

Week 14

3/31/11

James: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Robison. Betty and I are thrilled to have the author of the book, "Bonhoeffer." He references him as a pastor, a martyr, a prophet and a spy. It is quite a book. The author, Eric Metaxas who wrote also "Amazing Grace" about Wilberforce who literally, as one man led to the abolition of slavery all over the world -- period! It was the ultimate impact of one man. And Bonhoeffer has been, Betty, I think he got lost in the eyes of many of us in the discussions about whether or not somebody believed the Bible exactly right or whether they had been adversely effected by the liberalism of a lot of German theologians and a church that obviously didn't literally stand as the church in the face of perhaps the greatest manifestation of evil in the past 100 years, if not longer -- awful! And yet Bonhoeffer was a man that is amazing. When I read the book, I found myself before the Lord just saying, God, the peace that prevailed in his life, the message he wanted the German people to hear -- and Hitler so hated the very thought of this man because of a few messages that got out before he put him in prison. He literally, a few days before he died at his own hand, however Hitler went out, most people think he -- history says he probably killed himself, but he had to get this man dead and he had to destroy everything he had done. And now then Eric Metaxas has researched and done whatever it is to tell us the truth and to show us literally what God was in Bonhoeffer's life. Would you welcome this author -- this incredible writer, Eric Metaxas to *LIFE Today* again? Eric, I'm really glad to be here with you. And I thank you for the journey, I thank you for the effort that went into this. I said when I talked to you on another program that I was so inspired, I actually found myself praying, God, I want that peace that prevailed in the greatest, most adverse circumstances to where the other prisoners and even other believers, Christians -- good Christians that had also been taken captive, they noticed it on him, they were captivated by it, his writings, his letters to his fiancé, to family, to everything that he communicated, notes that you've been able to recover, this man was abiding in Christ. I mean this was kingdom power and life in his life manifest and it really inspired me. I want you to sort of take off on what you wish people could know about this man and wish that we could hear. It is sad that we ever lose the opportunity to knowing the truth.

Eric: Well, Bonhoeffer, you said earlier that he was misunderstood. He really was and that's why when I wrote this book I went in with no agenda. That's just a fact. I said, "I may find some stuff I don't like, I've got to tell the truth." What amazed me was that

everything I was expecting to find, I didn't find. I found a man of God from the beginning to the end. In fact, it was when he came to America in 1930; he went to all these liberal white protestant churches, mainline Protestant churches in New York City. He never heard the gospel preached and he wrote about it. I quote the letters and the journals in this book so people can read. He was shocked. He was disgusted.

James: He was inspired by the black churches and the pastors and their fire and their love for God in the face of total... let's say cruelty.

Eric: Yes, that's the point. So he goes to all these mainstream -- mainline Protestant churches; he hears nothing but liberalism, social gospel and he says, "That's all very nice but it is not Christianity." Then he goes to Harlem. An African American fellow student named Frank Fischer from Alabama invites him to go to Harlem and he visits the Abyssinian Baptist Church, African American, one of the biggest churches in the country; I think it was the biggest church in the country. And what Bonhoeffer sees, it blows him away. He has never seen this -- this is real faith. People really worshipping Jesus. They're not just going through the motions, they're just not getting dressed up, this is what you do on Sunday because this is what everybody else does on Sunday, and then you go to brunch and play golf. That's what we do here. No! These people were worshipping Jesus Christ. The sermons were fiery gospel sermons. Bonhoeffer said, "This is it." Not only did he go there that Sunday, he decided I'm going to go back every single Sunday that I'm in New York City. Now imagine a blond bespectacled German academic going up to Harlem every Sunday, not just to worship and to sing this music, because he just fell in love with this music, but to teach Sunday school. He got involved in the lives of the parishioners; he got very involved. It changed his life. When he went back to Germany in the summer of '31 everybody said, "Something has happened. What has happened to you?" Later on Bonhoeffer writes and I quote this letter in here also, that he basically says, "I became a Christian." Now I think that's typical Bonhoeffer, he is being overly gracious. He was a Christian before this. He was theologically straight and you can read it for yourself, what he said. But something happened in his heart. Something happened in his heart. Whether he was born again, whether he had -- I don't know, but the fact of the matter is everybody said, "You're different." And he understood suddenly, it's not about me, it's not about being a theological rock star that everybody is praising me because I'm such a genius, theological genius. No! It is about serving Jesus Christ in my time, in his power for his purposes. He understood this and people saw this. Just at the time he returns, what's happening in Germany? While he had changed, Germany had changed, the Nazis are on the rise. And Bonhoeffer begins -- even with kind of a prophetic voice speaking against what is happening in Germany. We know that the German people were so crushed by what happened in World War I -- by the way they lost, in case people

didn't know -- by what happened, economic conditions. They were so destroyed that they were looking for a savior to pull them out of their economic misery, but they were looking to a human savior. And Bonhoeffer says, even in his classes he says, "If you're a Christian in Germany, you can only have one savior and that is Jesus Christ."

