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HCH201 - Church History I

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In my time as a pastor, I've seen many kinds of characters. Working with the Men's Group for 17 years, you get a chance to see men from their starting point in their walk with God to their time of maturity. As I read about the life of Augustine of Hippo, I could not help but see so many of my men from the Men's Group in his story. So today, I want to write a little about Augustine of Hippo.

Aurelius Augustine was born in 356 BC in the North African town of Tagaste. His father, Patricius, was a Roman official, but it's his mother, Monica, who will play a more significant role in Augustine's life. She was a devout Christian. Augustine studies Philosophy and Rhetoric.

Augustine's life as a young man was one that I've seen in quite a few men in our group. He was basically a playboy and sleeping around with many women. He even had a child out of wedlock. He had an idea of who Jesus was, and that was because of his mother. This is another thing I saw that reminded me of the men today. Almost all of them had a praying mother behind the scenes standing in the gap for them. Augustine was part of Manichaeism, and he was not satisfied with it. Augustine was running from God, and his life was in turmoil. One day, he heard children crying out, "Take up and read, take up and read." It was then he knew this was a sign from God, and he read a

passage from Paul and his life was changed. At this time, Augustine met Ambrose, who would give him clear direction in his walk with God.

Augustine went back to North Africa and became the priest of Hippo, then later became the Bishop. While there, he wrote one of his books, “Confessions,” which talked about his younger life and all that he did. Augustine would be a big influencer in the area of sin and grace. When Manichaeism focused on separating light and darkness in your life in order to go to heaven, Augustine focused on the importance of trying to avoid sin in your life, and it was only through the grace of God that we could be saved. Augustine also wrote *The City of God*, and he says a quote that still stands today: ¹“There are two cities, that is, two social orders, each built on a foundation of love. The city of God is built on the love of God and the earthly city on the love of self.” This is so true today. Augustine would go on to be a significant influencer even after he died in 430 AD and would go on to be one of the most significant early church fathers.

I found the Life of Augustine of Hippo to be interesting because of how much he is like us in his life—running away from God. Living for the love of self and indulging in craziness, yet always having a praying mom at home. Even when we seek different religions to best suit us, God always has the final say in our lives, and He orchestrates that. Even putting people in our paths to help us to come to know God, like Ambrose,

¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity, The early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010) 250

and with all of that, you never know what God has planned for your life and how he plans to use you to make a difference, Just as He did in Augustine's life.