

"The torch has been passed down to us from the hands of heroes, scholars, and martyrs who have sown gospel seeds before us. They look over the cloud of glory to encourage us. This sums up this great book by Roberts Liardon. Let's join their ranks. This is harvest time—believe it!"

—Reinhard Bonnke

GOD'S GENERALS

THE
MISSIONARIES

LIVINGSTONE

GOFORTH

CAREY

BRAINERD

CARMICHAEL

JUDSON

ROBERTS
LIARDON

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★★★★★
GOD'S
THE
MISSIONARIES
GENERALS

ROBERTS
LIARDON



WHITAKER
HOUSE

The *God's Generals* series of books are some of the most important books in my library. I consider them to be required reading for our people. This volume on The Missionaries will no doubt inspire a wave of new sold-out lovers of God to invade the nations of the world, ready to pay any price to spread this wonderful gospel of the kingdom. *God's Generals* carries such profound importance because it provides us with perspective, it creates an awareness of a God-inspired momentum, and it ignites a hunger for what might be possible again in our lifetimes. Author Roberts Liardon does an amazing job of recalibrating our need for true heroes, while, at the same time, addressing weaknesses, shortcomings, and even failures of these great missionary leaders. He does this all without slander or even downgrading the importance of their roles in history. I love this transparent approach, and I highly recommend this volume for all who consider themselves disciples of Jesus Christ.

—*Bill Johnson*

Bethel Church, Redding, California

Author, *When Heaven Invades Earth* and *Hosting the Presence*

Roberts Liardon has written an extremely well-researched book, *God's Generals: The Missionaries*. These biographies awakened many memories of the joys and hardships Rolland and I have experienced as missionaries. As a skilled storyteller, Roberts weaves factual accounts with everyday struggles, heartaches, and victories. Our great pioneers of faith had two common threads: lives bathed in much prayer, and guidance by the Holy Spirit. *God's Generals* will show you how to lay down your life and consider everything a loss compared to knowing Jesus. This is a book I will put in my library.

—*Heidi G. Baker, Ph.D.*

Cofounder and Director, Iris Global

As one of the modern-day historians in the body of Christ, Roberts Liardon has brought forth another great jewel in his *God's Generals* series. Some of my mentors over the years have been books. The lives portrayed in this classic book on pioneering missionaries will surely join my "Hall of Heroes." The shadow of these humble and sacrificial lives in Christ is being cast once again upon the lives of many people because of this amazing author. Thank you, Roberts, for being faithful to your task!

—*James W. Goll*

Founder, Encounters Network and Prayer Storm

Author, *The Seer*, *A Radical Faith*, and *The Coming Israel Awakening*

Roberts Liardon has done an exceptional job compiling the life and testimonies of these mighty missionaries for God, who burned with a deep desire to reach the lost and to demonstrate Christ's love. These pages are filled with the dreams, hopes, faith, struggles, and hardships that they faced on their journey to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. I highly recommend *God's Generals: The Missionaries*.

—Dr. Ché Ahn

Apostle, Harvest Apostolic Center, Pasadena, California

Senior Pastor, HRock Church

President, Harvest International

Ministry International Chancellor, Wagner Leadership Institute

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Dedication

As I was writing some final touches for this book, I stopped in the middle with an earnest question. Who is doing the work of these missionaries today? Who is serving on the mission field and is “dedicated for life,” as were the men and women in this book? As I leaned back in my chair, memories came flooding back of all the godly and honorable people I have met in over thirty years of ministering in over one hundred twenty nations.

When I considered the unique qualities of the men and women included in *God’s Generals: The Missionaries*, one person kept coming to mind. Her name is Deborah Strong. I want to dedicate this book in her honor.

Deborah’s passionate work began over thirty years ago with a heartfelt prayer: “God, will You send me to the darkest places on earth where the needs are the greatest?”

God did just that.

Deborah Strong is an apostolic missionary. She goes into places where the gospel does not exist or is so small that the light is nearly impossible to see. At times, she has walked six days among the tallest mountains of the world to reach some of the most unreached people on earth, because that is the passion of her heart. God gives her the strength and victory to always move forward—to carry on.

Through her work in Christian Faith Ministries/Nepal Disability Relief Foundation, she has used probably every method of evangelism you know and has created some of her very own. I have known her to celebrate her birthday early with ministry friends when she is scheduled to be in a remote mountain village on that day.

I want to say, “*Thank you*, Deborah, for all you have done for Jesus and His kingdom. I salute you. I am honored to call you my friend.”

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I would like to thank Whitaker House for partnering with me in this vision to bring all of the *God's Generals* volumes to the Christian world, including *God's Generals: The Missionaries*.

I would also like to thank my editor and research assistant, Vicki Mlinar, for her invaluable assistance. Together, we walked through the miraculous history of the Holy Spirit's moving on these missionary men and women as they proclaimed the gospel throughout the world.

Foreword

Former Generations

In 1986, we had one of our Gospel Campaigns in Blantyre, Malawi, in East Africa. Blantyre is named after the town in Scotland where the great missionary David Livingstone was born. Livingstone had planted a Christian mission in the area, and had founded a city that now has more than 600,000 inhabitants, making it the largest city in Malawi. Before he died, Livingstone thought he had only one convert. Let me quote from his diary:

We are like voices crying in the wilderness; we prepare the way for a glorious future. Future missionaries will be rewarded with conversions for every sermon. We are their pioneers and helpers. Let them not forget the watchmen of the night—us, who worked when all was gloom, and no evidence of success in the way of conversion cheered our paths. They will doubtless have more light than we, but we can serve our Master earnestly and proclaim the gospel as they will do.

Livingstone died in 1873. We were there more than one hundred years later. What about Livingstone's prophetic word? Was it merely wishful thinking? I rejoice to tell you what we saw. The seed sown so long ago is now blooming into harvest. For instance, we saw 150,000 gathered in a single meeting. The people of Malawi heard the same gospel. We were there sixteen days, and tens of thousands responded to Livingstone's message as we preached it for him, and for Jesus. It reverberated throughout the whole country. A nation was shaken. The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, *You are walking on the tears of former generations.*

One Team

Suddenly, I saw it all. In God, we are linked to a single, mighty gospel movement, comprising His earlier and latter-day workers. We are all one together—we belong to their team; they belong to ours. We are reaping with joy where they sowed in tears before us. We did not have this

harvest because we were superior to those precious men and women who went before, but only because the harvest season had arrived. Jesus said:

He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together....I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. (John 4:36, 38)

This is harvest time—believe it! The world’s multitudes have multiplied. The opportunity is vast, exciting. And we, you, all of us, are the privileged ones who have been chosen to do the reaping. Knowing that so much has already been done long before we arrived on the scene should keep us humble in the times of success. We must not fail the sowers. We have been entrusted with a great task. We owe it to them to swing the sickle, or, better still, to use a combine harvester!

The Elijahs, the Pauls, the Justin Martyrs, and the Livingstones—they all relied on us for the future. They expected us to take advantage of all their labors. We cannot be proud, only privileged!

This experience in Malawi changed my whole outlook on how much all of God’s servants are interwoven and interlinked. The most humble ministries or missionaries, evangelists, teachers, and shepherds, even those who are perhaps considered failures, are part of the “big picture” and will rejoice with all of us in harvest-joy. This sums up this great book of Roberts Liardon. Let’s join their ranks. The harvest goes on. Jesus is coming soon!

The Moving of the Eternal Spirit

The Holy Spirit is committed to fulfilling Christ’s promise “*I will build my church*” (Matthew 16:18). That is His business. It is also our business and explains the whole vibrant scene of His work.

No one can destroy what God builds. No one can shut a door that He opens. The cross of Christ is the immoveable rock in the history of the roaring seas of mankind. Atheists and rulers have announced that God was dead or about to die. He has not died. They have! While they were busy inscribing “R.I.P.” on Christ’s gravestone, a hand was laid on their shoulder, and a voice said, “*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for ever more*” (Revelation 1:18)!

We are latecomers. The torch has been passed down to us from the hands of heroes, scholars, martyrs, and millions of unknown believers. They look over the cloud of glory to encourage us. Maybe it is ours to run the last lap. Well, in Jesus' name, let's do it well.

—*Reinhard Bonnke*
Founder, Christ for All Nations

Introduction

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

—Revelation 12:11

This verse from the Word of God is a clear description of the men and women in *God’s Generals: The Missionaries*. Without exception, they were *overcomers*, not in their own strength but in the power of the Lamb of God, whom they loved and served wherever they were called. They had extraordinary courage to face unknown lands, persecution, family loss, and death, because they esteemed their love for Jesus Christ more highly than *their own lives*. In the midst of both triumphs and tragedies, they lived out phrases we take for granted today, such as “Fulfilling the Great Commission,” “The future is as bright as the promises of God!” and “Christ is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all!”

The generals in this book were among the Christian pioneers who helped birth and develop modern Christian missions as we understand them today. They did not only speak about the need for preaching the gospel in “heathen” lands, but, by example, they also went and lived out their convictions on the mission field.

It is no coincidence that they shared a great many of the same personality traits and Spirit-anointed gifts. Although they ministered in three different centuries and in countries around the globe, these missionaries had a great deal in common. They had a fervent, uncompromising love for the Lord Jesus Christ. They were strong-willed, irrepressible individuals who listened to the Holy Spirit’s leading and then followed it without turning back. They were men and women of bold prayer who asked for God’s provision and protection, and then had the faith to see their prayers answered. For Christ’s sake, they were willing to endure affliction. They sensed in their spirits that it was a “must job”; they had to do it, no matter what. *They never gave up.*

They were also independent spirits; many of them left the mission societies that originally sent them out, preferring to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit on the field rather than take direction from an organization located thousands of miles away. In God's providential choice, they were some of the most brilliant intellects of their day. In faith, they used those intellectual abilities to advance the kingdom of God in amazing ways: creating new alphabets, translating the Bible into the most difficult languages, building schools, birthing mission societies and international ministries, and leaving legacies that are still bearing fruit today!

I chose to present missionaries in this fifth volume of *God's Generals* to inspire a new generation of mission workers today. There are still places on this earth where there is little or no Christian witness—places that need the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14–15 nlt)

Perhaps God is calling you to be a messenger of the good news to the far ends of the earth. My prayer is that this book will help you to make the decision to give your life for God and for man.

—*Roberts Liardon*

Chapter 1

Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

A New Thought: The World Is the Field of Harvest!

The top mast of the *James* bent nearly in two; resistance against the lashing winds was in vain. The prow of the ship sank beneath the raging waves one moment and soared up toward the stormy sky the next. It was February 14, 1743, and the *James* was returning from the West Indies with missionary leader Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf aboard.

As the ship approached the coastline of southern England, the North Atlantic gale relentlessly pushed her toward the jagged rocks jutting from the shoreline. The passengers and crew of the British vessel huddled below deck in fear for their lives. The winds shrieked as the ship pitched ominously, each hour driven closer to the English coast.

Captain Nicholas Garrison resigned himself to the inevitable. Turning to the quiet passenger standing by his side, he said the foreboding words, “Within hours, Your Excellency, we will be at the bottom of this ocean. The ship will not survive a crash against that rocky shore.”

Raising his eyebrows in surprise at the stark prediction, Count Zinzendorf spoke confidently above the raging storm. “Captain, within two hours, this storm will be abated, and we will be sailing in calm seas once again.”

Captain Garrison shook his head in disbelief as both men fought against the lashing winds to join the crew and passengers below deck.

In two hours, the captain of the *James* climbed carefully up the wooden ladder to the deck of his vessel. In wonder, he saw that the winds had shifted, the stormy clouds had parted; there were blue skies and placid seas surrounding the ship on all sides.

“Count Zinzendorf,” the captain inquired in awe, “how did you know that we would have these calm seas in exactly two hours?”

“I have had a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ for nearly forty years,” the count responded. “He speaks to me in the quiet of my soul when I pray before Him. This time, He assured me that the storm would end in two hours.”

Amazed at Zinzendorf’s extraordinary faith, Captain Garrison accepted Christ as Lord of his life soon afterward and began a friendship with the count that lasted a lifetime. For years to come, Garrison served as the captain of the Moravian missionary ship that transported Zinzendorf’s missionaries to foreign lands throughout the world.

“I Have but One Passion...”

“I have but one passion: It is He; it is He alone.”

—Count Zinzendorf

Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a European nobleman well-known to the regal heads of eighteenth-century Europe. Destined by birth to live a life of privilege and luxury in the courts of Saxony (Germany), he chose instead to dedicate all of his expansive influence and wealth to the glory of his Savior, Jesus Christ. Rather than making his mark in his native country alone, Zinzendorf changed lives for eternity in the farthest corners of the world through his missionary vision.

Throughout Europe, the Middle East, Asia, the East and West Indies, and South America, from the southern tip of Africa to the arctic shores of Greenland, the name of Christ was extolled by the missionaries sent out under Zinzendorf’s leadership. Eventually embarking on foreign journeys himself, Zinzendorf proclaimed, “The world is the field and the field is the world; and henceforth, that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ.”

Through nearly forty years of Christian ministry, Zinzendorf was revered by some people for his deep love of Christ, and reviled by others for his unorthodox ways of demonstrating that love. To Zinzendorf, the true church was an invisible body of believers hidden behind denominational barriers. Life in Christ was not what happened in the organized church; instead, it was a “Christianity of the heart.”

Zinzendorf expressed that kind of Christianity in three vital ways. First, it was essential that all believers embrace a deep, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, all true believers must learn to live and worship together. “There is no Christianity without community” was his personal motto. Third, every Christian was called to help spread the

message of Christ's sacrificial death and redemption to the unreached world. "Missions, after all," Zinzendorf wrote, "is simply this: Every heart with Christ is a missionary, every heart without Christ is a mission field!" Whether a believer was sent to a foreign land or worked to support the one sent, to Zinzendorf, the missionary enterprise was a cooperative effort, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that could change the world for Christ. Zinzendorf did change the world, revolutionizing the worldwide Christian community with his missionary zeal, taking his place in history as one of God's greatest missionary generals.

A Prophetic Prayer

Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was born into a family of Austrian nobility on May 26, 1700, in Dresden, Saxony. He was the only child of Count Georg Ludwig and Countess Charlotte Justine von Zinzendorf.

For generations before his birth, the Zinzendorf family had enjoyed a high rank among the Austrian nobility, serving in the court of Austria's emperors. As the Reformation spread throughout Europe, Nikolaus's grandfather, Count Maximilian von Zinzendorf, became a Lutheran, embracing *faith in Christ alone* for salvation. By the mid-1600s, in order to pursue his newfound Protestant faith, the count sold his Austrian estate, *Wachovia*, and moved his wife and five children from Catholic Austria to Lutheran Saxony.



The Zinzendorf Family: Count Georg Ludwig and Countess Charlotte Justine von Zinzendorf
with Nikolaus, who is portrayed as a three-year-old boy
despite the fact that Georg died a few weeks after the child's birth.
(Used by permission / Moravian Church Archives)

Maximilian pledged his allegiance to Saxony, which, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, included the eastern provinces of modern-day Germany and Poland. In time, one of his sons, George Ludwig, married a Christian woman of royal birth, Charlotte Justine von Gersdorf. It was to this couple that young Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (called “Ludwig”) was born. At the time of Ludwig’s birth, his father served as “counselor” to the king of Saxony. Tragically, George Ludwig contracted tuberculosis, and, on July 19, 1700, the thirty-seven-year-old father died six weeks after his son’s birth.

That day, Charlotte Justine wrote a prayer for baby Ludwig in the front of her Bible: “May the Father of mercy govern the heart of this child that he may walk upright in the path of virtues....Let his ways be strengthened by the Word of God...that he will indeed experience what the Lord has

promised, *'I am the Father of the fatherless.'*'"¹ It was a prophetic prayer in the life of her noble little boy.

Converted at Four Years Old

As a young widow, just twenty-five years old, the grieving Charlotte took her infant son and moved to her mother's estate in Gross Hennersdorf, Saxony, where Ludwig was lovingly welcomed by a Christian grandmother, aunt, and uncle. When he was four years old, his mother remarried Field Marshall Dubislav von Natzmer, a fifty-year-old widower who lived in Berlin. She left four-year-old "Lutz," as his grandmother fondly nicknamed him, behind.

Lutz's grandmother, Countess Henrietta Katharina von Gersdorf, was a devout Christian and an active Pietist. The Pietists were a small group of Christians within the Lutheran Church who longed for a deep personal relationship with their Savior. They emphasized the priesthood of the believer and the need for a "vigorous" relationship with Jesus Christ rather than the dry worship of the formal church. Philipp Jakob Spener was considered the "father of the Pietist movement" and was a close friend of the von Gersdorf [Zinzendorf] family. Growing up in this godly environment, little Lutz learned to lean on Jesus for everything in life.

