

Perpetua the Martyr

I. Introduction to Vibia Perpetua (181-203AD)

A. Early Life

1. Born and raised in Carthage, North Africa
2. Educated along with her two brothers in Latin and Greek
3. Married at age 20 and had an infant son
4. Converted at age 21 with one brother and her pregnant slave (Felicitas)

B. Discipleship

1. Participated in a small discipleship group called a catechism with Felicitas, Secundulus, Saturninus and Revocatus
2. Refused to sacrifice incense to Septimus Servus Caesar
3. Arrested during the Lenten season for civil disobedience
4. Wrote a diary of her arrest and imprisonment

C. Martyrdom

1. Perpetua's father pleaded for her to recant her faith
2. Governor Hilarion asked her about her faith
3. Condemned her to die in the amphitheater on Caesar's birthday
4. Witnessed to the warden and he is converted to Christ
5. Felicitas gave birth early and gave her daughter to her sister
6. Two deacons - Tertius and Pomponius witnessed the executions
7. Perpetua was mauled by wild beasts and then had her throat cut
8. Perpetua's last act was to guide the hand of the gladiator

II. Martyrdom - being a faithful witness to Jesus Christ

A. Severe Witness - *John 12:23-26*

1. Old Testament cloud of witnesses - *Hebrews 11:1-12:3*
2. The death of John the Baptist - *Matthew 14:1-12*
3. The death of Jesus Christ - *Mark 15:21-41*
4. The death of Stephen - *Acts 7:1-54*
5. The death of James - *Acts 12:1-3*
6. The suffering of Paul - *II Corinthians 11:24-29*
7. The suffering of Christians - *I Peter 4:12-19*

B. Everyday Witness - *II Corinthians 4:7-18*

1. We have a treasure - faith in Jesus Christ
2. We have a power - presence of the Holy Spirit
3. We have a cross - message of forgiveness
4. We have a sacrifice - our very lives
5. We have a revelation - resurrection of the dead
6. We have a blessing - grace of God
7. We have a reward - eternal glory of God

Hildegard the Reformer

I. Introduction to Hildegard (1098-1179AD)

A. Early Life

1. Born in Bockelheim, Germany - 10th child - "a tithe to God"
2. Suffered with severe headaches from age 3 to death - brought visions
3. Educated by her Aunt Jutta who founded a Benedictine convent
4. Learned Scripture and classical literature at the convent
5. Decided during her early teenage years to become a Benedictine nun

B. Discipleship

1. Succeeded her aunt as the Abbess of the convent
2. Taught the nuns to pray, study, sing and converse in a private language
3. Planted gardens and orchards and practiced herbal medicine
 - a. Categorized 200 medicinal herbs - naming them in German and Latin
 - b. Collected the traits/habits of animal characteristics - related them to God
4. Received visions throughout her life - in 1174AD had an overpowering vision
5. Encouraged by Bernard of Clairvaux to write down her visions
6. Endorsed by Pope Eugenius III to write books on her experiences
7. Wrote 3 books - *Scivias*, *Liber Vitae Meritorium* and *Liber Divinorium Operum*
8. Struggled with church authorities on issues like reform, women's rights and

worldliness

9. Excommunicated at age 80 for disobedience; restored before her death in 1179

C. Writings - "What does this mean?" *The Mercy of God*

1. "The Son of God is in plain sight" - not hidden from the world
2. "Preparing to requite all deeds" - judge the living and the dead
3. "Let the faithful walk to God in his faith" - trust in the Lord
4. "Seek his mercy and it will be given" - a fountain that flows to everyone who seeks

II. Reformation - having a vision of the ideal

A. Spiritual Reformation - *II Corinthians 12:19-21*

1. Speaking the truth in love - sets people free
2. Strengthening one another in grace - everyone needs help
3. Fearing God in humility - turning back to God

B. Social Reformation - *Mark 11:15-19*

1. A great need for change - justice and mercy
2. A great need for a change agent - men and women of courage
 - a. Core Values - what we value most
 - b. Mission Statement - what we do
 - c. Vision - where we do it
 - d. Plan - how we do it
3. A great need for a changing moment - waiting on the Lord
4. A great need for a changing action - faith and works

"The only necessary thing for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