James: Now can I just insert right here that I feel like the stage is set here that we're looking to the wrong source. We're beginning to think that government and that some way through government and through government entities or statism or this power, somehow we can have our security. Do you not see a little bit of that trend here that is alarming?

Eric: A little bit? How about a little more than a little bit. I've got to tell you one of the reasons that I think this book has touched such a core and I'm getting such incredible feedback is because people see parallels. Now you can take it too far but let's just look at that you just said, this idea that it is in the nature, the broken sinful nature of man to look to something other than God for salvation, for security, for everything. It is our nature; it is our broken nature. So we will do that naturally. Apart from Jesus Christ, that's what we do. And of course, even people who do think of themselves as Christians there is this tendency to make an idol of something, whether it is a political figure as they did with Hitler or whether it is the state, more generally speaking. And Bonhoeffer, he saw this, he began to speak out against it and then he begins to speak to the church. He's basically saying the church must be the church. The church must stand up and stand against the state when the state is encroaching on the boundaries of the church. The church is the church. In this case, it was about the church was being forced by the state to define who can be a Christian and who can't be. They said, "If you have Jewish blood you can't be a part of the German church" because they were defining everything according to racial -- along racial lines. Of course, that's what the Nazis did. And a lot of Germans said, "Well, that's not really incompatible with Christianity is it?" And Bonhoeffer said, "Yes, it is." He saw very clearly what a lot of Germans got -- this is why if you're theologically ignorant, if you don't know the scripture, if you don't know Jesus personally, you are open to deception and millions of Germans were deceived, they were suffering, they were looking for ways out and so they turned toward Hitler, toward the Nazis and many of them woke up eventually but it was too late. And Bonhoeffer was a voice trying to wake them up to see what was happening and to show them what it is to worship Jesus and what it is to just be a church goer who thinks he is a Christian. Bonhoeffer would say and I would say, "You're not a Christian, you're a Gentile. Okay, you're not a Jew, okay. You're not a pagan, okay. But you're not a Christian, you're just a Gentile." There were many people in Germany at the time, they thought, because I'm a German I'm a Christian. Bonhoeffer was saying no. To be the church you have to know the Lord, you have to

follow him. That's how God looks at it. Are you covered by the blood of Jesus Christ in everything you do or are you just somebody who goes to church on Sunday? And in Germany, there were many people who just went to church on Sunday; many who didn't even go to church on Sunday.

James: What do you think Bonhoeffer would want us to hear? What does Eric Metaxas want us to hear that you think is from God today?

Eric: I think it is the same thing that Bonhoeffer was preaching and it is the same thing -- listen, unless it is the Lord speaking who cares what I have to say and who cares what he has to say, either it is the Lord or nothing. I believe the Lord was speaking through him and through his life and to some extent through this book can speak again but what does God always say? He says the same thing over and over and over. The Lord says the same thing over and over. He says to the church, "Be the church to my people; be my people. Do not be apostate. Do not turn away from me. Do not follow false idols, follow me, I love you. I have a plan for your life." It is the same simple thing we know over and over and over but our hearts are wicked, we are broken and we keep turning away and God keeps trying to call us back to be the church. We live in a time today for example in America where it is very easy to be a Christian -- very easy. What is the cost? Try to be a Christian in North Korea. Try to be a Christian in other times in history; in first century Rome, try to be a Christian. So we have to ask ourselves, are we really Christians or are we just floating along with the cultural tide? We're not really thinking about this. Are we behaving the way somebody who has been bought by the shed blood of Jesus Christ would behave? This is what Bonhoeffer was saying in his day. If you believe you will obey -- you will obey. You can't just say, "Well, I believe but I'm a sinner and I screw up." He said, "No, if you really, really believe you will obey. You will take it seriously what God has done for you. You don't take this lightly." That's God's call to every human being that he ever created but I really think that we live in a time now where it is very easy for us to just wink at this and wink at that. Just on the issue of how the church has defined say sexuality since the beginning -- that's not something that changes -- what scripture says does not change. But today it is becoming culturally uncomfortable so a lot of people are suddenly -- well, I'll ask the viewers, how many people have signed the Manhattan Declaration? Right? I mean you can ask the question, if you haven't signed the Manhattan declaration --

James: I signed it the day it was written.