"Already in my childhood," he recorded later, "I loved the Saviour, and had abundant communion with Him. In my fourth year I began to seek God earnestly, and determined to become a true servant of Jesus Christ....I was...as certain that the Son of God was my Lord as of the existence of my five fingers!"²

There was no doubt that Lutz had unreservedly given his heart to Christ, as he recorded in his childhood diary, "A thousand times I heard Him speak in my heart, and saw Him with the eye of faith....If Jesus were forsaken by all the world, I still would cling to Him and love Him."³

Bullied at School

At the age of ten, Lutz was uprooted from his grandmother's castle by his mother and taken to the Pietist boarding school Halle Paedagogium, 120 miles from his grandmother's estate. As a nobleman of high rank, Ludwig was expected to train for service in the Saxon court. His family assumed that he would become a highly important court counselor, just like his father and grandfather before him.

Unfortunately, his years at Halle were nothing like his pleasant childhood. In spite of attending a Christian school, Lutz was bullied by the older boys because of his money, his noble rank, and his intelligence. “With a few exceptions, my schoolfellows hated me throughout,”⁴ Ludwig wrote later. Even his personal tutor, Daniel Crisenius, scorned his commitment to Jesus and blackmailed him for his allowance. “I’ve always thought that your grandmother thought far too much of you,” Crisenius sneered. “And if you tell her I said that, I shall tell her you are too lazy to study!”⁵

Because God had a plan for Ludwig’s life, He used the young count’s boyhood trials to build steadfastness in his “inner man,” to give him the spiritual strength to endure criticism while remaining strong in his faith. Lutz became determined. “This shame shall not crush me. On the contrary, it shall raise me up!”⁶ The young count grew both academically and spiritually, and found a few like-minded friends to join him in his quest to follow Christ. It was God’s blessing that enabled him to excel both in knowledge and in personal character. It is an important combination that God desires us to possess.

“Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed”

At twelve years old, Lutz and his four closest school friends formed a secret Christian society dedicated to prayer, Bible study, and faithful adherence to the teachings of Jesus Christ. They were the least popular boys in school, picked on for their lack of size and strength, but they no longer cared. One of the young men, Baron Friedrich von Watteville, became Ludwig’s closest friend and confidante for life.

Ludwig sensed the call to be an evangelist or minister at a very young age. His example was Jesus Himself, who was only twelve years old when He confused the great minds of His day in the temple. In the Old and New Testaments, we read about young people called into ministry—Joseph, Samuel, David, Timothy. We don’t see as much of it in the church today as we should. Ludwig Zinzendorf was a great example of what a youthful evangelist might look like.

The young count named his secret society “The Order of the Mustard Seed,” because he believed that their small seed of faith would become a large tree of service to the Lord. To young Lutz, it was like taking an oath of knighthood for Christ’s sake. These young men would have wealth and influence, and they pledged to use both to promote the gospel of Jesus

Christ. Ludwig had gold rings designed for each of them, with the Greek words translated “No man liveth unto himself” (see Romans 14:7) inscribed inside. The society also had a banner embellished with the crest of a mustard tree and a Latin inscription that read “*quod fuit ante nihil*”—“out of nothing something.”

The words were prophetic. Over the next forty years, the tiny seed of faith grew from their small dormitory room to the world’s political and religious stage. Zinzendorf met Christian world leaders who accepted membership in The Order of the Mustard Seed and pledged to influence the world for Christ; these included such diverse men as James Oglethorpe, governor of colonial Georgia; Tomochichi, chief of the Yamacraw tribe in America; Christian VI, king of Denmark; John Potter, the Anglican archbishop of Canterbury; and even Louis de Noailles, the Roman Catholic cardinal of Paris.

There is an anointed unity in the Spirit among groups of Christians who bond together in Christ; Jesus and His disciples are the perfect example. John and Charles Wesley formed The Holy Club, a group of believers who met at Christ Church, Oxford, and covenanted to pray and fast together, study the Bible, and take care of the needy in the Oxford area. They later became the foundation of the Methodist Church. Young men and women who were saved during the Welsh Revival of the early 1900s were committed to one another for prayer and ministry under the direction of healing evangelist George Jeffreys, and they later formed the Elim denomination. Billy Graham established his worldwide ministry with a group of young men who worked with him as a team for life, becoming old men together in Christ’s service. Young Zinzendorf’s secret society was one of the most influential societies among world leaders that I have ever discovered.

The Missionary Fire Is Lit

Before long, Ludwig’s brilliant mind was recognized at Halle; he excelled in biblical studies, Greek, and Latin. He was no longer the brunt of student jokes and enjoyed increasing attention from the headmaster, Professor Augustus Franke. Because Ludwig was a nobleman, he was always seated near the head of the dinner table, closest to Franke and honored guests. One evening, one of those guests changed the direction of The Order of the Mustard Seed and altered Zinzendorf’s life forever.

Fifteen-year-old Ludwig was seated across the table from Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, a Halle alumnus who was home on furlough from the mission field. Ziegenbalg and fellow Halle student Heinrich Plütschau were the first two Protestant missionaries sent out by the Danish royal family. They had been sharing about Christ in the Danish colony of Tranquebar, India, for eight years.

From the early years of the Reformation, Denmark had welcomed the gospel and faith in Christ alone for salvation. The Danish Christians were among the first Europeans to produce the Bible in their national language. Although missionary work was unheard of in Protestant Europe at the time, King Frederick IV of Denmark was a Christian visionary who eventually sent Christian missionaries throughout his Danish colonies.

This is a perfect example of the power and influence for good that can be exercised by people in leadership who are not afraid to stand for God. God still uses people in government positions. I believe we will see more of that in our lifetime, even in the midst of the spiritual warfare among the nations of the world.

Unlike King Frederick, the Anglican and Lutheran churches of Europe were actually against the idea of sending missionaries to the nations of the world. At that time, they believed that Jesus' command to "*go...into all the world*" (Mark 16:15) had ceased when the apostles died, and that the first apostles had fulfilled the command by reaching the ends of the known world. The European reformers had spent the last two hundred years establishing the Protestant denominations and fighting against the religious control of Roman Catholicism in Europe. Their church vision did not include outreach into foreign nations.

The Spirit of God is always trying to breathe life into the church and the world, but religion is always trying to squelch it! In the Danish outreach, we see the first signs of the Spirit of God breathing new life into what we call the Great Commission. But the traditional church had control, and they thought that what God had said to the apostles about evangelizing the world was now irrelevant.

Ludwig's Destiny Was Sealed!

At dinner that night, Ludwig sat in rapt attention, his eyes fastened on Ziegenbalg, the first Lutheran missionary. Burning with curiosity, he asked him detailed questions about his missionary work and the language and

customs of the Indian people. From the time of that momentous dinner, Ludwig's destiny was sealed.

As soon as he was excused from the dining hall, Ludwig raced down the corridor and burst into Watteville's room, eager to share every detail of his dinner conversation. What an exciting new vision for The Order of the Mustard Seed! They would consecrate their lives to sending the good news of Jesus Christ to those throughout the world who did not know Him. "It will be impossible to go ourselves," they reluctantly admitted, because of their positions of nobility. But they vowed to use their fortunes and their influence to spread the gospel message around the globe.⁷

This story is a reminder to each of us that, sometimes, our greatest sermon may be delivered to just one person. Ziegenbalg had a simple conversation with a teenage boy at dinner, and he sowed the mission seed that changed the European Protestant church! Whatever is on your heart, speak up, even if it is just to one person.

Keeping His Spirit Fed and Free

In eighteenth-century Europe, Wittenberg, Saxony, was the most famous city of the Protestant faith. There, in 1517, Martin Luther, a Catholic priest and professor at Wittenberg University, nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the wooden door of Castle Church. Since that time, Wittenberg had served as the seat of the Lutheran Church, but when Zinzendorf arrived at the university two centuries later, there was little evidence left of Martin Luther's fiery passion for Christ. The Lutheran Church and Wittenberg University had become dry and formal in their theology.

It is a historical observation that many places of revival are dead and dull by the time the third generation comes along. For Ludwig, the church and the university seemed as dead as a doornail!

At Wittenberg, Ludwig's uncle, Count Otto von Zinzendorf, insisted that he study the law and learn how to fence and dance to prepare for service in the royal court. "My uncle was obsessed to change my [Pietist] heart and put a different head on my body," Ludwig later proclaimed.⁸

In spite of the worldliness and religious formalism that had crept into the university, Ludwig was determined to pursue Christ. "I commune with the Friend of my heart, the ever present Savior, daily...I am spending a whole hour from six to seven in the morning, as well as in the evening from eight to nine, in prayer."⁹ Ludwig spent entire nights praying and full days

fasting before the Lord, as well. Nothing would deter him from his passion for Jesus! This prayer time was the way he kept his spirit fresh. Likewise, our Christian walk must consist of more than a onetime prayer; we must keep our vital relationship with Christ fresh and alive, as Zinzendorf did.

The Art Gallery Visitation

After graduation from the university, each young nobleman was sent on a yearlong journey through the capital cities of Europe to complete his education. Ludwig's travels were uneventful until May 20, 1719, the day he visited the Dusseldorf art museum.



Depiction of four scenes from Zinzendorf's grand tour through the Netherlands, France, and Germany in 1719–20: (right) Zinzendorf discussing theological matters with a reformed minister in his library in Utrecht; (center bottom) a servant bringing a letter for Count Zinzendorf; (center top) Zinzendorf meeting with Cardinal de Noailles and Père la Tour in Paris; (left) Zinzendorf (seated) in Ebersdorf, with Heinrich XXIX, Count Heinrich Reuss, his mother, and Reuss's sister Erdmuthe Dorothea.

Walking leisurely through the gallery, Ludwig stopped at a large, somber painting of Jesus Christ with the crown of thorns on His head and blood on His cheek. The painting, by Italian artist Domenico Feti, was entitled *Ecce Homo*, Latin for “Behold the Man.” This was the announcement Pontus Pilate made after Jesus was scourged. The words etched beneath the painting startled Ludwig and were burned into his heart: “This I have done for you; what are you doing for Me?”

“I stood there without an answer,” Zinzendorf wrote. “I implored my Savior to draw me with force into the partnership of His suffering, even if my mind struggled against it.”¹⁰ There, in that art gallery, Ludwig von Zinzendorf dedicated the rest of his life to the service of the Son of God.

“These wounds were meant to purchase me,” he declared. “These drops of blood were shed to obtain me. I am not my own today. I belong to another. I have been bought with a price. And I will live every moment of every day so that the Great Purchaser of my soul will receive the full reward of His suffering.”¹¹

During his six months’ stay in France, Ludwig met the archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Louis Antoine de Noailles. In spite of their different beliefs regarding Catholic doctrine, the men developed a friendship based on their love for the crucified Savior. Before they parted company, the seventy-year-old cardinal accepted twenty-year-old Ludwig’s invitation for membership in The Order of the Mustard Seed. For the rest of his life, Zinzendorf insisted that it was love for Christ that could end the differences among Christian believers.

Losing His Girlfriend

Before reporting to the Saxon court in Dresden, Ludwig traveled through Switzerland, first to visit his school friend Friedrich von Watteville and then to visit an aunt, the Countess of Castelle. While staying at her castle, young Zinzendorf found himself falling in love with his beautiful cousin, Theodora. Ludwig left the castle for home with his aunt’s hearty approval for their engagement, but something didn’t seem quite settled for Theodora.

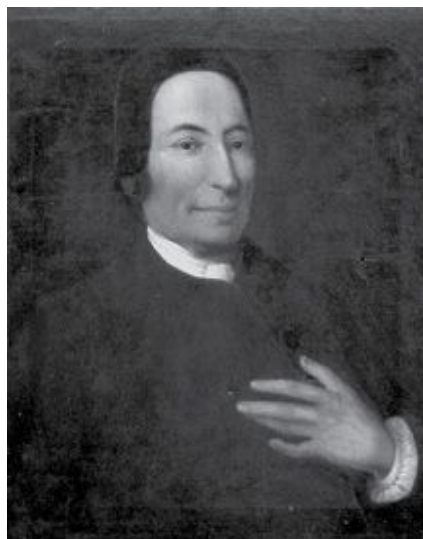
A short time later, Ludwig discovered that a close friend, Count Heinrich Reuss, had fallen in love with Theodora, as well, and that she returned his

affection. Ludwig, trusting completely in the Lord's direction for his life, stepped aside for them to marry. With a peaceful heart, he spoke to the young couple, "It is settled; God's benevolent will be done. I wish you two felicity and contentment." God had something else planned for him, of that Ludwig was certain; he would patiently wait.

Eighteen months later, on September 7, 1722, twenty-two-year-old Ludwig married Heinrich Reuss's younger sister, Countess Erdmuthe Dorothea Reuss. She was the perfect companion for him; Erdmuthe shared Ludwig's passion for following Jesus above all else. Working together, they offered their lives and their fortunes for the sake of the gospel of Christ.

Ludwig was being directed by the Lord in this decision. In Christian ministry, it is vital not to be swayed by youthful passion to marry without waiting for God's specific guidance. The right person will share the same ministry vision and embrace the same call for service. Zinzendorf was led by the Holy Spirit when he put aside the early passion of "first love" to wait for God's chosen companion.

Most people today marry according to emotion and physical passion. They don't marry according to calling; they don't consider evaluating the person to make certain that they will be spiritually compatible. When considering marriage, ask these questions: Do we believe the same things scripturally? Are we called to the same ministry or service? If I were called to go to the mission field, would you going to go with me? Most, but not all, of the missionaries in this volume made wise decisions concerning their marriage partners. Zinzendorf was certainly one of them.



Count Zinzendorf
(Used by permission /
Moravian Church Archives)

Receiving a Large Inheritance

In 1722, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf reported for duty at the court of Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony. He was assigned as a king's counselor, just as his mother, uncle, and grandmother had hoped. But Ludwig was discouraged; more than anything else, he longed to be a minister of the gospel. In the world of European nobility, it was not an acceptable choice. Yet Zinzendorf was certain that "winning souls for Christ and working in His spiritual kingdom was his real vocation."¹²

Each Sunday afternoon and evening in Dresden, Ludwig and Erdmuthe welcomed Christians, both nobles and commoners, into their home for fellowship, Bible study, and prayer.

That same year, Ludwig came of age and received a large inheritance from his father's estate. Since his days in Halle, he had dreamed of building a Christian community like the early church, where rich and poor could worship and work together. To make his vision a reality, he purchased the estate of Berthelsdorf from his grandmother, located just a few miles from her castle. At the time, all that existed on the estate was the small village of Berthelsdorf and a run-down Lutheran church. But Zinzendorf gazed at the empty acres with eyes of faith, envisioning the Christian community it could become. What God built on that land was greater than anything Ludwig von Zinzendorf could have imagined!

Christian Community Was His Passion

Berthelsdorf became Ludwig's passion. The more he saw of court life, the stronger his desire became to devote his life to the gospel and Christian community. Although he was required to spend his winters in Dresden, in the summer months, he was free to fulfill his dream on his new lands.

First, he appointed his Pietist friend John Andrew Rothe as the pastor of the Lutheran church on the estate. Zinzendorf commissioned him with these words: "I bought this estate because I wanted to spend my life among peasants, and win their souls for Christ. So go, Rothe, to the vineyard of the Lord. You will find me a brother and a helper rather than a patron."¹³ At Rothe's induction ceremony, a Pietist preacher from the nearby village

of Görlitz spoke a prophetic word, saying, “God will light a candle on this place which will illuminate the whole land!”

Ludwig decided to build a mansion on the grounds, which he named Bethel (house of God), so that he and Erdmuthe could live in the middle of the Christian community whenever they were on leave from Dresden. Once it was complete, the Zinzendorfs opened their home to everyone in the area, nobles and peasants alike, for evening Bible studies. To Ludwig’s delight, his boyhood friend Friedrich von Watteville left his Switzerland estate and moved to Berthelsdorf to join Zinzendorf in fulfilling his vision.

The first settler who arrived at the Berthelsdorf estate was Christian David, a believer from Moravia (currently located in eastern Czech Republic). As a Protestant, David had been relentlessly persecuted by the ruling Catholics of Moravia and Bohemia. Although he had safely escaped the region, he wanted to return and lead other persecuted Protestants out of the country. When he heard about Ludwig’s vision for a Christian community, he asked if the Moravian refugees would be welcome in Berthelsdorf. Ludwig answered with a resounding “Yes!” Unknown to either of the men, Christian David’s request was the very thing that brought life to Zinzendorf’s Christian vision.