Edmond Burke

Egeria the Pilgrim

I. Introduction to Egeria (4th Century AD)

A. Early Life

1. Raised in Spain or France - western half of the Roman Empire
2. Left a crumbling Europe - civil unrest and government mismanagement
3. Witnessed Germanic Visigoths invades Rome itself
4. Endure the hardship of traveling on a pilgrimage
5. Served as a nun or unmarried disciple of Christ - "blessed and holy" and "abbess"
6. Educated with an unusual knowledge of Scripture and the monastic way
7. Received and respected by priests, hermits and monks that she met
8. Spent a great deal of money to journey for three years

B. The Journey East - (381-384AD)

1. Kept a record of her journeys to Egypt, the Holy Land, Asia Minor and Constantinople

2. Described customs, conversations and cultures along the way
3. Visited the following places:
 - a. Constantinople - new home for a Christian empire
 - b. Old Alexandria - a city known for its faithful witness to Christ
 - c. Antioch - a place Peter and Paul preached
 - d. Bethlehem - the birth place of Christ
 - e. Nazareth - the home town of Christ
 - f. Jerusalem - the city of God's peace
4. Believed that a pilgrimage was a spiritual discipline for everyone
5. Described seasons and worship celebrations:
 - a. Daily prayer in Jerusalem
 - b. Epiphany in Bethlehem
 - c. Easter on the Mount of Olives
 - d. Palm Sunday in Jerusalem
 - e. Feast of the Nativity (1/6) and Purification in Egypt (2/14)

II. Experiencing God on the Road - *Mark 8:27-38*

A. Come Follow Christ

1. An invitation to connect and move with God
2. A call to deny self, take up the cross and follow Christ
3. A journey of renunciation and death to this world - saying goodbye

B. An Apophatic Image

1. Obedience is learned on the road with Christ
2. Life is letting go and saying no - "count yourself dead to sin and alive to Christ"

**Pilgrim's Progress*

III. Experiencing God in the Desert - *Luke 4:1-13*

A. Come Find Christ

1. An exodus into barrenness, solitude and silence - journey into the wilderness
2. A season of trials, tests and temptations - purification
3. A time of a deeper dependence upon the grace of God

B. An Apophatic Image

1. God demands faithfulness and simplicity while remaining silent
2. God requires the death of spiritual desires and appetites - dark night of the soul
3. God remains hidden until the proper time

**Desert Father/Mothers*

Mechthild the Teacher

Introduction to Mechthild (1207-1282AD)

A. Early Life

1. Born into wealth and nobility in Saxony, Germany
2. Educated and cultured in Latin and Classical literature
3. Had a vision of the Holy Trinity at age 12, "*I knew Him by His shining countenance*"

4. Left home at 23 to join the Beguines in Magdeburg

B. A Humble Beguine

1. Devoted her life to loving and serving Christ
2. Lived in a community of faith with other women
 - a. They did not take vows of poverty and chastity
 - b. They often lived in group homes serving the poor
 - c. They based their life on frugality, virginity and self-knowledge
 - d. They stressed evangelism and personal commitment to Christ
3. Learned theology from the Dominicans who preached the Gospel
4. Taught the Word of God in the local languages - German instead of Latin
5. Started writing 1250 AD on her journey of faith - Heinrich of Halle
 - a. she was often ill and depressed from failed health
 - b. she entered long periods of pray, fasting and weeping and watching
6. Wrote one book, "*The Flowing Light of the Godhead*" in German
7. Endured persecution for being a Beguine and from her book
8. Died in a Cisterian convent in Helfta in 1282 AD

Leadership - leading the Church of Jesus Christ

A. Myths about Strong-willed Women

1. "A strong-will is automatically a negative trait"
We need people who can provide leadership and direction
2. "Strong-willed women are man haters."
We need to show love and respect to all people
3. "Strong-willed women are rebellious"
We all need to submit and surrender to Jesus Christ
4. "Strong-willed women can not be compliant"
We all need to approach conflict with grace and reconciliation
5. "Strong-willed women can not take orders from others."
We all need to work together for the glory of God.

