer: A story fit for a song -- tomorrow on Life Today!