Smuggling Moravian Refugees

Sneaking back into Moravia in spite of personal danger, David returned to Berthelsdorf with the first refugees—the two Niesser brothers, their wives, and four children. On a small hill on the estate, just one mile from the Berthelsdorf village, David felled a tree for the first house and declared that the Moravians had finally found their home. On that day, June 17, 1722, a new Christian community was born.

David made ten more secretive trips to Moravia to smuggle his persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ to freedom. Johann Heitz, the steward at Berthelsdorf, named the new community Herrnhut (“the Lord’s Watch”). In a letter of explanation to Zinzendorf, he wrote, “God grant that Your Excellency be able to build on the hill a town which may not only itself abide under the Lord’s Watch, but all the inhabitants of which may also continue on the Lord’s Watch, so that no silence [of prayer] may be there by day or night.”¹⁴

Within four years, Herrnhut had grown to three hundred members. The men of the village gathered with Zinzendorf and Watteville to lay the

cornerstone for a Moravian school and medical building. They dedicated it to the glory of God, singing songs of praise for His work among them.

As Friedrich von Watteville knelt in front of the cornerstone, praying aloud for God to accept their work and worship, five newcomers were standing in the back of the crowd and listening intently. The men were Moravian refugees who had stopped at Herrnhut on their way to find religious sanctuary in Poland. When they saw the passion for Christ among the leaders and villagers, they asked for permission to remain.

Strangely, three of the five men had the same name, David Nitschmann, so they were labeled by their jobs in the village. All of the men were essential to the future growth of Herrnhut, but David “the carpenter” became a Moravian bishop in Herrnhut and one of the first missionaries sent to foreign soil.

Who Were the Moravians?

It took Zinzendorf a few years to understand the history of the Christian brothers from Moravia and Bohemia who were seeking religious sanctuary in Herrnhut. In 1412, John Hus, a Catholic Bohemian priest, spoke out against the practices of the Catholic Church, condemning the selling of indulgences for the forgiveness of sins and the immorality among the Catholic leaders. His protest occurred one hundred years before Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses. Boldly, Hus proclaimed the gospel truth: the only way to eternal salvation is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

In 1415, Hus was tried for heresy by a Catholic tribunal and burned at the stake for his righteous stand, but throughout Bohemia and Moravia, his followers, “the true Christian believers,” grew in number. By 1457, still sixty years before Luther made his famous protests, these Moravian believers became officially known as the *Unitas Fratrum*, the United Brethren; they became the earliest Protestant denomination. Members of the early *Unitas Fratrum* were Germans; they lived as a community within what is now the Czech Republic, but they were Germans by blood, culture, and language.¹⁶ By Luther’s time, they had more than four hundred congregations and nearly 200,000 members. It was not a small, struggling denomination.¹⁷

The Prophecy of the Hidden Seed

In the Catholic states of Moravia and Bohemia, the United Brethren were mercilessly persecuted and martyred until, by 1547, they were driven underground to practice their faith. Their last bishop, Jan Amos Comenius, escaped the persecution in 1627 by fleeing to Holland with a remnant of the Brethren. Comenius spoke prophetically of the United Brethren who were left behind, calling them God's "hidden seed" that would someday grow to be a fruitful tree again, able to worship the Lord in freedom.

It wasn't long after the refugees began arriving at Herrnhut that Ludwig discovered that these men and women were truly the "hidden seed" that Comenius had written about, the remnant of the faithful *Unitas Fratrum* (later called the Moravians). The count pledged to use his resources and his life to preserve and rebuild this historic denomination of faithful Christians.

"I want to be used among these people to bring a *revival*," Zinzendorf declared. "Though I may lose my property, my honor, and my life in the cause, as long as I live, and as far as I am able, this flock of the Lord shall be preserved for Him until He comes!"¹⁸

What Satan Meant for Evil...

Zinzendorf believed, "Everything should be done out of love. The focus of our brotherly community is the winning of souls."

As word of the Herrnhut community spread, persecuted Christians from diverse backgrounds began arriving—Moravians, Anabaptists (now the Mennonites), Calvinists, Separatists, and even Catholics. At first, denominational divisions festered under the surface, but eventually they exploded into biting verbal disagreements; before long, the vision of a loving Christian community had disintegrated before their eyes.

Into the turmoil, Satan sent an evil messenger, Johannes Sigismund Krüger, who preached using the Scriptures but was actually "a false brother," bringing division and hatred to Herrnhut. Krüger mocked the Lutheran Church, calling it the "whore of Babylon," with Zinzendorf the "beast of the abyss," and John Rothe the "false prophet." His messages were so persuasive that many settlers were deceived by his false accusations, including Christian David, the first Moravian settler. As a result, David, a leader in Herrnhut, and Rothe, the pastor of the Berthelsdorf church, spoke hatefully about each other.

As Krüger's messages increased in fanaticism, it became obvious that he was mentally deranged; he was arrested and eventually committed to an

asylum in Berlin. But a great deal of damage had already been done.

Saddened by the reports of the spiritual dissension among the Christian believers, twenty-seven-year-old Zinzendorf took a leave of absence from the Saxony court; he and Erdmuthe, with their newborn daughter Benigna, hastened home to Herrnhut. (Their firstborn son had died two years earlier within months of his birth.)

A Forgiveness Meeting

On May 12, 1727, the youthful but determined Zinzendorf stood in front of the three hundred residents of Herrnhut. Reading from the Scriptures, he reminded them of Jesus' final prayer for His disciples:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

(John 17:21)

Ludwig preached passionately on the goal of Christian unity—that they might *all be one in Christ*. He reminded the Moravians of their commitment to the simple faith of the earlier United Brethren. In the end, Zinzendorf, the “lord” of the estate, made clear that every member of Herrnhut must pursue brotherly love in Christ in order to remain on his land. He asked them to sign a “Brotherly Union and Compact” to live together in Christian peace.¹⁹ Ludwig signed the pact first, followed by Christian David, and then the other Herrnhut settlers.

The conviction of the Holy Spirit moved among the people as Zinzendorf spoke that morning. When the three-hour meeting came to a close, the Christian disciples stood and extended outstretched hands to one another in peace. Soon after, John Rothe approached Christian David and forgave him for his relationship with Johannes Krüger.

During that summer of 1727, brotherly love was restored on the Berthelsdorf estate, and twelve elders were chosen as leaders in the community. “The whole place,” said Zinzendorf, “represented a visible tabernacle of God among men.”²⁰ God was preparing Zinzendorf and the Moravian Brethren for an anointed move of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and Fire

On Sunday, August 10, 1727, John Rothe knelt before his congregation and prayed for the Lord's Spirit to move mightily among them; together, they remained in prayer until well past midnight. Three days later, the

Christian settlers of Herrnhut walked the short mile to the Berthelsdorf church, where Rothe had invited them to a Communion service to celebrate their reconciliation.

From both communities, the people entered the church quietly, sensing the sweet presence of God. As they lifted their voices in praise, the Holy Spirit swept through the congregation with His purifying fire. Humbled believers dropped to their knees, weeping in repentance before the Lord, drowning out the singing with cries to be cleansed from their sins. Swept up in the Spirit's presence, the worshipers praised Him with adoration; they prayed alone or in groups; they called on the Lord's grace and mercy until they finally sensed His release.

As their singing and weeping subsided, Ludwig prayed that the bond of peace and brotherly love would abide among them forever. No one wanted to leave God's holy presence. Zinzendorf sent for food from his kitchens, and the Herrnhut Brethren celebrated the first of hundreds of "love feasts" breaking bread together.²¹

Zinzendorf wrote about "that blessed summer":

We saw the hand of God and His wonders, and we were all under the cloud of our fathers, baptized with the Spirit....The Holy Spirit is the life-giving Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of all our comprehension of God—He uses the Scripture for this purpose. His main striving is to magnify Christ in our lives. He relentlessly pursues us to make us Christ-like.²²

A Hundred-Year Prayer Meeting

Two weeks after the Holy Spirit fell on the Berthelsdorf gathering, twenty-four men and twenty-four women from Herrnhut pledged to "unceasing prayer" for one hour a day. This prayer time was called the "hourly intercession," and it was held around the clock, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week!

They interceded before God for the specific needs of the people; before long, they had seventy-seven people committed to take part in twenty-four hour prayer, and they received two thousand prayer requests from Christians throughout Saxony. When the Moravians began their mission work, the prayer time focused on their missionary work. Imagine the astonishment of those prayer warriors had they known that their prayer meeting, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, would continue among the

Moravian Brethren twenty-four hours a day, every day, 365 days a year—*for the next one hundred years!*

What a marvelous, wonderful thing this was—an *unceasing commitment to prayer*. “*Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks*” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18). This is the closest manifestation of that Scripture that I have ever heard of!

I am blessed when I think of the nations and people who were changed forever by one hundred years of prayer for world missions. Some sources believe that it may have gone on for closer to one hundred twenty years, but in our research, we have never discovered exactly when or why this supernatural prayer time stopped. There are ministries today that are picking up some degree of that mantle. We admire them and bless them for their commitment to unceasing prayer in our day.

That same summer, Zinzendorf began to share a specific Scripture to encourage or exhort the Herrnhut congregation; he and the elders shared it from house to house among themselves. Soon after, Ludwig and the leaders gathered a collection of Bible passages that were “suited for doctrine, reproof, and instruction in righteousness” (see 2 Timothy 3:16) and placed them in a wooden box. They chose one by “the lot” each night to share with the settlers the following morning. This became known as the *Losung*, or “Watchword.”

Three years later, the Moravians set up a printing press in the village of Ebersdorf to publish inexpensive copies of the Bible, Christian tracts, and hymnals in the German language for the common people to read. They also published their first annual devotional book, containing the *Losung* for each day of the entire year. Today, nearly three hundred years later, that devotional, *The Moravian Daily Texts*, is still published annually in more than fifty languages by the thriving Moravian Church. (www.moravian.org)

Shortly after this, while visiting his uncle in the nearby region of Silesia, Ludwig discovered some of the earliest writings of Jan Comenius, the last bishop of the United Brethren. He found among Comenius’s writings the *Ratio Disciplinae* (“Account of Discipline”), a small book of the guiding principles for the early Unitas Fratrum. Zinzendorf was amazed at the similarity between Comenius’s writings and his own recently written “Brotherly Union and Compact.”

Without a doubt, God had placed these humble refugees, this “hidden seed,” into Zinzendorf’s path as a part of His plan for restoration!

Spirit-filled Life in Herrnhut

From his earliest years, Ludwig had been a writer of hymns, expressing his worship to the Lord in song. His most famous hymn, translated later by John Wesley, is “Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness.”

The Moravian Brethren also had a heart to worship the Lord in music; they were joyous in their praise. Life in Herrnhut became a sanctuary filled with worship; each morning and evening, there was a time of praise in the village. Watchmen would walk past the homes at sunset, singing God’s praises as the village slowly closed down for the night. Ludwig personally wrote more than one thousand hymns and published a number of hymnals, some of which are still in use today.

In 1728, Zinzendorf organized the members of the growing community into small groups called “bands” for the purpose of prayer and spiritual care of one another (much like cell groups in modern churches). Later, the bands were increased in size and called “choirs.” The people were divided by gender or position in life, so that there were choirs for single men and single women, married couples, and even children. “The reason we have choir groups,” Zinzendorf wrote, “is to disclose the conditions of our hearts. We begin to trust one another and we dare to disclose openly and honestly...from our inner being.”²³

Before long, all of the single men moved into a “single brethren’s house,” vowing to serve the Lord together above all else. Soon after, the single women did the same, residing together in a “single sisters’ house.” For these young people, marriage was secondary to discovering their call for God’s service. They were hardworking people and talented craftsmen, with a passionate commitment to Christ. That Christian commitment laid the foundation for the true call of Zinzendorf and the Moravian Church—launching Protestant missionaries from Europe to the farthest corners of the world.

A Divine Appointment at the Danish Coronation

Count von Zinzendorf and Baron von Watteville were still actively involved in fulfilling the mission of The Order of the Mustard Seed. The men had not forgotten their covenant as teenage boys to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. The time had finally come for that pledge to be fulfilled.

In 1731, Zinzendorf and Watteville were invited to the Danish court to celebrate the crowning of Christian VI as king of Denmark. The Danish royal family was still sending Christian missionaries throughout its colonies. This was a time when church and state worked nicely together. The state valued the gospel but didn't force it.

At the coronation, Zinzendorf met Antonius Ulrich, a former slave from the island of St. Thomas in the West Indies. Ulrich had become a Christian while on board a ship crossing the Atlantic Ocean, but he expressed great remorse that his fellow slaves in St. Thomas had no way of hearing about Christ. "If only some missionaries would come," Ulrich mourned. "Many an evening have I sat on the shore and sighed my soul toward Christian Europe; and I have a brother and sister in bondage who long to know the living God."²⁴

Zinzendorf was shocked that the Christian plantation owners in St. Thomas did not openly share the gospel of salvation with their native slaves. With the same excitement he had when meeting the first missionary fifteen years earlier, Ludwig rushed back to the Moravian leadership with a renewed passion for foreign missionary work.

That night, June 23, 1731, Leonard Dober lay in bed in the single men's house, tossing and turning until dawn. Before him loomed the African slaves of the West Indies, held captive and without hope in Christ. "Here am I; send me" was the cry of his heart. When he told his friend, Tobias Leopold, of his desire to go to St. Thomas, Leopold admitted to having the same call in his spirit. Together, they approached Zinzendorf and the elders of Herrnhut with their desire to go to the mission field.

On July 29, 1731, Ulrich arrived at Herrnhut to speak to the Brethren on the plight of the abused slaves of the West Indies. He longed to see them set free in Christ. But, Ulrich warned them, they would have to work to gain the trust of the island slaves.

Choosing by "the Lot"

Throughout his life, Zinzendorf strongly believed in "the lot" as God's way of leading His people whenever the Scriptures did not give clear direction in a matter. The lot was an ancient way of making decisions by drawing one slip of paper out of a collection of them, or by casting down stones or marbles.

Ludwig based his belief on Acts 1:24–26, when the apostles used the lot to choose a disciple to replace the betrayer, Judas Iscariot.

And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Ludwig chose to use the lot because he questioned the motives of his own heart and the hearts of others in making spiritual decisions. For each serious decision, he and the elders prayed fervently and then left it to the Lord through the lot. Calls to service were decided by the lot, as well as missionary destinations, the annual “watchwords,” and even marriages. “Once the Lot had been consulted, the decision was absolute and binding.”²⁵ The Moravians would continue the lot until it was abolished in 1818.

This is not a practice that I would recommend for today. God answered Zinzendorf and the Moravian brothers in their simple faith, but Romans 8:14 clearly tells us, *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*

Today, in the body of Christ, we are guided by the eternal Word and by the Spirit of God, rather than by choosing pieces of paper from a wooden box. Even for the Moravians, what started out as a simple, honest way to hear from God became so legalistic that they couldn’t even marry without it. This is why they abolished the practice in the early 1800s. But for a time, God worked with Zinzendorf in this season of spiritual learning and growth.

All citizens of Herrnhut prayed earnestly over the decision to send Dober and Leopold to St. Thomas, where uncertainty and death could await them. The large Protestant churches of Europe had not attempted such a missionary task. Was it the Lord’s will for the small community of Herrnhut to do so?

After a year of prayer, Zinzendorf decided it was time to draw the lot. Christian Dober pulled a slip of paper from the wooden box and rejoiced as he read it aloud: “Let the lad go, for the Lord is with him.” But for Tobias Leopold, the lot was not favorable; it was not his time to go. David Nitschmann, the carpenter, was chosen to go with Dober instead. Leopold was given the opportunity to join the mission work in the West Indies just one year later.²⁶

The First Two Missionaries of the Modern Age

No one in Herrnhut, including Zinzendorf, had any idea how to launch a missionary movement! As the first missionaries to be sent out by a European Protestant church, Dober and Nitschmann were not even given enough money to travel outside of Saxony. Although Zinzendorf had the financial means to sponsor them, the Herrnhut community believed that the venture was to commence and sustain itself fully on faith.

At 3:00 am on August 21, 1732, Ludwig escorted the young men in his carriage to a spot just twenty miles north of Herrnhut. At the crossroads, the new missionaries knelt beside the buggy, and Zinzendorf laid hands on them and prayed. His only instruction was one of faith: “In all things and in all ways, let the Spirit of Christ guide you.”

