

READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

Something Beautiful for God

by

Malcom Muggeridge

Malcom Muggeridge first met Mother Teresa in 1967, when he interviewed her for the BBC. This interview was so popular that a year later Muggeridge took a film crew to Calcutta to make a documentary, *Something Beautiful for God*, about Mother Teresa's work among the poor people of that city. That time spent with Mother Teresa changed Muggeridge's life and resulted in his conversion to Christianity. This book records his conversations with her and his reflections on her life.

1. One of Mother Teresa's favorite sayings was "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (p. 16). Mother Teresa found herself by "abolishing herself." How might one find oneself by giving one's life over to Christ?

2. Once, while living in Calcutta, Muggeridge visited a hospital where he was unable to handle the sight of a severely injured man. Mother Teresa, on the other hand, worked with sick, deformed, and dying people every day, without turning away (p.22). How do you think she did this? How might we find the strength to remain in a difficult situation rather than run from it?
3. Muggeridge writes that “life is always and in all circumstances sacred, or intrinsically of no account; it is inconceivable that it should be in some cases the one, and in some the other” (p. 29). Do you agree with this statement? If life is either sacred or meaningless, which do you think it is? What makes it so?
4. Mother Teresa “grudges every moment expended and penny spent other than on carrying out Christ’s two commands—to love God and to love her neighbour” (p. 33). As a result, she says that one must beg when one needs money: “Begging, when it is for Christ, is a very beautiful activity.” What do you think about this?
5. Muggeridge says, “All that is required of us is that we should love God and, in loving him, fall in with his purposes” (p. 39). How might a person who loves God “fall in with his purpose”? Do you agree with Muggeridge that this is all that is required of us?
6. Muggeridge describes a miracle that occurred during the filming of *Something Beautiful for God*, when the crew tried to film in a dark room. When he tried to describe the miracle to people, they didn’t want to

- listen (p. 45). Why do you think people are skeptical about miracles?
7. Mother Teresa clearly preferred Christianity over other faith traditions, but even so, she convinced people of different faiths to work with her in service to the poor (p. 59). How do you think Mother Teresa managed this? How might Christians today manage this?
 8. Muggerridge makes many observations about how Mother Teresa lived her life. He recounts that Mother Teresa said, “God cannot command the impossible” (p. 65). Have you ever felt that you were being asked to do the impossible? How did you go about it? Who or what helped you through that experience?
 9. “We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence” (p. 66). Do you think it’s true that God is more easily found in silence? If so, why do you think that is? How might you encourage silence in your life so as to be more reachable by God?
 10. People who met with Mother Teresa seemed to come away from the experience better and happier. How might you positively influence people with whom you interact?
 11. When Mother Teresa was living at the Loreto Convent school, she felt that she was called by God to serve the poor in Calcutta. The “only impediment to her new vocation was the happiness and happy relationships it required her to relinquish” (p. 87). Have you ever felt

called to make a sacrifice in the service of God?
Explain.

12. Muggeridge said to Mother Teresa, “Spending a few days with you, I have been immensely struck by the joyfulness of these Sisters who do what an outsider might think to be almost impossibly difficult and painful tasks” (p. 98). Mother Teresa attributed that joy to “total surrender, loving trust, and cheerfulness.” How does joy result from total surrender to Christ? How might you be more joyful when attempting difficult and painful tasks in your life?
13. Sister Joseph said that she “wanted a very hard life” (p. 108), whereas many of us seek out the easiest paths in life. Which path do you normally seek out—the easiest, the hardest, or something in between? How might seeking a harder route be more beneficial to you?
14. Faith is “lacking because there is so much selfishness and so much gain only for self” (p. 112). Do you agree that in our society selfishness causes lack of faith? How might acting in a more selfless manner increase a person’s faith? How do you think selfishness affects your faith?
15. Mother Teresa said of her work among the poor, “We give it and we do it to God, to Christ, and that’s why we try to do it as beautifully as possible” (p. 114). How might trying to do something as beautifully as possible differ from simply trying to finish a task? What might this look like?

16. Muggeridge says that when he thinks of Mother Teresa and her coworkers, “it is not the bare house in a dark slum that is conjured up in my mind, but a light shining and a joy abounding” (p. 125). He says that because Mother Teresa was working for God, her work in difficult, ugly places became beautiful. How can ugly or difficult work become beautiful?
17. Suffering is not the bane of the human condition, Muggeridge writes, but rather makes our lives significant and worth living. Were we to end all suffering, our lives would become “too insignificant, too banal, to be worth living” (p. 132). What is your initial reaction to this statement? Does your opinion change as you think about it? How might suffering make our lives more significant?
18. Throughout Mother Teresa’s life, she served others because she saw God in each person. As a result, “the two commandments—to love God and to love our neighbour—are jointly fulfilled; indeed, inseparable” (p. 130). After reading about Mother Teresa’s life of service, do you agree that you can serve Christ by serving others? How might you make a more conscious effort to serve others in your daily life?