B. The Key to Leadership - *1 Corinthians 9:19-23*

1. We become slaves to everyone v.19
2. We submit to cultures - "Jews" v.20
3. We submit to religious orders - "law" - v.20b
4. We submit to lost people - "no law" - v.21
5. We submit to the weak - "less than ourselves" - v.22a
6. We become all things to all people to win some - v.22b
7. We lead for the sake of the gospel - v.23

Catherine The Teacher

I. Introduction To Catherine of Siena - (1347-1380AD)

A. Early Life

1. Born in Siena, Italy, to a poor but devout family
2. Vowed her virginity to God at age 7
3. Experienced a vision of Christ while walking with brothers at age 12
4. Cut off her hair at age 15 to avoid getting married
5. Became Dominican nun in 1365 AD - Third Order-living at home

B. Ministry as a Sister of Penance

1. Spent three years in her room meditating, fasting and praying
2. Returned to normal family life at 21 serving the sick and the poor
3. But lost half her body weight from fasting - scarred by an illness
4. Served at the Santa Maria Della Scala hospital
5. Taught the Word of God to patients and family
6. Called upon to settle religious and political disputes
7. Wrote a book on her conversation with God called *Dialogue*
8. Went on preaching crusades throughout Europe
9. Died at age 33 while trying to reconcile the church
10. Made a doctor of the church in 1970 for her zeal, wisdom and spirituality

Teaching - helping others grow in faith

A. Various Teachings *Titus 2:1-10*

1. Teach sound doctrine - orthodoxy
2. Teach older men
 - a. temperance
 - b. respect
 - c. self-control
 - d. soundness in faith
 - e. love
 - f. endurance
3. Teach older women
 - a. reverence
 - b. holy speech
 - d. goodness
 - e. how to train younger women
- c. soberness
4. Teach young men
 - a. self-control
 - b. goodness
5. Teach workers/employees
 - a. submission
 - b. holy speech
 - c. integrity
 - d. trust
 - e. how to witness

B. Rules for Teachers - *Titus 2:8,11-15*

1. Show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech - opposition
2. Say no to ungodliness and worldly passions
3. Live self-controlled, upright and godly lives
4. Wait for the blessed hope - Jesus Christ
5. Encourage and rebuke with all authority - let no one despise you

Dhoua the Prisoner

I. Introduction to Dhoua (803-843AD)

A. Early Life

1. Born into a noble family in the Frankish Empire
2. Learned Latin and Greek and studied theology, literature and the arts
3. Related to the Emperor Charlemagne who died when she was 11 years old
4. Betrothed to Charlemagne's cousin Bernard for political advantage
5. Married in 823 with the entire royal court in attendance
6. Gave birth to William in 826 - an heir to the throne
7. Sent to live in a secluded castle in the town of Uzes

B. Political Prisoner

1. Bernard was royal chamberlain - second only to the Emperor Louis I
2. King Louis I died in 840 which brought chaos and war
3. Dhoua gave birth to a second son in 840 - unnamed - sent to be with his father
4. Dhoua wrote to William on how to be faithful to church
5. William received the manual in 843, the year Dhoua died
6. Bernard was executed by the Emperor in 844
7. William was executed in 845

C. *The Manual for William*

1. On God - His power and His kingdom are forever
2. On Morals - God is good and His mercy is forever
3. On Praise - beseech God, cherish Him, love Him and He will keep you
4. On Prayer - prayer is firm and pure speech
5. On Discipline - follow your instructors and perform your duties

II. Imprisonment - being captive to Jesus Christ

A. Paul the Prisoner

1. Arrested in Philippi after preaching and deliverance - *Acts 16:16-40*
2. Arrested in Jerusalem after confronting the Jewish leaders - *Acts 21:33-36*
3. Appealed to Caesar - *Acts 25:12*
4. Home arrest in Rome - *Acts 28:17-31*
5. Wrote *Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, II Timothy and Philemon* while in prison

B. A People Set Free - *Philemon*

1. We are fellow soldiers in the spiritual war - *v.1*
2. We are active in sharing our faith - *v.6*
3. We are connected to each other by the love of God - *v.9*
4. We are no longer slaves but brothers and sisters - *v.16*
5. We are partners in the gospel of Christ - *v.17*
6. We are blessings to one another in grace - *v.20*
7. We are praying for each other - *v.22*