On that day, the Moravian missionary movement was born! These devout Moravian disciples had no example to follow, no society to financially provide for them, and no guidelines to help them steer their course; they simply moved by the direction of the Spirit of God. Although they would never know it, at that moment, the two men became the pioneers of the great modern missionary movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

A trip through Denmark proved to be the Lord’s open door for the young pioneers. The Danish court took up their missionary cause, and the king’s sister, Princess Amalie, paid their passage to the West Indies. The court’s cupbearer even located a ship sailing to the Americas.²⁷ There was no doubt that God’s hand was upon them and their mission!

Four More Missionaries Sent

“My call from the Lord is to spread the word of the blood and the cross of Jesus to the world,” Zinzendorf wrote. “I am not concerned what happens to me as a result. This call was on my life before I knew the Moravian and Bohemian Brethren.”

Within a year, four more missionaries were chosen to be sent out from Herrnhut. This time, Matthaus and Christian Stach, John Beck, and Friedrich Bohnisch were sent to minister to the Inuit natives of Greenland. They established a Christian village named New Herrnhut on the western shores of Greenland.

It was through the Greenland missions that the Moravians discovered the key to bringing Christ to the lost. When missionary John Beck shared lengthy explanations about the existence of God and the established Christian church, the natives were uninterested. They already believed

there was a God. However, when he read the story of Christ's suffering and sacrificial death to save them for all eternity, they responded, "Tell us that again; we are ready to be saved!"

From that point, Zinzendorf counseled all of the prospective missionaries, saying, "Don't be blinded by the notion that the heathen must be taught first to believe in God, and then, afterwards, Jesus Christ....They know already that there is a God. You must preach to them that God has a Son...preach of Jesus Christ who was crucified for their sin. You must tell them that the way to salvation is belief in this Jesus, the eternal Son of God."²⁸

Soon after, Zinzendorf sent missionaries to Suriname in northeastern South America and to Lapland (Finland). In 1733, Tobias Leopold left with fifteen missionaries to assist in the growing work in St. Thomas. The following year, two men were sent to the Guinea coast of Africa, and eleven more missionaries to St. Croix, some to replace those who had died of malaria.

The Herrnhut Christians' dedication and willingness to sacrifice their lives for Christ was without equal. As soon as word that one missionary had fallen to disease reached Herrnhut, two more rose to take his place. Together they consecrated their lives under the Moravian banner: "Our Lamb has conquered; let us follow Him."

Protecting the Movement

By this time, Zinzendorf had resigned from his post at the Saxon court to devote his life to the ministry of the gospel. He and his family settled into their home in Herrnhut, which now had five hundred members. The years with Erdmuthe had been full of spiritual blessings, but also painful family loss. Since the birth of their first child in 1724, Erdmuthe had given birth to five other children, but by 1733, three had already died of early childhood diseases. Tragically, Ludwig and Erdmuthe had to visit God's Acre, the cemetery in Herrnhut, to bury their children far too often. During their marriage, Erdmuthe gave birth to twelve children, six boys and six girls, but only four of them survived to adulthood.

In addition to these family sorrows, Zinzendorf was continually the subject of much suspicion by those outside the Herrnhut community. Church leaders and European nobles alike were heatedly divided in their opinions of the unorthodox count. "Some regarded him as a faithful

servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, but others conceived a great mistrust of him...they were also afraid of his odd projects.”²⁹

Zinzendorf was concerned, not for himself, but for the Herrnhut Brethren. He realized that the Lutheran church in Saxony could force the community of Herrnhut to leave. Taking matters into his own hands, he approached the church leaders. “Test my doctrine of faith; prove that my theology is sound,” he requested. In a surprise move, Ludwig also asked to be considered for ordination as a Lutheran minister. After months of interrogation and testing, Zinzendorf presented his final petition before the examining church board:

I was but ten years old when I began to direct my companions to Jesus as their Redeemer....Now I am thirty-four, and my mind has undergone no change. My zeal has not cooled...I love and honor the established church...I will continue to win souls for my precious Savior....I shall go to distant nations, who are ignorant of Jesus and of the redemption in His blood.³⁰

Zinzendorf successfully passed all phases of the examination and was ordained as a Lutheran minister in December 1735. Now he could preach in Lutheran churches throughout Europe and protect the Brethren at Herrnhut from accusations that they were “not Lutheran enough.” Unfortunately, nothing Ludwig did could protect him from the false accusations of the European churchmen.

Religion always wants to make people conform to a narrow sphere. Scripture says, “*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord*” (1 Corinthians 12:4–5). Too often, the church gets the “*differences*” and “*the same*” turned around. Most leaders of denominations and churches want everyone around them to have the same gift and anointing that they do: “Speak like me; minister like me; walk like me.” But it is the Spirit that is to be the same; there are different gifts.

When the head of a church demands conformity of gifting from his followers, the church will stay small because there is beauty and growth in the different gifts in the body of Christ under the same Lord. Christians must have a relationship with Jesus Christ and good sound doctrine, but their gifting can still be different. Sometimes, people who need the freedom to be who they are in Christ will leave a church or ministry because they are being constrained; an insecure leader will call them

rebels. But they are moving in the same Spirit. The difference, as in Zinzendorf's life, is in their gifting and anointing.

Exiled—No Problem!

The Christian community at Herrnhut was thriving. Dozens of missionaries had been sent out; more were training to go. Satan was angry! How could the enemy undermine the work of Herrnhut and stop this move of God? Attack its founder.

Slandorous statements and half-truths about Zinzendorf began circulating through the courts of Europe. To make matters worse, the elector of Saxony, Augustus the Strong, had passed away. His son, August III, was suspicious of Ludwig and his "zealous" dedication to Christ, and listened to the lies of jealous court members.

On March 20, 1736, the new Saxon king sent forth an edict: "Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf is permanently exiled from the kingdom of Saxony, including the village of Herrnhut!" Ludwig, who was traveling in Holland with his family, did not hear the news until one month later. Fortunately, a special permit from the new court allowed the Moravian Brethren to remain in the community they had lovingly built, even though their leader had been banished.

As always, Zinzendorf's response reflected his belief that God was the One who established the course for his life. "I could not have come to Herrnhut, irrespective of this, for the next ten years; for it is time to gather the pilgrim church and preach the Savior to the world....That place becomes our home where I can accomplish the most for the Savior at the time."³¹

Ludwig was determined that his exile would not stop the mission work of Christ. "I am destined by the Lord to proclaim the message of the death and blood of Jesus, not with human ingenuity, but with divine power, unmindful of personal consequences to myself."³² With his exile, Zinzendorf became a missionary and a pilgrim rather than the leader of a single Christian community.

Zinzendorf needed a new headquarters, a home base, while in exile. He chose to purchase a deserted, run-down castle in Ronneburg, northern Germany. Soon, a community called Herrnhag ("the Lord's grove") was established on the property there. The Moravians worked quickly to repair the castle and to minister to the poor peasants in the surrounding area.

The Power of Sowing Seed

By now, Moravian missionaries had been sent throughout the West Indies and Suriname to minister to the natives, and to Holland to share the good news of the Messiah with the Jewish population. Revival was sweeping through Greenland, with scores of Inuit attending the Moravian services.

“We will work simply and quietly,” Zinzendorf reminded his followers. “Even if we never see wonders with our own eyes or hear them with our ears, we are planting the kingdom of heaven into the nations and will look for the fruit which grows from it.”

This is the best statement of a seed sower that I have ever heard from a missionary! He got it—he understood his purpose in sowing the seed. There are God-given stages in spreading the gospel message, and sowing the seed is the first stage.

The apostle Paul listed those stages clearly in 1 Corinthians 3:6: “*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*” We need to realize that these three stages are of equal importance. The planting is the first time that someone hears the gospel message; the watering is when they continue to hear the Word over and over as the seed is hydrated for growth; and then the third stage is the harvest. When evangelizing, most people get discouraged during the times of planting and watering. They think the only exciting part is the harvest. But we have to remember that all three parts are equally important.

For some Christians, their only job is to plant the seed—and to suffer doing so, without getting the opportunity to see the fruit of their labors during their lifetime. This was especially true of the early missionaries in many parts of the world. Many of those men and women lived a more sacrificial life in Christ than we do today, but they didn’t get to see the harvests of tens of thousands of people coming to Christ. Today, most ministers get to enjoy that harvest, but many have forgotten that scores of people went before them, watering those seeds so that they could enjoy the fruit of their labor.

The message for each of us is this: Don’t be discouraged if you are a “planter” or a “waterer”—and don’t be arrogant if you are a “harvester.” Someone planted and watered before you. Perhaps it was even a Moravian missionary!

Moravians Bring Christ's Love to South Africa

Twenty-six-year-old George Schmidt left Herrnhut for the dangerous mission field of South Africa to minister among the native Khoikhoi people. The Moravians were appalled by news that the Dutch East India Company persecuted and often killed the South African natives, whom they disparagingly called *Hottentots*, which meant “stammerers.” Schmidt traveled alone to South Africa to introduce the Khoikhoi to Jesus, hoping to replace the hatred they had experienced from earlier European colonists with the love of Christ.

The Dutch government of South Africa opposed everything Schmidt did to spread the gospel. Eventually, he was forced him to leave the country, but not before he had spent five years teaching the natives to read and write and to worship the one true God. He established a Christian settlement that was later named Genadendal. It would be fifty years, in 1793, before the Dutch government permitted other Moravian missionaries to enter South Africa. When the Moravians finally returned to Genadendal, they helped to develop the small village into a hardworking, prosperous community, and a Christian sanctuary for African slaves.

Two hundred years later, on October 10, 1995, South African President Nelson Mandela visited the small village. To honor the Moravian community and their sacrificial work among the former black slaves, Mandela renamed the presidential residency in Cape Town *Genadendal*. The anointed Moravian missionary work was still blessing others from beyond the graves of those early Christian workers.

“You Are Sending Young People to Their Deaths!”

In spite of the spiritual victories of the growing Moravian community, the attacks against Zinzendorf's character never let up. “You are sending young people to their deaths, but you won't go yourself!” was the newest accusation Zinzendorf heard. Even though the overseas Moravian work was flourishing, there were also tragic deaths in the tropical climates due to malaria and yellow fever; one of the first to die was young Tobias Leopold.

Ludwig responded to this fresh accusation by humbly turning to the Lord in prayer and then through the lot. Was he to travel to the West Indies himself? God's answer through the lot was, “Go to St. Thomas.” Knowing that he would not be immune to quick death in the tropical climate, Zinzendorf put his European affairs in order. To protect his estates from the

suspicious Saxon government, Ludwig had already legally turned over all of his property to Erdmuthe. Now, he wrote out a detailed will concerning the rest of his personal effects and made arrangements to travel to the New World.

Erdmuthe wrote to her brother of her husband's zealous new plan. "You can easily imagine what a difficult test this is for someone like me to see my dear Ludwig begin such a long and dangerous journey. I could not bear it if I were not sure it was the Savior's will and not just some venturesome act. I believe the Savior will bring him back to me if it is His will and He will not place more on his shoulders than he can bear."³³

Missionaries in Prison

Sailing from Europe in November 1738, Ludwig stepped onto West Indies soil at St. Thomas on January 29, 1739, officially becoming a foreign missionary for Christ.

Asking a native worker on the docks for the location of the Moravian missionaries, Ludwig was incensed to hear that they had spent the last three months in a local prison! With a smile, the slave reassured the count that the imprisonment of the missionaries had renewed the slaves' interest to hear more about Jesus. "A great revival is beginning here!" the man insisted. "You should be happy the missionaries have been in prison, for there is a great awakening among the slaves as a result! The imprisonment of the brethren is quite a sermon to them!"³⁴

Nevertheless, knowing that his missionaries had the support of the Danish king, Ludwig stormed into the governor's office. "This is an outrage," he protested. "These missionaries have permission from the Danish authorities to preach to the people. How dare anyone throw them into prison?"³⁵ The governor quickly released the missionaries, fearful of the ire of the European nobleman.

Over the next six months, Ludwig preached to gatherings of six to eight hundred slaves from nearly fifty plantations every Saturday night, some meetings lasting into the following morning. The response of the natives to the gospel was exhilarating. "Saint Thomas is a greater marvel than Herrnhut!" Zinzendorf exclaimed.

By the time Ludwig returned to Europe, the Herrnhut and Herrnhag missionaries had extended their global outreach, going out in small groups to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Romania, Algiers (Algeria), and Constantinople

(Istanbul). There were now seventy Moravian missionaries ministering the gospel around the world.

Spangenberg and the American Missions

Three years earlier, August Gottlieb Spangenberg, a brilliant scholar and theologian from the University of Jena, south of Saxony, had arrived in Herrnhut. Zinzendorf's message of personal faith in the lordship of Jesus Christ and his call to send missionaries into the world had pierced Spangenberg's heart. At twenty-nine years old, he left a successful career in academia to minister with the Moravians for life.

Spangenberg wanted to take the message of Christ's salvation to North America. First, he traveled to London, meeting with James Oglethorpe, the governor of Georgia, to request a land grant for the Moravians near the town of Savannah. He was awarded one hundred acres, and, in 1736, he sailed for America aboard the British ship *Simmonds* with a small group of male and female missionaries, including Anna Nitschmann, who was Bishop Nitschmann's niece and a young Moravian leader.

Ludwig Zinzendorf was a pioneer in welcoming women into the ministry. The young women in the sisters' house who felt called to missionary work were sent out as readily as the men. Eventually, Anna became a female elder in the Moravian community.

Zinzendorf referred to Galatians 3:28 whenever he defended his elevation of women into teaching positions: "With [God], none comes up short, and he also does not prefer one person to another. He loves with an inexpressible and inimitable equality."³⁶ He also declared, "The sisters belong to the class of those whom the Saviour has declared to his heavenly Father as priests just as much as the men: hence there is no question that the whole band, the whole company, the whole choir of his maidens and brides, are priestesses, and not only priestesses but also priestly women."³⁷

Unfortunately, the mission in Georgia never had the chance to succeed. As soon as the Moravians arrived, they were commanded by the Georgian authorities to take up arms against the Spanish soldiers who were attacking from Florida. Because they were against all military action, the new settlers refused to fight and were expelled from the settlement. In God's perfect timing, British evangelist George Whitefield was preaching in Georgia and invited the ostracized Moravians to sail north with him to Pennsylvania. Whitefield owned a section of land northeast of

Philadelphia, which he sold to the Moravian Church. Deep in the forests of eastern Pennsylvania, their Christian settlements would flourish!

John Wesley and the Moravian Anointing

Another traveler aboard the *Simmonds* that year was a young, relatively unknown Anglican pastor sailing to America to be a missionary to the natives—thirty-two-year-old John Wesley. Spending months in close quarters with the Moravian missionaries, Wesley was deeply moved by the depth of their faith. He was questioning his own commitment to Christ, confessing on his return from America, that he lacked “the assurance” of his salvation. He lamented in his journal, “I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God.” Although Wesley was likely a Christian at the time, he still struggled with believing that he was saved.

All of that changed on Wesley’s return to London in 1738, thanks to the Moravian relationships he had developed. He spent that spring studying the Scriptures with a Moravian missionary named Peter Boehler. When Wesley questioned whether he still had God’s call to preach, Boehler answered, with wise encouragement, “Preach faith till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach faith....Do not hide in the earth the talent God has given you.”³⁸

On May 24, 1738, Wesley went to a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate Street, where James Hutton was preaching. “About a quarter before nine,” Wesley recorded in his diary, “while [Hutton] was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and finally an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” Wesley continued to worship with the Moravians in Aldersgate Street.

On New Year’s Eve, 1738, a “watch night” service was held at Aldersgate to welcome the Lord into the New Year. As they prayed during the early morning hours, the anointing fire of the Holy Spirit fell on the assembly, which included the British Moravians, John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield. “About three in the morning,” Wesley recorded in his journal the next day, “as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we

broke out with one voice ‘We Praise Thee, O God; We Acknowledge Thee to Be the Lord!’” In the years following that anointed meeting, the evangelic preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield exploded into the First Great Awakening!

A European Count in America

Spangenberg wrote to Zinzendorf in Europe, encouraging him to sail to Pennsylvania at once to visit the newly opened ministry field. Ludwig organized a group of missionaries, including his oldest daughter, Benigna, and set sail once again for the New World. They arrived in New York Harbor on November 29, 1741.

Once in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania, Ludwig helped Spangenberg establish the Moravian towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth; the settlements were located just eight miles apart and worked together as one united Christian endeavor.