Eric: Of course, you have! But there are people who go, well... I want to ask people, if you're not willing to sign that, why not? And if God's going to ask more of you, are

you going to have the courage? This is the story of Bonhoeffer is meant, I believe, to inspire us to stand for the truth knowing that it is nothing but the love of God. The truth is not a dark thing, it is not a divisive thing, it is the love of God. On that issue today in America, how many people are willing to stand just on that? Because there is cultural pressure to bend, there is cultural pressure to go with the flow on a number of sexual issues. That is the one thing you can say in America, is the church being the church? Are people actually doing that? This man went to his death for the truth.

James: Well, you know we talk about the atrocities of killing the Jews, the holocaust, and yet we without blinking terminated the most helpless of all creation and that is the child in the womb. It's been more than 50 million and we haven't stood. I would have been taken out because I'm the product of a non-planned for pregnancy to a 40 year old woman who didn't have a husband. I shouldn't have had a chance and a doctor refused to abort me. Out of conviction he said, "No." Where are the convictions today that will defend someone that is helpless like I was? And what about the people we have touched because God has a purpose for the unplanned and the unexpected. One of the reasons that I think the truth of God doesn't get out is because major media are going to twist or ignore the truth or totally misrepresent it. They're going to actually assault it. So the stronger we stand the more the world's forces are going to come against us. But I want to tell you something, if the silent majority and I wrote a whole commentary on this. By the way, if you've never gone to JamesRobison.net or go on LifeToday.org and over here it will say James Robison's commentaries or my articles, well, read them, and just scan back through them. But I wrote one on when the silent majority suddenly speaks loudly. We're not talking about organizing some new wing of a political party or a new political party. We're talking about releasing the power of God through the individual that has been the light hidden under the bushel. We're talking about getting that light up on the lamp stand. I'm just saying -- this is kind of what you contributed to. You're a troublemaker! You contributed this to me by writing Bonhoeffer. So you have stirred up in me this fire that God was already stirring and you're sitting over across the room watching this and I'm knee deep in books. Let me tell you something, Betty said I like to read. You want to know why I like to read? Because I love you and I want to know truth. And I want to know everything about how the word of the living God applies to the living on this planet who in many instances are living like a mortuary. Look at them in churches. They look like the local chain gang. It looks like people -- it just breaks my heart because we're not supposed to live that way. So I'm reading and digging and I'm trying to say Lord, show in light of history and what's happened, show me where the church got over here under the bushel of conformity and comfort and compatibility, and compromise, and we sat over here discussing the liberal theologians over in Germany and writing off someone who might have been released from that and even appalled at the liberalism in our schools.

Eric: Oh, he was. I tell you, just to point out. I found some stuff -- I couldn't believe it -- in 1939 when he comes back to America to escape Nazi Germany, he comes here and he goes to hear the liberal preaching at Riverside Church; couldn't get more liberal. But he believes God can speak through anything and guess what? The Lord could speak through anything. So he goes over there and he is disgusted by the religiosity of the sermon and I put it in the book. The preacher preaches from James, not the book of James, from the philosopher William James.

[Laughter]

That's how liberal -- forget scripture. So he is disgusted. The same day -- this is like out of a movie -- the same day he walks six blocks south on Broadway to another church where there was the Arch Fundamentalist Presbyterian, MaComb was preaching and Bonhoeffer says, "Let me see what that is like." And here he hears the gospel preached. And if ever he throws his hat in, if he has to vote, who do I vote for? -- Them or them? It's like something out of a movie. You'd say that's too simplistic, that wouldn't happen in real life. It happened six hours apart, six blocks apart, he hears ultraliberal preaching and then he goes south and he hears this man reviled as a fundamentalist, the enemy of Fosdick and all these people. And Bonhoeffer says, "This was beautiful. Finally, on Sunday I heard the gospel preached and I was among the people of God." When I read that I thought, am I making this up? This is just like too clear. But this man, he knew when he saw the people of God, when he heard the gospel preached, he said, "This is it. This is what we need." Right after that he goes back to Germany to face death but he had the peace of God. He was not looking for rules, he was looking to be led by the living God and he was.

James: And I want to tell you, that's where God is carrying me in my journey right now as kind of an old man, I'm an old guy. This guy died in his early 30s. I'm an old guy! I'm going to tell you something, this is the hour for the church. This is arise and shine for the glory of God must be released through us. The imprint and impact of God through all of us as believers, this is the hour -- arise and shine! That's God's call to you. You are so important to his purpose. You are that holy habitation coming together. By the way, I'm going to do everything I can to communicate truth even to those who may be criticizing me who may say, "I don't like what you're saying. You're compromise --." I'm going to tell you, I love them! I'm going to love my enemies. Maybe you'll hone me, you may be an abrasive grinding device in my life but I'm going to love you even if you're unkind, and I want to do my best to see truth penetrate all barriers and the grace and love of God prevail so that we become that city set on a hill so that we really do begin to live in the shadow and shelter of the almighty

and be an answer to the prayer of Jesus. We be one and thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth right now through us, your people the church on this earth. I believe it can be done. Do you agree it can be done? Do you appreciate Eric? Do you appreciate what he shared with us about Bonhoeffer? The book is in the bookstores. It is great. You can go online and get it. I really encourage you to do it. Betty, you sure have talked a whole lot.

