

GREAT CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE (1875-1955)

Mary McLeod was born in Mayesville, S.C. Her parents, Samuel and Patsy McLeod, were former slaves; Mary was the fifteenth of 17 children. After graduating from Scotia Seminary where she attended and graduated from Moody Institute, she wished to become a missionary in Africa; however, because of her race she was unable to pursue this end. While she was an instructor at Kindell Institute in Sumpter, S.C., in 1897-1898, she married Albertus Bethune.

Bethune began her career as an educator in Daytona Beach, Fla., and began the difficult task of establishing a school for African American girls. Bethune also organized classes for the children of turpentine workers. In these ways she satisfied her desire to serve as a missionary. Bethune needed financial support to continue her work. In 1912, she interested James M. Gamble of the Proctor and Gamble Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, who contributed financially to the school and served as chairman of its board of trustees until his death. In 1923, Bethune's school for girls merged with Cookman Institute of Jacksonville, Fla., a school for boys, and the new coeducational school became known as Bethune-Cookman College. Bethune served as president of the college until 1942. She remained a trustee of the college until her death. By 1955, the college had a faculty of 100 and a student enrollment of over 1,000.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE (1820-1910)

Florence Nightingale was born in 1820 in Florence, Italy. She was the second daughter of a well-off English family who went to Florence for her birth and subsequently named her after the city. Unlike other girls in similar families, Florence was educated in various subjects including languages. At 16, Florence's life changed. God spoke to her and told her that she had a task that He wanted her to do. Whatever anyone would think of such an event, it was real to Florence. In 1854, war was declared by Great Britain and Florence was in exactly the position that God had planned. Sidney Herbert wanted Florence to take the responsibility to change the conditions in the army hospitals by bringing in trained female nurses. Even though the army did not allow women in their hospitals, by the end of 1854 Florence and thirty-eight female nurses traveled to the army hospital at Scutari in Turkey. There, Florence was given a free hand to organize the hospital and she did. It was during this time that

Florence gained the nickname “The Lady of the Lamp” because she was continually checking all parts of the hospital day and night and at night she used her lamp.

After the war, Florence set up the Nightingale School of Nursing in 1860. She produced a number of books on nursing, advised on the treatment of injured soldiers in Egypt, and advised the Americans during the duration of the Civil War. In 1910, she died at the age of ninety.

GLADYS AYLWARD (1902-1970)

Gladys Aylward was born in London in 1902. She came from a working-class family. She wanted to be a missionary in China, but her background and lack of education prevented her from being accepted by the China Inland Mission society. So she saved sufficient money to buy a train ticket to China and went on her own, despite an on-going war between China and Russia. She arrived in Yangcheng, China, in November 1932. She went to help an elderly missionary, Jennie Lawson, who ran an inn called “*The Inn of Eight Happinesses.*” The inn provided food and shelter for people traveling over the mountains. Unfortunately, Jennie died a few months later. Gladys continued on her own looking after a number of orphans. The number of orphans increased as the war continued. By 1940, it had become too dangerous for her to stay in Yangcheng. Gladys and one hundred children started on an epic journey that took them over the mountains to safety. During the whole journey, Gladys had to evade capture by the Japanese. In 1956, this epic journey was turned into a movie: “The Inn Of The Sixth Happiness,” starring Ingrid Bergman.

MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA (1910-1997)

In 1910 Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born in Skopje, Yugoslavia (now Macedonia). She had a comfortable lifestyle, her family were Catholics but her father died when she eight. In 1928, Agnes decided to become a nun and traveled to Ireland to join the Sisters of Loreto, a 17th century religious order. After a short time, she was sent to join the Loreto convent in the city of Darjeeling in Northeast India. When she was twenty-one, she took the name Teresa. At first, Teresa taught geography at a girls’ school in Calcutta. But the city was full of needy people. There were many homeless people and beggars. Lepers lived on the streets as did orphaned children. In 1946, Teresa gave up the job as a teacher to care for the needy in the slums of Calcutta. In 1948, she became an Indian citizen, and in 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity order of nuns.

Her initial work was among children teaching them to care for themselves and to learn basic reading and writing skills. She had her first recruit in 1949 and many others joined her over the next few years. In 1952, Mother Teresa founded the Kalighat Home for the Dying. She established a leper colony to help the many leprosy sufferers. Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

WOMEN TRAILBLAZERS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
WOMEN MISSIONARIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
Terri McFaddin Series #5-11

Scripture Focus: *“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, blessed by my Father; take your inheritance. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? “The King will reply, ‘Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.’” (Matt. 25:34-40)*

Opening Statement: The Bible tells us in Ephesians 4:11, that some were called to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. This is also known as the five-fold ministry of the church. You may be surprised to know that the word “missionary” is not found in the scriptures. There are references to Paul’s missionary journeys, but there are no actual scriptures that use the word “missionary.” However the role of the missionary has become an important part of the work of the contemporary Church. The dictionary defines a missionary as people who are sent out by a church to carry on humanitarian work. But in Matthew 25:34-40, it appears that Jesus is saying that humanitarian work in His name is not the responsibility of a few adventurous Christians, but of every Christ-centered man and woman.

In this respect, we are all called to be ministers or “missionaries.” Some of us will never minister in a foreign land, but we can be a missionary to our family, community, church, or wherever we see people in need. Indeed we are called by the Lord to minister to Him by being a blessing to the least among us.

Observation:

1. Read the stories of the four missionaries in our lesson. Name at least one obstacle that each of them had to overcome.

2. Which of the four women in our stories never said she wanted to be a missionary, but only wanted to help people?

Interpretation:

In Matthew 25:34-40, why do you think the righteous did not realize that by serving people, they were serving the Lord?

Personalization:

In what ways do you personally serve the Lord by serving others? What type of obstacles have you faced?

Application:

Make a commitment to serve God by serving others. It does not have to be an overwhelming task, to benefit one or a few people can bring tremendous blessings.