Moravian settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in about 1800.
(Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

Zinzendorf had no ability to handle financial matters. So it was Spangenberg whom God spoke to about the creation of the “Economy,” a voluntary system where the Christians of Bethlehem and Nazareth labored daily for the common good; a large portion of the community funds were used to support missionaries throughout North and South America. In the “Economy,” the people built their own homes, made their own clothing, provided for all of their own food, and sold the surplus in the markets of nearby towns. The community vision had one major purpose—to provide for missionaries to spread the gospel of Christ in the New World.

For years, the Moravians had watched Zinzendorf unselfishly donate his wealth to establish Christian communities and to spread the gospel of Christ. It was not difficult for them to do the same. They adopted the motto “Together we pray, together we labor, together we suffer, together we rejoice.”

After preaching the gospel in Pennsylvania for two years, a rejoicing Zinzendorf returned to Europe, leaving the Pennsylvania settlements in the capable hands of Spangenberg, David Nitschmann, and Anna Nitschmann. Under Spangenberg’s organizational genius as the head of the American Moravian Church, the new settlements flourished.

“It is nothing,” Spangenberg remarked, “but love to the Lamb and to His church.” Everything they did, every task they undertook, every soul that was saved, was all for the Master’s sake. Soon, they had missionary stations in Maryland, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and New York. Spangenberg divided his time between America and Europe for the next twenty years.

The Great Foolishness

After two years of successful missionary work in Pennsylvania, Zinzendorf entered a bizarre season of testing. It came to be called “the sifting time,” named after Jesus’ conversation with Peter in Luke 22:31–32: *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”* I prefer to call it “the time of great foolishness.”

I realize that there are times when even anointed men of God are sifted as Peter was, led astray, misdirected. For nearly two decades, Zinzendorf’s leadership had brought words of truth and guidance to the Moravian Brethren, but now his teaching took a fanatical turn. Ludwig began to obsess about the need to come to Jesus as a little child in order to be pleasing to Christ. He based his teachings on Matthew 18:2–4:

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Every Christian needs to take warning here: *Any biblical truth taken to an extreme becomes an error.* It is important to come to Christ with the

faith of a child, but Zinzendorf took the concept too far.

With rousing messages, he encouraged the Herrnhag Brethren to embrace childlike behavior in their relationship with Christ; before long, the teachings disintegrated into childish nonsense. Ludwig created a new society and called it “The Order of the Little Fools”; he sponsored childish outdoor games and festivities, turning Herrnhag from a hardworking, economic society into a frivolous one. To make up for the loss in income, Zinzendorf used his own resources to provide for the settlers’ personal needs.

Becoming ridiculous, Ludwig referred to the Lamb of God as “our little Lamby” and began to address the Holy Spirit as “our Mother,” erroneously claiming that since the Spirit of God acted as the Comforter, He held the same position as the mother of the home. Zinzendorf made his only son, Christian Renatus, who was only in his late teens, one of the Herrnhag leaders.

Both Christian David, from Herrnhut, and Spangenberg, from Pennsylvania, wrote letters warning Ludwig that he had moved dangerously beyond the biblical intent of childlike faith, but he would not listen.

Repentance and Forgiveness

The strange fanaticism continued for nearly four years and thoroughly infected Herrnhag with unbalanced teachings. In response to the foolishness, John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield broke fellowship with the Moravian Brethren and condemned Zinzendorf’s folly. Both Wesley and Whitefield criticized the Moravian Church in future years.

Finally, Carl von Peistel, a nobleman and new settler at Herrnhut, traveled to Herrnhag and convinced Zinzendorf of the heresy in his teachings. In humility, Zinzendorf came before the Lord and repented for allowing the issues to get so out of hand. He stood before the settlers at Herrnhag and admitted, “Ah! My beloved Brethren, I am guilty! I am the cause of all these troubles!” The Moravian communities, including Herrnhag, that had supported the fanatical teachings, repented. (The settlers at Herrnhut had remained separated from the Sifting Time.)³⁹

Unfortunately for Herrnhag, the repentance came too late. Count Gustav Casimir, the owner of the estates surrounding their community, demanded that the settlers renounce all ties to Zinzendorf and the

Moravian Church or leave his properties within three years. Refusing to break ties with their leader or with the Brethren, within one year, the six hundred Herrnhag members had scattered to Moravian communities in Europe, America, and other parts of the world.

The situation with Zinzendorf and the “Order of the Little Fools” should not be taken lightly; even godly men can fall into heresy, especially if they do not stay within the balanced message of God’s Word or accept the warning counsel of fellow brothers in Christ. Just as he had done in the case of the disciple Peter mentioned in Luke 22, Satan had won a grievous battle against Zinzendorf’s Christian testimony. But the enemy would not win the war! *“I will build my church,” Jesus promised, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18).

The Exile Is Over!

Following Zinzendorf’s repentance came a time of blessing. Revival was flowing in Greenland, with more than two hundred natives meeting for weekly services. Nazareth and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, were flourishing; the Economy had founded thirty-two new businesses, and their missionary support spread throughout the Americas.

Ludwig officiated at the wedding of his daughter Benigna and John von Watteville, the adopted son of his dear childhood friend Friedrich. As a wedding present, Ludwig purchased his grandmother’s Gross Henndorf estate for them.

The greatest blessing of all came when King Augustus II of Saxony visited Herrnhut for himself and experienced the fervent Christian spirit that governed the Moravian community. Shortly after the visit, he sent a letter to Ludwig rescinding his exile and, on October 11, 1747, after ten years of separation, the Zinzendorfs joyously returned to Herrnhut!

The Death of His Only Son

Zinzendorf continued to travel throughout Europe preaching the gospel and encouraging the Christian communities that had been built on the Herrnhut model. There were already twenty communities in Saxony and the nearby states of Prussia and Silesia. Erdmuth stayed at home in Herrnhut, ministering to the Moravian community there and handling the work at their headquarters.

Ludwig’s companion during his travels was their only surviving son, Christian Renatus, who was now in his early twenties and on fire for the

Lord. To Ludwig, Christian was not only the heir to his titles, but he was also the heir to his leadership in the Moravian Church and missionary settlements. After repenting of any wrongdoing at Herrnhaag during the “Sifting Time,” Christian Renatus had rededicated his life to following the Savior and His Word.

In 1749, Ludwig and Christian settled in the Chelsea section of London to set up a Moravian headquarters. Occasionally, Erdmuthe traveled from Berthelsdorf to spend a few months with them before returning to Saxony where their three married daughters lived.

In early 1752, while living in London, Christian Renatus began to experience fevers and harsh coughing spells. Within a few months, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Ludwig and Erdmuthe were heartbroken. In their spirited son, they had seen the hopes and dreams of their future. Neither of his parents was with him when Christian Renatus died in his apartment on May 28, 1752, at the age of twenty-four. Ludwig wept bitter tears at the loss of his precious son and heir. As he read Christian’s journal of his increasing desire to serve the Lord, Ludwig grieved for the ministry they might have had together.

Erdmuthe’s grief at the loss of her only son was inconsolable. She had set out for London to be with him and was traveling through Holland when she received word that he had succumbed to tuberculosis. Referring to him through her tears as her “precious Christelein,” she spoke frequently of joining him in heaven and began to retire from all her ministry work. She had lost her focus in life. Two years later, Ludwig left the London headquarters permanently and rejoined Erdmuthe in Berthelsdorf.

Missionary Victories Continue

The years following Christian Renatus’ death were filled with news of missionary victories. By 1753, in St. Thomas, four thousand people were attending the weekly meetings, and more than one thousand had been baptized into the body of Christ. Missionary settlements on St. Croix and St. John were growing rapidly as well. Plantation owners from the island of Jamaica sent a request for Moravian missionaries to settle there to lead the slaves to Christ. The Moravians had also expanded into Tranquebar, India; the Danish Nicobar Islands; and Tibet. There were now more than two hundred Moravian missionaries worldwide.

That same year, Lord Granville, an English aristocrat, sold 100,000 acres of his land in North Carolina to the American Moravian Church.

Zinzendorf named the area Wachovia after his grandfather's original estate in Austria. A dozen male and female missionaries sailed to North Carolina and built a new Christian community modeled after Herrnhut, naming it Salem. Today, the state of North Carolina, particularly around the city of Winston-Salem, has a larger number of Moravian congregations than any other region in the United States.

“God’s Princess Among Us”

Zinzendorf had spent so many of his personal resources on missionary outreach that, despite the prospering mission settlements, his wealth was nearly depleted, and several Moravian communities were in serious debt. In answer to prayer, the Lord sent a godly Christian brother with the gift of administration to handle the finances of the Moravian Church. Johann Friedrich Köber, a gifted lawyer and accountant, set up an ecumenical council and a system to repay all the debt. Zinzendorf was relieved that the matters were no longer his or his wife's responsibility.

Oftentimes, ministers with the anointing to lead or preach are not good at handling large amounts of money. Over the years, some have gotten into major financial trouble. The best plan is to allow God to call someone into the ministry who is both financially astute and spiritually alive, one who can manage all monetary aspects of the ministry. Although it was a bit late to restore Zinzendorf's personal wealth, the Moravian Church finally had financial peace and stability due to Johann Köber's leadership.

At Zinzendorf's home in Herrnhut, Erdmuthe became increasingly listless, although the doctors could not find the exact cause. After a few months confined to her bed, on June 18, 1756, Countess von Zinzendorf passed away quietly in her sleep. Ludwig entered a time of both mourning and regret for the many years that he had left his wife alone while ministering throughout Europe and the Americas during their thirty-four-year marriage. “I can say in all my life I have never endured such anguish,” Zinzendorf confessed after her death.



Count Zinzendorf's second wife,
Anna Nitschmann.
(Used by permission / Moravian Church Archives)

Erdmuthe had been a faithful wife, a joyful mother to the people of Herrnhut, and a vital economist in handling their family fortunes. At her funeral, Ludwig said, “The Lord, through His great power, accomplished many glorious deeds through her. She gave wise advice and had deep insights into Scripture. She was God’s princess among us.”⁴⁰ He had the last four words—“God’s princess among us”—engraved into Erdmuthe’s headstone.

The Final Years: A Hymn to God

After a year of seclusion, in which Zinzendorf wrote hymns to bring himself comfort, the Herrnhut elders suggested that he marry again. Ludwig agreed, and, on June 27, 1757, the fifty-six-year-old count and the forty-two-year-old former missionary Anna Nitschmann were married by Bishop Leonard Dober. For decades, Ludwig and Anna had worked diligently for the cause of Christ, but he was nobility, and she was a commoner. Even in the last years of his life, the count made personal decisions that rocked the noble world!

The Zinzendorfs traveled throughout Germany and Holland while Ludwig preached on his vision of missionary expansion. “A missionary

seeks nothing else, day and night, but that the heathens find joy in their Savior and that the Savior might find joy in the heathens.”

One year later, in 1758, the couple returned to Herrnhut ready to settle down and pastor the community that they loved. It was time to leave all the traveling and missionary work in the very capable hands of the younger Moravian Brethren.

Entering the Presence of the Lord

In the spring of 1760, everything changed. For some months, Anna had been feeling ill; in April, she was diagnosed with cancer and soon after became bedridden. Ludwig continued to preach to the Herrnhut Brethren and to spend the evenings at his wife’s bedside. He worked on the *Losung* for the following year, which included the final Scripture for December 31, 1761: “*We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord*” (Psalm 118:26). It would prove to be prophetic.

The first Sunday in May, during the morning worship service, Ludwig experienced pressure in his chest followed by chest pains and difficulty breathing. It was most likely a heart attack. Four days later, getting weaker, he lay in bed with a fever and a harsh cough. His dear friend, Bishop David Nitschmann, was at his bedside, along with Ludwig’s three daughters, Benigna, Marie Agnes, and Elizabeth. With grateful tears, the count turned to David and asked, “Did you suppose, in the beginning, that the Savior would do as much as we now see amongst the various Moravian settlements, amongst the children of God of other denominations, and amongst the heathen? I only entreated Him for a few first fruits of the latter, but there are now thousands of them.”

“I cannot say,” he continued, “how much I love you all. Who would have believed that the prayer of Christ, ‘That they may be one,’ could have been so strikingly fulfilled among us?”⁴¹

That night, with his family still at his bedside, Zinzendorf whispered hoarsely to his son-in-law John, “Now, my dear friend, I am going to the Savior. I am ready. I bow to His will. He is satisfied with me. If He does not want me here anymore, I am ready to go to Him. There is nothing to hinder me now.”⁴²

John reached for Ludwig’s hand and prayed, “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace. The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.”

Just moments later, on the evening of Friday, May 9, 1760, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf rested his head back on his pillow and quietly entered into the joy of his Lord. When John walked into Anna's bedroom with the sad tidings, she responded with a quiet smile, saying, "I have the happiest prospect of you all. I will be going to him soon."

For several days, Zinzendorf lay in state in the Berthelsdorf mansion; on May 15, the day of the funeral, peasants from the neighboring towns and dignitaries from the nearby cities walked through to see the beloved father of Herrnhut one last time. Zinzendorf was buried in God's Acre, beside Erdmuth and eight of his twelve children.

"With tears we sow this seed in the earth," Bishop David prayed at the gravesite, "but He, in His own good time, will bring it to life and will gather in His harvest with thanks and praise! Let all who wish for this say, Amen!" And four thousand voices present that day echoed "Amen."⁴³

One week later, on May 22, 1760, Anna Nitschmann Zinzendorf passed away and was buried in God's Acre as well.

The Moravian Covenant for Christian Living

The Moravian Church was forever grateful to the Lord for sending Zinzendorf to help restore the *Unitas Fratrum*. Once his leadership was gone, the elders prayed and then called August Spangenberg home from Pennsylvania to become the official leader of the European Moravian Church. In 1777, he wrote the *Idea Fidei Fratrum*, which became the declaration of the Christian Faith of the United Brethren. Spangenberg served the Moravian Church until his death at Berthelsdorf on September 18, 1792, at the age of eighty-eight. He was buried near his friend Zinzendorf in God's Acre.

The "Brotherly Union and Compact," which was signed by the Christians of Herrnhut and Berthelsdorf in May 1727, has been revised many times over the years; today, it is known as *The Moravian Covenant for Christian Living*.⁴⁴ The motto of the Moravian Church is: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, love."

The Holy Spirit Lives in Herrnhut Today

Today, the small town of Herrnhut, Germany, population just under five thousand citizens, is still the international headquarters of the Moravian Church. For twenty-eight years, from 1961 to 1989, Herrnhut was located on the East German side of the Berlin Wall. Even though practicing

Christianity openly was illegal during the communist repression, a group of Moravian Christians were baptized in the Holy Spirit and founded a charismatic prayer group that worshiped the Lord by meeting in homes from 1979 to 1999. In 1999, they established a Spirit-filled ministry called Christliches Zentrum Herrnhut, and they meet in a vibrant church building called *Jesus-Haus*.

Their vision today is much like Zinzendorf's nearly three hundred years ago. Here are some of their stated beliefs:

We believe that the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ is the Church's most precious treasure. We want to live and preach it.

We treasure the Holy Spirit and His gifts. We love God's word; it teaches us what to do in every situation of our lives.⁴⁵

We want to serve the body of Christ, love our neighbours, and spread the Gospel throughout the world.⁴⁶

We identify with churches in the charismatic movement and operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, healing, prophecy, and praying in tongues.⁴⁷

In addition to worshipping at Jesus-Haus in Herrnhut, visitors can see the Berthelsdorf church where God's power fell on the Moravian people in 1727. God's Acre and Count Zinzendorf's grave are still undisturbed in the village. The Zinzendorf's manor house is currently being restored to its eighteenth-century beauty and is open for guests.

The Missionary Spirit Lives On

The Moravian missionary spirit continues. By the time of Ludwig's death, the Moravians had sent out 226 missionaries and baptized more than 3,000 converts around the world. From 1732 to 1782, they officially recorded the baptisms of more than 11,000 people. On the Caribbean island of Antigua alone, from 1769 to 1792, the number of converts grew from 14 to 7,400!