[Laughter]

Do you like what you see?

Betty: I love it! Like I've said before, I haven't read the book yet but I'm anxious to get into it. But I come away just from what I've heard the two of you share about this man that I come away saying, God, you've told me I'm just as significant as the life of this man. You are too. You are significant to what God wants to do. Will you allow him to take you on his journey? You'll be blessed! You'll be blessed!

James: That's really -- that's what this little gift book, "The Butterfly Effect" says. Scientific fact, a butterfly can start a hurricane -- that's a scientific fact. You know what that means? We can release a wave of God's love all over the world. That's literally what we are asking you to do. Would you help us rescue lives? Would you help us rescue, just like the girl you're about to see, would you help us rescue precious children from the horrors of the sex traffic and the sex trade? We can do it with God's love... together! Watch this.

On the mission field:

>> Actually she -- the old lady took her to the room and let the men rape her and then sold her to other men, one after the other and never gave her money.

>> At a time when she felt so disgraced for herself that she was sold and then when she was beaten all of the time she would think it is better for her to be killed.

>> They beat them and then locked in the room.

>> And they also put a spike in her leg.

>> A spike? Like a metal railroad spike? They put that into your leg? And here she is, she is caught in this trap and she doesn't see any way out. People have owned her and forced her to perform many sexual acts, ten men a day. You can look at her face and tell she doesn't want to do this. She hates it! She hates what she has to do again and again and again. I want to stop it.

End of clip

In the studio:

James: Jeanne Rogers, along with the mission teams can want to stop it but they can't stop it without your help. Your help, people like you, rescued that beautiful girl. Here she is right now, these pictures were just sent to us, they're training her in a trade so that she can learn how to make a living in the right way because she is experiencing life and we're helping her in the *LIFE* Center that love shared through people like you built. It is an absolutely beautiful place. Now our mission team led that pimp, that man that was talking about how he could use a knife and control them and how he knew what he was doing. He was just talking casually, just like he was talking about dirt. But they led him to Christ; they led him to the Lord. The man's life was changed there on the street by the power of God and the power of love. Betty, what we're asking our viewers to do is to help us rescue more girls like that. Literally thousands of children that we can get, who are going to be sold into the sex trade because they go into the impoverished areas and out into the rural areas and they convince the parents that they're going to take these children and they're going to teach them a job, and they'll even give them money. So we watch -- you and I went there and we saw children that had been bought with a radio; the family got a radio or maybe a portable television, just some kind of electronic device and they got the child. I'm telling you, right now we can save those children's lives -- thousands of them! You know what it costs to rescue a child? It costs \$128. The *LIFE* Center that is established there was by people selling everything they had who lived in California and served the motion picture industry, Hollywood. And they just sold out and they said, "God wants us to go over here and rescue these children." And they left everything. They're there and we've built the *LIFE* Center there in Thailand and we're building others in other areas, in Cambodia and other places in Asia. When I say we, I'm talking about us together. But we've broken out the cost to help rescue a child, it is \$128. Here's what I would like you to do. If you can help us rescue a child, dial the telephone number. It is truly a lifeline, always a prayer line for you -- always! But you dial the number, take your bankcard, use it like a check or write a check, make it to *LIFE*, that's what you're doing, you're rescuing lives or you can go online LifeToday.org. If there is any way that you can help us rescue ten children, think about this, \$1280, we can give life and hope to people in desperate situations. Would you help us do that? Would you help us

maintain those incredible outreaches and even expand them? You are the source. You are the release of God's love. You are the enablers of those missionaries and those precious people that God has put in place to literally help express God's love. Would you enable them to do it? Please make the call God put on your heart and make the gift. Would you do that right now? Thank you so much! We have some gifts to bless you and to say thank you! Thank you for helping rescue these precious lives.

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: We're going to be sending you "The Butterfly Effect" because I'm telling you, you're going to be putting healing streams in motion, literally by your gift and we thank you. I want to remind you again the book, "Bonhoeffer," the Dietrich Bonhoeffer story -- incredible! What a blessing this has been to me and what a blessing it will be to the church today. I want to say thanks and ask all of you to join Betty and me in saying thanks to Eric Metaxas for writing the book. Thank you for your journey. Thank you for your life! Thank you for your love! You're a treasure my friend -- you're a treasure. You are too! Very special! Thanks for helping us share God's love.

>> How can you be one nation under God if you can't even be one church under God?

Announcer: Next week, Dr. Tony Evans reveals a new kingdom perspective that overcomes all racial problems.