For fifty years, the Moravians spread the gospel of Christ throughout the West Indies without help from any other denomination. They established missions in St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. Johns, Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados, and St. Kitts. They had baptized 13,000 new Christians before missionaries from any other church arrived on the islands.⁴⁸

Near the end of the eighteenth century, just as the earliest missionary society of Protestant Europe was sending out its first missionary, William Carey, the Moravians had one thousand missionaries already serving Christ worldwide. By the end of the nineteenth century, more than twenty-two hundred Moravian missionaries were on the mission field. Today, the Moravians still send missionaries to countries where the need is the greatest, such as Burundi, Belize, Cuba, Kenya, Peru, Uganda, and Haiti.⁴⁹

“Zinzendorf was the instrument in the hand of God,” wrote August Spangenberg years earlier, “for planting the church of the Brethren in almost every quarter of the globe. He was a man of lively disposition, quick perception, penetrating judgment, extraordinary zeal, and incomparable genius.”⁵⁰

God’s Message to His People

Simply put, Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a man before his time. He was the first to challenge the Protestant church with the mission to go into all the world to reach the unsaved for Christ. He supported first century “Christian community” and the leadership of women in the church. He welcomed the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in his personal life and in corporate worship through robust prayer and the recognition of gifts in individual lives. He lived a holy and consecrated life, submitted to the Savior in every part of his life, and encouraged the Moravians to do the same. Together, they went to the mission field, exuberantly sowing seed that would return a great harvest.

As a child, Zinzendorf was like the young rich ruler in the gospel of Mark who asked Jesus, “*What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” (Mark 10:17). But instead of turning away in sorrow at Christ’s answer to sell all that he owned, Ludwig faithfully laid down all his riches to follow his precious Lord and King. The last line on his headstone speaks of his crowning achievement: “He was destined to bring forth fruit, fruit that should remain.”

Upon learning of Zinzendorf’s death, Spangenberg wrote, “He was the great treasure of our time, a lovely diamond in the ring on the hand of our Lord, a servant of the Lord without an equal, a pillar in the house of the Lord, God’s message to His people.”⁵¹

*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
(1 Corinthians 3:6)*

Will you go with God's message?

Will you plant or water the seed of God's Word to the lost, even if you are not the one who will see the harvest?

Chapter 2

David Brainerd

“I Want the Field of the Unreached”

An intent young man sat astride his horse, guiding his mount carefully through the darkening Pennsylvania forest. The journey had been long and treacherous, with no end in sight. Coughing into his coat sleeve, David Brainerd urged the mare along while searching through the trees for signs of a campsite. Nothing met his anxious gaze except more trees and overgrown trails.

It was his first meeting with the Delaware tribe. “It is important to God—I have to make it,” he repeated to himself.

Was he lost? It had happened many times before.

As the sun descended behind the tree line, the young missionary’s strength was nearly spent when he spied the flickering glow of scattered campfires through the dense foliage. Finally, he had reached the Delaware. *Will they be as ferocious and unwelcoming as I have been warned?* David wondered.

“Prayer is the key. Prayer is always the key. Thank You, Father,” he encouraged himself, as he decided to spend the night with God in the forest beside his own campfire. Prayer would give him the strength to face the natives early the next day.

As he tied up his horse and started a fire, the weary traveler was unaware that eyes were peering at him through the forest. The Delaware chief, hidden with his warriors, gave the command, “Let us go at once and kill this man whose people have taught us to drink firewater [alcohol], and then, while we are drunk, have taken our baskets and skins and even our lands for nothing.”⁵²



David Brainerd

Silently, the warriors descended on the lone campsite as the solitary figure bowed, clutching something close to his heart. They heard the young man on his knees praying to God, “Let the natives embrace your salvation, Lord.” Stealthily moving forward, the warriors stopped suddenly as a rattlesnake slithered up to the young man and raised its ugly head within inches of the bowed face. Then, just as suddenly, the snake uncoiled and, for no apparent reason, slithered away. Gazing at each other in surprise, the warriors did the same, leaving the praying man alone with his God.⁵³

The next morning, David walked into the Delaware camp and was welcomed by the curious and awestruck villagers. “The Great Spirit is with this praying white man,” the natives proclaimed.⁵⁴ And so, Brainerd’s ministry to the natives at the Forks of the Delaware River in eastern Pennsylvania began.

A Flame of Fire

“Never think that you can live to God by your own power or strength; but
always look to and rely on Him for assistance,
yea, for all strength and grace.”

—David Brainerd

The above story was one miraculous event in David Brainerd’s life described in the book *Heroes of Faith on Pioneer Trails*. But the greatest miracle of his ministry was the supernatural power of God that *called* him, *equipped* him, and *kept* him, so that he could accomplish, in five short years, what few men accomplish in a lifetime.

An anointed disciple of Christ, Brainerd laid the foundation for mission work among Native Americans and inspired thousands of missionaries and believers to dedicate their all for Jesus. His compelling story is one of unfailing determination to love and serve God in spite of the most

devastating circumstances. Rejection, loneliness, sickness, hostile natives—nothing could still the cry of David Brainerd’s heart: “Oh, that I could be a flame of fire to the service of my God!”

His ministry was birthed during the First Great Awakening, influenced by the preaching of George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. Because Brainerd and Edwards later became close friends, nearly everything we know of his missionary endeavors comes from *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*. This work was edited and published by Jonathan Edwards in 1749, shortly after the young missionary’s death.

Brainerd’s powerful influence has spanned the centuries because of the intimacy of that diary. He wrote with painstaking honesty of the highs *and* lows of his life, unaware that his personal journey with Jesus would inspire thousands of believers for centuries to come. “There is a God in heaven who overrules all things for the best; and this is the comfort of my soul....How blessed it is to grow more and more like God!” As a testimony to God’s anointing on this young man’s life, *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* has never gone out of print in more than 260 years of publishing history!

For David Brainerd, Jesus Christ was his *all in all*—“*the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*” (Ephesians 1:22–23). “I have received my all from God,” he wrote countless times. “Oh, that I could return my all to God!”

The Christian world still honors Brainerd’s extraordinary commitment to Christ nearly three hundred years later. This young disciple was truly one of God’s missionary generals.

An Unquenchable Stirring

David Brainerd was born in the New England village of Haddam, Connecticut, on April 20, 1718, to Hezekiah and Dorothy Brainerd. He was the sixth of nine children and the descendant of a long line of Puritan ministers. In 1633, his great-grandfather, Peter Hobart, had fled England to avoid religious persecution and settled in Massachusetts. It was just thirteen years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth.

David had a staunch Puritan upbringing with parents who were devoted to God and spent many hours in the Congregational (Puritan) Church. His father was a representative in the Connecticut Colony government and a successful landowner. Sadly, when David was only nine years old, his father died suddenly while attending to his senatorial duties in Hartford.

Five years later, another tragedy struck when his mother became ill and died as well, leaving David an orphan at just fourteen. These tragedies, as well as a personal disposition to depression, led him from his youth to be “somewhat sober, and inclined rather to melancholy than the contrary extreme.”⁵⁵

At his mother’s death, David inherited a farm in Durham, Connecticut, from his family’s estate. His father, Hezekiah, had been successful in business and law and owned land throughout the Connecticut River Valley. At fourteen, David was too young to manage his property, so he moved to East Haddam to live with his married sister, Jerusha Spencer. He kept up his studies in her home and attended church “religiously,” trying to do everything expected of him as a Puritan believer.

Uncertain of his future, at nineteen, David took on the responsibility of running his farm. Although he worked diligently, the daily toil of farmwork was completely unfulfilling to him. In his heart, there was an unquenchable stirring from God. Day by day, he became more preoccupied with the dream of pursuing biblical studies and following his grandfather’s footsteps in ministry.

“Farming will never be for me,” David finally resolved. He packed up his Bible and books and moved back to Haddam to study with the Reverend Phineas Fiske while preparing to enter Yale University in the fall. He spent very little time at the farm in future years, but being a landowner provided him with the money he would need for his college education and his later missionary work.

Over the years, David worked hard to maintain a “proper religious life.” He wanted to do the right thing, but he really didn’t understand salvation by grace alone. Instead, he worked diligently to be “good enough,” reading the Scriptures, memorizing sermons, and separating himself from “youthful foolishness.”

“I proceeded on a self-righteous foundation,” he admitted later, “and should have been entirely lost and undone had not the mere mercy of God prevented it!”⁵⁶

“God Swallowed Me”

Deep in his soul, David Brainerd longed to know the power and presence of God. He poured out his heart in prayer on long walks through the Connecticut countryside. Speaking to an “unseen audience,” he wrestled with the demons within his own soul, struggling to find the way to

salvation. In the spring of 1739, as David approached his twenty-first birthday, the Holy Spirit began to convict him of the sin of trying to earn his way to God.

“Sometime in February 1739, I set apart a day for fasting and prayer, and spent the day in almost incessant cries to God for mercy to see...the way of life by Jesus Christ.”

His struggle was with God’s grace; he wanted God to accept all of his hard-earned works as a way to earn salvation. “All this time,” David wrote, “the Spirit of God was powerfully at work within me; and I was inwardly pressed to relinquish all self-confidence, all hopes of ever helping myself by any means whatsoever.”⁵⁷ David Brainerd was surrendering his heart and will to God.

While walking briskly through the fields near Haddam that July, the heavens appeared to open, and the Holy Spirit fell upon Brainerd with His revelatory power:

As I was walking in a dark, thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to the view and apprehension of my soul...a new view that I had of God...I stood still, wondered and admired!

My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable, to see such a God, such a glorious Divine Being; and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that He should be God over all forever and ever. My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness and other perfections of God, that I was swallowed up in Him!”⁵⁸

God had captured his soul!

The Holy Spirit enveloped David Brainerd with both the majesty and the mercy of God, and he accepted his salvation in Christ based on grace alone. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast*” (Ephesians 2:8–9 nasb). Brainerd had turned to the living God with his whole heart, and God had answered his prayer with His glorious salvation. David was exited to begin studying for the ministry.

The Rigors of Yale University

Yale University, in New Haven, Connecticut, became Brainerd’s home for the next three years. In eighteenth-century New England, it was difficult to enter Christian ministry unless you received a degree from Harvard or Yale and were licensed to preach by the Congregational

Church. So, with both excitement and anxiety, David entered his freshmen year in September 1739, just two months after his personal conversion.

At twenty-one, David was older and more serious than his frivolous classmates, who didn't seem focused on following Jesus. Because he was such an intense young man, he promptly immersed himself in his studies, gradually sliding into his bad habits of working too hard just to prove he was worthy of God's love.

After a year of rigorous study with little rest, Brainerd became physically weak and disoriented. One night, in a coughing fit, he was alarmed to find that he had coughed up blood. "It isn't serious," assured his tutor. "You just need to go home for a few weeks' rest."

Brainerd left Yale in August, and a few weeks became a few months as he slowly recovered. When he regained his strength, he walked in the meadows of his farm and surrendered his heart once again to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He wrote in October, "I again found the assistance of the Holy Spirit, both morning and night, and life and comfort in God the whole day....I enjoyed a sweet and precious communion with God wherein my soul enjoyed unspeakable comfort."⁵⁹

During these same days, as God was renewing David's soul, the Holy Spirit was blowing revival winds across New England and through the campus of Yale University.

The Great Awakening at Yale University

David returned to Yale just as the Holy Spirit began a powerful move across the English-speaking world, throughout England, Scotland, Wales, and the American colonies. The Great Awakening swept through New England with a renewed emphasis on the conviction of sin and a "new birth" experience based on the love and grace of Jesus Christ. It was a wake-up call to the staunch Puritan church, which had begun to emphasize outward works and family connections for church membership instead of a personal relationship with Jesus.

The most famous of the Great Awakening preachers, Jonathan Edwards of Massachusetts, delivered messages on repentance and faith in Christ each week in his church services. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, people from the congregation would fall to their knees, crying out from conviction, "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30).

George Whitefield, a twenty-six-year-old evangelist from England, was traveling throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut, preaching a fiery message of God's justice and mercy. Over and over, he proclaimed the new birth from Jesus' words to Nicodemus in the gospel of John: "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

Just one of Whitefield's open-air revivals, held in a field outside Boston, attracted thirty thousand people. Everywhere he preached, the crowds responded with overwhelming emotion—tears, cries of repentance, and renewed love for Jesus Christ. Thousands of colonists came to new birth through his messages.

On October 27, 1740, Whitefield preached to the Yale students, and the power of the Holy Spirit blazed through the chapel, drawing the students to their knees and transforming the irreverent young men into on-fire Christian disciples. The Great Awakening had arrived at Yale!

David Brainerd's faith was ignited! Students who once were indifferent to the gospel flocked to the Bible studies that Brainerd organized. They met in groups of four or five and spoke freely of this "new" power of the Holy Spirit that was moving among them and bringing repentance and new life in Christ.

Raging Opposition to the Revival

When the Spirit of God moves, Satan always responds with controversy and disruption. Evil will always oppose the power of God. Unfortunately, the opposition often comes from Christian leaders who are afraid of a fresh move of God's Spirit.

As the Great Awakening swept through New England, the revival message split people within both the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. In each denomination, there were supporters of the Awakening, called "New Lights" or "New Side," and opponents, called "Old Lights" or "Old Side."

The administrators of Yale University were in raging opposition to the revival. They disapproved of Whitefield and other revivalists' teachings. "The meetings are pure emotionalism!" they charged. "They stray too far from the Puritan doctrine." They accused the zealous Yale students of rejecting the school's biblical teachings to follow a "new gospel."

The students were outraged. Many of them accused the opposing Yale administrators of not being true believers and of rejecting the Spirit of God. The controversy came to a head when Yale's rector, Reverend Thomas Clap, pronounced an edict: "Any student who [criticizes] the professors or administration or questioned their Christian faith because of the Great Awakening [is] subject to expulsion." The students were also forbidden to attend Whitefield meetings or to join in the revival in any way!

In spite of the threat, Brainerd and many fellow students continued to meet daily for prayer and occasionally snuck out to hear the Awakening evangelists preach in the open countryside.

One night in the dormitory, while discussing the day's events, a student questioned Brainerd about Mr. Chauncey Whittelsey, a Yale tutor whose prayers were often stilted and severe. Brainerd's comment concerning Whittelsey came quick: "He has no more grace than this chair."⁶⁰

A freshman student overheard and immediately reported Brainerd's remark. Thomas Clap declared the comment "forbidden criticism of a faculty member" and cause for immediate expulsion, unless Brainerd made an open apology to the entire student body in the College Hall.

Brainerd refused. He believed the comment was acceptable because it was made in private. In his youthful enthusiasm, or "indiscreet zeal," as he later called it, he was convinced that the rector would eventually agree with him. (His refusal to apologize became a decision that he regretted for the rest of his life.) As a result, in the winter of 1742, he was expelled from Yale.

Blazing "New Lights"

David was shocked and in a state of mourning. His appeals to be reinstated were soundly rejected. Heartbroken, he packed his belongings and left Yale, his dreams of ministry crushed. Since he couldn't preach without the Yale degree and a Congregational license, he thought all possibilities for ministry in New England had been destroyed.

Where would he go next? In deep melancholy, Brainerd traveled from New Haven to Ripton, Connecticut, just ten miles from the college.

Still longing to serve the Lord, he continued his ministry studies with Rev. Jedediah Mills, a minister who had been stirred by the Great Awakening and become a "New Lights" pastor. Several Congregational

ministers had joined the revival and formed their own ministerial association as “New Lights.” In fellowship with these men of God, David could continue his biblical studies and preach the gospel.

Daily, Brainerd poured his heart out in his diary, expressing overwhelming regret for his stubbornness and frustration over the college’s handling of the whole situation. Some days, he sensed God’s assurance that things would be well. On April 12, 1742, he wrote,

This morning the Lord was pleased to lift up the light of His countenance upon me in secret prayer, and made the season very precious to my soul. And although I had been depressed of late, respecting my hopes of future serviceableness in the cause of God; yet now I had much encouragement respecting that matter.

I felt exceedingly calm, and quite resigned to God, respecting my future employment, when and where He pleased.⁶¹

Other days, his heart was tortured by depression and feelings of his own worthlessness:

I think I never felt so much of the cursed pride of my heart, as well as the stubbornness of my will before. Oh dreadful! What a vile wretch I am! O that God would humble me in the dust! I felt myself such a sinner all day that I scarce had any comfort. O when shall I be delivered from the body of this death?⁶²

During these days, Brainerd was locked in the painful depression he had suffered since childhood. He was also a victim of the legalism of the time, desperately trying to fulfill other men’s expectations for his life. Brainerd spent a long time trying to win back something that he should have just left to God. Once the doors of Yale had been closed, he should have rested in the direction the Lord was leading him in his ministry. Thank God that, in the body of Christ today, we realize that it is not the university or seminary degree that gives credibility to our ministry but the fruit that we bear empowered by the Spirit of God. “*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit*” (Matthew 7:17).

As David sought God’s comfort, his lifetime commitment to secret prayer and fasting was established. Feeling God’s peace in the outdoors, he took long walks in prayer, offering his heart and soul to Christ’s service. “I set apart this day for fasting and prayer to God for His grace; especially to prepare me for the work of the ministry, to give me divine aid and

direction in my preparations for that great work, and, in His own time, to send me into His harvest.”⁶³

“Reaching the Unreached”

In spite of the persecution and suffering, God had the perfect assignment for David Brainerd’s life. For some time, he felt that his call was to reach people who had never heard the gospel, those who weren’t already sitting in a church pew. “I never could feel any freedom to enter into another man’s labors and settle down in the ministry where the gospel was preached before,” he wrote.⁶⁴

The Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge was already sending missionaries into the New England wilderness to reach the Native Americans. During the Great Awakening, the society embraced the revival teachings and was searching for Spirit-empowered men to share the love of Christ with the natives. The Rev. Ebenezer Pemberton of New York sent Brainerd a letter, offering to ordain him as a missionary to the natives of New York, New Jersey, and eastern Pennsylvania. Was he God’s man for the job?

Brainerd welcomed the call! He would begin his service among the Housatonic Indians of Kaunaumuck, New York, eighteen miles outside of Albany. (Throughout Brainerd’s diary, the Native Americans are referred to as “Indians,” which was a common practice during the eighteenth century, so I will do the same in some places in this chapter.)

Excited about his first ministry assignment, on April 20, 1743, Brainerd’s twenty-fifth birthday, he spent the day in prayer and fasting in the woods in close communion with God. That day, his diary entry ended with the cry, “O that God would enable me to live for His glory for the future!”⁶⁵

The Testing of His Faith

Brainerd would have great success among the Native Americans during his ministry years, but not before God brought him through a deep valley of testing. The year he spent among the people of Kaunaumuck was a time when he faced the darkest spiritual challenge of his life.



Brainerd preaching to Native American tribes.⁶⁶

When he arrived in Kaunaumeeek in late April, Brainerd lived in a log cabin with a poor Scottish couple and walked through rough terrain a mile and a half each way to visit the Indian settlement. It was a struggle to find an interpreter who could communicate all that Brainerd wanted to share with the people there.

At night, his bed was merely “a little heap of straw, laid upon some boards, a little way from the ground.” The only food he had was a sparse diet of hasty pudding and bread baked in ashes. While the Native Americans seemed receptive, there was no outward acceptance of Christ. Each day, he labored in prayer for God’s help in his work.

Although he was convinced that he was following God’s will for his life, Brainerd still suffered with extreme bouts of melancholy. Whether his depression resulted from spiritual attacks or emotional and physical illness is unknown. But again, emotional struggles were a lifetime challenge for this anointed man of God.

His writings echoed his distress. On May 18, 1743, he wrote,

My circumstances are such, that I have no comfort, of any kind, but what I have in God. I live in the most lonesome wilderness; have but one single person to converse with, that can speak English....I have no

fellow-Christian to whom I might unbosom myself...and join in...prayer. ...My labour is hard and extremely difficult.⁶⁷

Yet, in the midst of Brainerd's greatest weakness, God revealed his greatest strength—his relentless commitment to loving and serving Jesus Christ. "Afterwards my soul rose so far above the deep waters that I dared to rejoice in God. I saw that there was a sufficient matter for all my consolations in the love of a blessed God."⁶⁸

During these difficult months, the bouts of sickness he had experienced at Yale returned. Yet, even as he struggled with illness, he continually offered his heart and hands to Christ's service.

Never Giving Up

Refusing to give up his dream to become a Yale graduate, in June 1743, David traveled the sixty miles from Kaunaumeeek to New Haven to apologize once again to the Yale leadership and to plead to complete his final year. This time, he was sponsored by the evangelist Jonathan Edwards and Aaron Burr Sr., both longtime Yale supporters, who gave testimony in David's defense. Once again, the prideful Thomas Clapp and the Yale administrators denied his request.

It seems obvious that religious spirits were working through these men to destroy Brainerd's passion and destiny. The "Old Lights" were the religious people who didn't want things to change. They fought the spiritual zeal of the Great Awakening because they were afraid it contained no knowledge. Instead of trying to kill the zeal of the Holy Spirit among the "New Lights," they should have added to that zeal with their biblical wisdom and knowledge. The entire body of Christ would have benefited from that choice.

What Brainerd had said about the Yale administrators' lack of spiritual life was truth; he had labeled them correctly, and it had provoked them to respond in anger. The truth is that *error cannot hide behind an institution*.

In response to the spiritual pride of the "Old Lights" and their treatment of Brainerd, Edwards and Burr withdrew their sponsorship of Yale University. Together with other "New Lights" leaders, they founded the College of New Jersey in Princeton, New Jersey, offering biblical studies to all Christian denominations. The school was later renamed Princeton University. In the following years, Yale's rector, Thomas Clapp, repented of his opposition to the Great Awakening and the teachings of God's grace, and joined the New Lights pastors in ministry!⁶⁹

It was a travesty at the time that the Yale administrators made their decisions against Brainerd. It was also a sad statement of the university's inconstancy when, years later, after the renowned success of Brainerd's ministry, Yale claimed David Brainerd as one of their own graduates. They established Brainerd Hall in the Yale School of Divinity, which is still in use today. There is a bronze plaque on the front of the building that reads: "David Brainerd, Class of 1743"—even though he was denied the honor of graduating with his class.

Although David Brainerd never lived to see these events, God was faithful to answer his prayers, to reveal the truth about his ministry, and to honor his memory.

They Are My People

Traveling back to the Kaunaumeeek village after Yale's denial, Brainerd lost his way in the dense forest and was forced to lie all night in the open air. He awoke weak and disoriented, racked with pain and coughing spasms as he rode back to the village. Once again, he turned to the only source of his strength, Jesus Christ.

Determined to complete his mission, Brainerd built a small hut of his own in the Native American village and lived among the community for nearly a year. As a result of prayer and God's faithfulness, the people became more responsive to the gospel, and, as their relationship grew, he referred to them in his writings as "my people."

With a thankful heart, on January 1, 1744, David recorded this prayer:

May I always remember that all I have comes from God. Blessed be the Lord, who has carried me through all the toils, fatigues, and hardships of the year past, as well as the spiritual sorrows and conflicts that have attended it. Oh that I could begin this new year with God, and spend the whole of it to his glory, either in life or in death!⁷⁰

Three months later, Brainerd's time of testing came to an end. On Sunday, March 11, he preached his final sermon to the natives at Kaunaumeeek. They had agreed to move from their isolated village to the town of Stockbridge, New York, where more than four hundred Native Americans lived in a flourishing Christian community under the ministry of John Sargeant.



Brainerd depicted in his missionary travels.⁷¹

Unexpectedly, Brainerd received offers from two different “New Lights” churches to serve as their pastor. He was flattered by the invitations and was especially tempted to accept the one from East Hampton, New York, where he had close Christian friends, but he was certain that his call from God was to minister to the Native Americans. He wrote, “O that God would send forth faithful labourers into His harvest. I am resolved to go on still with the Indian affair, if divine providence permit.”

Menacing Natives

New orders from the Scottish Society arrived. It was time for David to move south from New York to the Forks of the Delaware, in the dense forests of Pennsylvania.

Several tribes lived along the banks of the Delaware River, including the Delaware, or Lenni-Lenapes. They had a menacing reputation because of their animosity toward the white settlers, and the Scottish Society had been

reluctant to send a missionary to them any sooner. This is the tribe that had plotted to kill Brainerd before he was miraculously delivered from the rattlesnake.

Before attempting this dangerous new work, the Presbytery of New York laid hands on David to ordain him for this ministry. Humbled by God's purpose for his life, on June 12, 1744, Brainerd penned, "At this time I was affected with a sense of the important trust committed to me....O that I might always be engaged in the service of God, and duly remember the solemn charge I have received, in the presence of God, angels and men. May I be assisted of God for this purpose."⁷²

Packing up his few belongings and giving the rest of them away, Brainerd set out from New York for his critical assignment.

Each day, he arose from his small campsite and set out with renewed determination; alone, he crossed the Hudson River and traveled another hundred miles "through a desolate and hideous country above New Jersey" until he reached the Delaware River. Although the tribes received him cautiously, they were willing to listen as he shared the gospel. He set up a small cabin and began his ministry, preaching messages of salvation each morning, visiting from tent to tent to explain God's sacrificial love, and sharing their meals and their lives.

One Hundred Miles of Susquehanna

Anointed to preach to all the unreached natives, Brainerd did not limit his ministry to one tribe. In October 1744, he launched deeper into the Pennsylvania wilderness in search of the hundreds of natives who lived along the Susquehanna River. His traveling companion was fellow missionary Eliab Byram, a 1740 graduate of Harvard, who worked with David as a team.

On this trip to reach the Susquehanna, Brainerd wrote, "We went way into the wilderness and found the most difficult and dangerous traveling by far that any of us had ever seen; we had scarce anything else but lofty mountains, deep valleys, and hideous rocks to make our way through."⁷³

On one of those precarious paths, Brainerd's horse slipped and broke its leg. In the wilderness, with no assistance, there was nothing to do but kill the horse and continue on foot. God surely had a special plan for such an arduous journey.

Making their way one hundred miles up the Susquehanna, they shared the sacrificial love of Jesus with small groups of natives along the way. The spiritual warfare was heavy; the Native Americans were suspicious of white settlers and their white God. Their faith was settled in their *powwows*—or medicine men—who, they believed, had the power to help them—or to poison them to death.

In spite of the spiritual warfare, Brainerd experienced unusually good health on this expedition, and his spirits were lifted by having Byram ministering by his side. He wrote, “My soul loves the people of God, and especially the ministers of Jesus Christ, who feel the same trials that I do.” When Brainerd ministered with other believers, he was always lifted from his melancholy spirits.

If the New England ministers had followed the biblical example, they would have known that Jesus always sent His disciples out in pairs. When two or more are sent out in Christ’s name, they are blessed with the power of agreement, with spiritual encouragement, and with personal accountability. Brainerd’s problem of depression was magnified by the fact that he was always by himself. It is not good to spend long times in ministry alone.

In my travels, I have noticed that this is true even of missionary couples. Biblically, the couples are not two people: they are one flesh. It is better if two couples are sent out as a ministry team so that they can pray together and help one another hear the full counsel of God as they minister in His name.

Overcoming “Medicine Man” Power

When Brainerd returned to the Forks of the Delaware in early December, he found the village preparing for a great feast in honor of their pagan gods. For two days, he camped in the woods, fervently praying and fasting for their deliverance. The Delawares spent the same two days dancing and feasting in celebration of their gods. Discouraged by the false spirituality of the Delaware Indians, Brainerd steadfastly prayed to God to deliver the natives for His kingdom.

Within days, Brainerd’s prayers were rewarded! His interpreter, Moses Tattamy, approached the missionary and confessed that he wanted to know more about Jesus. Excited by the prospects of his first convert, Brainerd prayed for Moses to make a true commitment to Christ, which he did, along with his wife and daughters.

Although his primary vision was to minister among the natives, Brainerd also shared the gospel with white settlers in the area. On certain “Communion weekends,” he traveled for miles to assist the church pastors in neighboring towns. As many as 3,000 Pennsylvania settlers would travel great distances to hear the gospel and to share the Lord’s Supper together.

When Brainerd preached, “the Word was attended with amazing power; many scores, if not hundreds, in the great assembly were much affected.” Tears would flow as settlers accepted the richness of God’s love for them.

Those ministry weekends brought great encouragement to Brainerd, for, after two years of ministry in the wilderness, the Native Americans were still reluctant to turn from their powwows to faith to Christ. Discouraged by their cold hearts, he was often “exceedingly depressed with a view of the unsuccessfulness of [his] labors.” But all of that was about to miraculously change!

The Power of God Falls

In the summer of 1745, David was called by the Scottish Society to move to what would become the great mission field of his ministry—Crossweeksung, New Jersey. Brainerd was prepared to move to a new area. “My heart rejoiced in my particular work as a missionary,” he wrote, “rejoiced in my necessity of self-denial in many respects; and still continued to give myself up to God, and implore mercy of him; praying incessantly, every moment with sweet fervency.”⁷⁴

Brainerd arrived in the village of Crossweeksung, which was just eight miles southeast of the town of Trenton, New Jersey. On the first day, things were quiet, as most of the region’s natives had been driven west by the settlers, and only four women were in the small village to listen to his message.

To his surprise, by the next evening, the women had traveled throughout the area inviting other natives to hear the white missionary speak. On the third day, thirty Native Americans had gathered in Crossweeksung. Instead of the usual opposition, Brainerd found their hearts open to the gospel message, with a hunger to know more of God.

Delighted, he wrote that night, “My soul was much refreshed and quickened in my work. This was indeed a sweet afternoon to me.” But it was only the beginning!

By the end of the first week in Crossweeksung, more than forty Indians were gathered to listen to his messages. They were so eager to learn more that they asked him to preach about Christ twice daily!

In great joy he recorded, “I was enabled to speak the Word with much abundance and warmth. And the power of God attended the Word; so that sundry persons were made to shed many tears, and to wish for Christ to save them....O how heart-reviving and soul-refreshing it is to me to see the fruit of my labors!”⁷⁵

Natives Overwhelmed by the Spirit

There are times when we plant God’s Word for days, weeks, or even years, and then, one day, the floodgates burst open, and the Spirit of God pours down upon us like a mighty flood. Remember those biblical steps in spreading the gospel. “*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*” (1 Corinthians 3:6). Brainerd had been discouraged for a time as he planted and watered, but God was about to shower him with the increase!



Brainerd Preaching to
the Indians.⁷⁶

Preparing his heart to be used to the fullest in ministry, Brainerd wrote, “I long to spend the little inch of time I have in the world more for God. I feel a spirit of seriousness, tenderness, sweetness, and devotion; and wish to spend the whole night in prayer and communion with God.”

On August 6, preaching to the Crossweeksung natives, David spoke on the love of God from 1 John 3:16: “*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.*” There were more than fifty Indians in

the room, and nearly all of them were in tears or lying prostrate, crying out in distress that they had not accepted Christ's love before this. They were brought to their knees by the Holy Spirit's power at work within their souls.

When he asked them, "What would you like God to do for you?" their clear answer was, "We want Christ to wipe our hearts completely clean."⁷⁷

The Weight of God's Glory Falls

Two days later, on August 8, 1745, the Holy Spirit swept through Crossweeksung in answer to David Brainerd's fervent prayers!

Sixty-five Native Americans filed into the house where Brainerd was preaching that afternoon. He spoke from Luke 14:23: "*And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*" Brainerd preached under a mighty anointing of the Holy Spirit.

After the message, he walked around the room, praying individually for men and women who lay prostrate under conviction, when, suddenly, "the power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly *'as of a rushing mighty wind'* (Acts 2:2), and with an astonishing energy bore down all before it!"

"I stood amazed," he marveled, "and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent or swelling deluge, when its insupportable weight and pressure bears down and sweeps before it whatever is in its way!"⁷⁸

Throughout the house, natives were praying and crying out for mercy. The ones who had already received their salvation were rejoicing in Christ and praying for their distressed friends, sharing the good news of Jesus' sacrificial love, and inviting them to give their hearts to Him.

A Murderer Is Redeemed

An old powwow, who was a former murderer and alcoholic, fell under the convicting power of God that day. Because he had murdered a young Indian, he had stayed away from the rest of the tribe for some time, although he still continued his conjuring practices. The powwow sat transfixed while listening to the message, and, when God's convicting Spirit fell, he wept and cried out for God's mercy on his life.⁷⁹

Within the next few months, the old powwow totally surrendered his life to Christ and became what Brainerd described as a “humble, devout, and affectionate Christian.”

A young woman who did not believe she even had a soul, and who had mocked David earlier the same day, cried out continually to the Lord in her native tongue, saying, “Have mercy on me and help me to give you my heart.” This became a common cry among the natives in the village.

The power of God continued to fall the following day. Brainerd spent the morning praying for weeping men and women who hungered for the salvation of Christ. Later in the day, as seventy Native Americans, both old and young, gathered to hear him preach, he spoke on Matthew 11:28: “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” Tears of repentance and acceptance of Christ continued to flow.

Their hearts were so hungry for the Word of God that Brainerd continued to preach twice daily. He did not use the fear of hellfire or God’s judgment to reach the people’s hearts but spoke instead of the sacrificial love of God and His mercy in sending His Son to save them. What brought the great change was their understanding of the goodness and kindness of God. “*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*” (Romans 2:4). The kindness of God does more to change a person than a thousand years of hellfire and damnation sermons. We should follow that principle in our preaching of the Word of God today.

White settlers, hearing reports of strange happenings in the Native American village, began to join the meetings, suspicious at first, but then embracing the message of salvation for themselves.

On Sunday, August 25, Brainerd shared from Revelation 3:20: “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.*” That afternoon, he baptized twenty-five native adults and children who had repented and given their hearts to Christ. It was a joyous answer to prayer for the young man who had traveled thousands of miles, fighting exhaustion and disease, and had cried out to God “to see the Indians embrace Christ’s saving grace.”

God’s Power and Strength

David Brainerd’s call was to travel among the lost, so he set out in September to visit the natives in both the Susquehanna and the Forks of the Delaware. Although he still fought bouts of depression and illness, he was determined to see God’s kingdom expand among the tribes. He saw a little

more of the Holy Spirit's stirring among them on that trip, and left them with the hope that God would still move among them.

Riding on to New York, Brainerd traveled to the church in East Hampton for some much-needed Christian fellowship. He received comfort and strength from conversations with his friends about Christ and the missionary work.

In November, he went on to Long Island to meet with the Presbytery of the Scottish Society. There, he gave a glowing report on the supernatural move of God's Holy Spirit in Crossweeksung. He returned to New Jersey greatly encouraged in his spirit.

"My Heart Was Knit to Them"

On January 1, 1746, Brainerd wrote, "I am this day beginning a new year, and God has carried me through numerous trials and labours in the past; he has amazingly supported my feeble frame....O that I might live nearer to God this year than I did the last!"⁸⁰

Throughout the winter, he continued to push his body as he traveled the hundreds of miles between the three Native American tribes. The Crossweeksung natives continued to grow in Christ, and he wanted the Delaware Indians to be blessed, as well. With each trip, his body became more feeble, and his coughing spasms more intense. He would spend many days back in Crossweeksung recovering from the travels, preaching to the natives in God's strength alone.

By the spring of 1746, the Native Americans were asking for more than preaching. Although he was often too sick to stand, Brainerd began to teach them more detailed doctrines of the Christian faith. They would come to his house just to be near him and to talk more about Jesus. When he was with them, he "felt a sweet union of soul. My heart was knit to them; and I cannot say I have felt such a sweet and fervent lure to the brethren for some time past."

He celebrated his twenty-eighth birthday a short time later, rejoicing at the changes that had happened in his ministry during the previous year.

After considerable prayer, the natives and Brainerd decided that the Indians in the village should move to Cranberry, New Jersey, just fifteen miles away, where they could settle into a Christian community and start some much-needed schooling. Brainerd seriously considered settling down with them to be their pastor and to rest from his weary travels. But, he

became convinced once again that his call was to save the lost: “My [call] has been and still is to go forth and spend my life in preaching the gospel from place to place and gathering souls afar off to Jesus the great Redeemer....And if ever my soul presented itself to God for service, without any reserve of any kind, it did so now” (May 22, 1746).

Shaken by God

In August, at the one-year anniversary of the Spirit’s move in Crossweeksung, Brainerd preached on Psalm 72, and he said that “the power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly, and when I prayed from Acts 4:31, ‘*And when they had prayed, the place was shaken,*’ there was a shaking and melting among us; and many, I doubt not, were in some measure filled with the Holy Ghost.”⁸¹

Always praying that the Spirit of God would move through the tribes at the Forks and Susquehanna, Brainerd continued to ride hundreds of miles to revisit them. But he couldn’t spend as long as he wished, because of “[his] extraordinary weakness, having been exercised with great nocturnal sweats and a coughing up of blood in almost the whole of the journey.”

With each trip, while his physical condition weakened, he continued to preach, determined that the Native Americans would hear the Word of God. While he was gone, the Crossweeksung Christians prayed day and night for his spiritual success.

In subsequent diary entries, he spoke of his physical decline. “I was so weak I could not preach”; and “spent this day, as well as the whole week past, under a great deal of bodily weakness, exercised with a violent cough, and a considerable fever.”

Even through this sickness, the melancholy spirit of his earlier years did not return; it had finally been lifted. His encouragement was a result of the powerful move of the Holy Spirit that had brought his beloved Crossweeksung brothers and sisters into God’s kingdom.

The Doctor’s Orders

Little was known about tuberculosis and its cure in the early eighteenth century. Doctors recommended that the patient travel by horseback, riding out of doors as much as possible. Even though he was quite ill, Brainerd made a journey on horseback into New England in an attempt to receive some healing. He was gone from November through March, visiting family and friends in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York. Even

though he was ill and in pain, Brainerd could proclaim, “There is a God in heaven who overrules all things for the best; and this is the comfort of my soul....How blessed it is to grow more and more like God!”

In March 1747, he returned to Cranberry to visit with his beloved congregation. After spending a few precious days with them, praying and sharing the Word, he left for what would be the final time. He had baptized a total of eighty-five of the natives, and more were surrendering their lives to Christ each week. There were lengthy embraces and sad tears as they parted for the last time on this earth.

Brainerd traveled to Elizabethtown, where he met with his younger brother, John, who had been assigned to take over David’s ministry in Cranberry. He reminded his brother, “Never think that you can live to God by your own power and strength, but always look to and rely on Him for assistance, yea, for all strength and grace.”⁸² While fellowshiping with John, Brainerd celebrated his twenty-ninth—and what would be his last—birthday. He set out the next day to ride through New England, hoping that it would bring some relief to the pain in his lungs.

Meeting Jerusha Edwards

On his last trip through New England, David stopped to visit a number of influential Christian friends. In Princeton, New Jersey, he spent time with Jonathan Dickinson, the first president of the new College of New Jersey. (In future years, both Aaron Burr Sr. and Jonathan Edwards would serve as the president of Princeton.) After a trip home to Haddam, Connecticut, to visit his family, Brainerd went on to Northampton, Massachusetts, to the home of Jonathan Edwards. Although they had met briefly when Edwards had presented Brainerd’s case at Yale, they had not spent much time together.

While visiting, Brainerd became extremely ill and could not immediately continue his journey. He spent hours each day talking and praying with the Edwards family. During this visit, he developed a close friendship with Edwards’ seventeen-year-old daughter, Jerusha. She was a sweet girl with a desire to serve others in the love of Christ. For years, Christian biographers had assumed that David and Jerusha had developed a romantic relationship and were engaged to be married. However, there is no actual record that their relationship went beyond a close Christian friendship.

After a trip on horseback to Boston in June, once again, in the hopes of prolonging his life, and visiting with a number of supportive Christian

friends there, Brainerd made his final journey back to the warmth of the Edwards home in Northampton.

Surrounded by Love

In August, Brainerd became confined to his bed on the first floor of the Edwards home. He continued to share nightly prayer time with the family and to be cared for by Jerusha.

David was delighted to receive a visit from his brother, John, with the encouraging news that his flock in Cranberry was flourishing. During their visit, John turned to his satchel and retrieved a special package to present to his brother. He had collected David's personal diaries from his log cabin in New Jersey and brought them back to their author.

As he laid the precious journals in his brother's hands, David's tears flowed. What joys and sorrows, what heartaches and rejoicings, were contained in those pages! David read his passionate prayers of both despair and triumph and was reminded once again that God had faithfully been with him every step of the way!⁸³

David never intended for anyone to read his private writings, but when Jonathan Edwards requested permission to publish them, Brainerd gave his consent. He realized that his heartfelt prayers and experiences might help other missionaries for Christ. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined that these writings would still be ministering to Christians centuries later!

“My Heaven Is to Please God”

During September 1747, David's youngest brother, Israel, also an ordained minister, visited him in Northampton. He rejoiced that David's spirits remained uplifted and that his attention remained focused on the will of God.

As friends and fellow ministers visited and spoke of God's goodness, it was easy to see that Brainerd's days of depression were far behind him now. When Satan attacked him with thoughts that he was unworthy and not fit to see God in heaven, Brainerd remembered God's grace and “instantly appeared the blessed robes of Christ's righteousness, which I could not but exalt and triumph in!”

During his final days, he prayed often for the work of the ministers he knew, including his own brothers, that they “might be filled with the Holy Spirit” for the work God had called them to do. He prayed for the spiritual

prosperity of his own congregation of Native Americans in New Jersey, dissolving into tears because of the love he held for each of them.⁸⁴

Calm and content even in his last days, Brainerd was still writing,

My heaven is to please God, and to glorify him, and to give all to him, and to be wholly devoted to his glory; that is the heaven I long for....I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honour to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or low seat there; but to love and please and glorify God is all....Had I a thousand souls, if they were worth anything, I would give them all to God!⁸⁵

Graduation

On Brainerd's last evening, his brother, John, was with him. They reminisced late into the night about David's beloved congregation in Cranberry and planned what John could do in the future to help advance the kingdom of God among them. David was delighted that John would bring them his final words of love to let them know that they had not been forgotten by him.

At six the following morning, October 9, 1747, David Brainerd graduated to heaven to see the Lord Jesus, whom he had loved and served so fervently. His funeral three days later was officiated by Jonathan Edwards and attended by Congregational and Presbyterian ministers, professors and administrators from the local universities, and scores of Christian friends who knew and loved him.

The Edwards family had drawn him into their hearts and greatly mourned his passing. A personal tragedy struck them when Jerusha became ill just four months later and died on February 14, 1748, possibly of the tuberculosis that had taken David's life. She was buried beside David Brainerd in the Northampton churchyard.

For Christ Alone

David Brainerd was a life to be reckoned with. His desire was for Christ and Him alone—and to present the kingdom of God to all who were lost. Although he was physically frail and wrestled with depression in his lifetime, he was a spiritual giant whose relentless dedication inspired many missionaries to courageously go where no one else had gone before in Jesus' name.

Knowing that God would use Brainerd's personal diaries for much good, Jonathan Edwards published his edited version of *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* in 1749. The writings inspired many men and women of God to praise Brainerd's work and devotion to Christ:

Let every preacher read carefully over *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*. Let us be followers of him, as he was of Christ, in absolute self-devotion, in total deadness to the world, and in fervent love to God and man. — John Wesley

David Brainerd's diary entries have shown countless generations the undeniable proof of God's unending faithfulness. Inspired by Brainerd to serve as a missionary to India, William Carey required his mission team to read Brainerd's diary three times every year. Henry Martyn, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, and Jim Elliot were each inspired by Brainerd's intense devotion to God's call to missions.

In the end, David Brainerd's own words clearly reveal the unquenchable passion of his heart:

Here I am, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth, send me to the rough, savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in earth, send me even to death itself, if it be but in Thy service, and to promote Thy kingdom.⁸⁶

Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me." (Isaiah 6:8 nlt)

Will you answer the Lord's call?

Will you declare, "Here I am, Lord! Send me to the nations!"?

Chapter 3

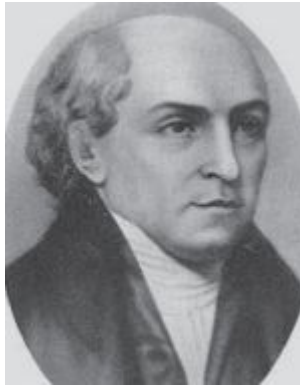
William Carey

Missions Revelation: A Bible and a Map

The pansi boat rocked back and forth, taking on water, as it traveled up the Hooghly River toward the shores of India. Scarcely noticing, William Carey strained forward to glimpse the approaching shoreline. He was transfixed by the colors and bustling figures along the riverbank: dark men in turbans and wide cotton pants, women in bold-colored skirts and tunics, walking briskly toward the marketplace.

Almost before the boat docked, William jumped on land, gazing in wonder at the exotic sights: large wicker baskets perched on wooden stands and overloaded with fruits and vegetables in yellows, reds, and greens. Brightly-colored tents filled with brass bowls, candlesticks, woven fabrics, and household items he had never seen before. The background murmur of a new language filled his ears. As William walked along, he smelled the fish before he saw the fishermen's tables displaying the catch of the morning.

The murmur behind him became a clamor; he turned to see a crowd of curious townspeople gathered around his family as they cautiously climbed from the boat. Small, brown-skinned children pushed forward giggling and reaching out to touch his wife, Dolly, and their four children as they stood on the strange shore. Dolly was wide-eyed and apprehensive as her eyes met his.



William Carey

The day had finally arrived! After twelve years of planning and praying, he and his family had finally reached the shores of India, arriving just south of the city of Calcutta. Tears filled William's eyes as he gazed for the first time on the land he had labored to reach.

Although he didn't know it as he walked on the sands of India's shoreline, William Carey would not leave India for the rest of his life. God had called him to the overpopulated and un-evangelized nation, and he would zealously fulfill that call until his last breath.

Missionary Trailblazer

"To know the will of God, we need an open Bible and an open map!"
—William Carey

William Carey was a missionary trailblazer. He has been called "the father of modern missions" because his zeal ignited a missionary passion in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe that reshaped modern Christianity.

Before Carey obeyed God's call to foreign lands, the Protestant church in Europe had little outreach abroad; even the widespread success of Ludwig Zinzendorf and the Moravian missionaries he sent throughout the world was still being ignored by the larger established denominations.

Carey's passion to bring the gospel to the lost in foreign lands birthed a missionary revolution. Along with a group of men inspired by his pioneering vision, he founded the first British missionary society to send Christian disciples around the world. "Let us give ourselves up unreservedly to this glorious cause," he wrote. "Let us never think that

our time, our gifts, our strength, our families are our own. Let us sanctify them all to God and His cause.”

Carey was an extremely gifted man. He had an astounding ability to read new languages, and Carey and his team were responsible for translating the Bible into Bengali and twenty-nine other languages, printing the Word of God and supplying it to hundreds of thousands of Asians.

God used William Carey to spiritually awaken a sleeping church and to set it on fire to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ. He was a giant in Christian history and one of God’s generals in the missionary world.

An Unexceptional Beginning

William Carey was born on August 17, 1761, in the small village of Paulerspury in central England. This exceptional man of God had an unexceptional beginning. He was the eldest of five children born to Edmund and Elizabeth Carey. The hardworking Careys were low-class weavers, living in a two-story cottage where they set up a loom to weave the woolen cloth known as “tammy.”⁸⁷

By the time William turned six, things improved dramatically; Edmund was hired to serve as both the parish clerk and the local schoolmaster, and the Careys gratefully gave up their weaving trade to live for free in the schoolhouse. It was a special blessing for William because it meant he could attend school.

Even at a tender age, William had an insatiable desire for knowledge. With his father working as the local schoolmaster, he had access to the few books in the village. He read everything he could get his hands on: the Bible, adventure novels, books on botany, anything in print. His mother was often awakened in the middle of the night by his reading aloud. She admitted, “So intent was he from childhood in the pursuit of knowledge. Whatever he began he finished; difficulties never seemed to discourage his mind.”⁸⁸

When Carey was just eleven years old, he found a small Latin textbook in his father’s study. He took up the challenge to read it! The inquisitive boy pored over his father’s Latin grammar book and taught himself the classic language. William’s family was astonished! From that moment, they realized that God had blessed him with a unique gift of

languages. Little did they know how that gift would inspire the Christian world!

Captain Cook's Hook

From childhood, William was afflicted with a disease that caused painful blisters on his face and hands from sun exposure. The worst part was that he loved the outdoors, spending hours wandering through the forest collecting unique leaves and butterflies, examining birds eggs and insects. Carey's love of botany remained strong throughout his life and was a source of pleasure and provision for him when he arrived in India years later.

Because of his allergic reaction to the sun, William needed an indoor trade. At fourteen years old, he was apprenticed to Clarke Nichols, a cobbler in a town only eight miles from his home. Nichols encouraged Carey to read, even while he worked, recognizing that his young apprentice was different from the other boys.

In the next two years, Carey mastered both Greek and Hebrew, spending hours studying the primers. By the time he reached sixteen, with little formal schooling, William Carey was one of the most educated young men in central England!

Carey was obviously a leader from his earliest days. In the Bible, God develops great leaders at young ages—Joshua, Joseph, Gideon, David, and Timothy, to name just a few. We see this occurring in the world today, as well, and it gives us hope for the young people of this current generation.

Carey's brilliant imagination was captivated by the book *Captain Cook's Voyages*—it was the British sailor's personal journals of his adventures in the South Seas. Envisioning each foreign port, Carey was filled with an overwhelming desire to see them for himself. He later wrote, "Reading Cook's voyages was the first thing that engaged my mind to think of foreign missions." God had used a most unlikely bait to capture the heart of His servant!

John Wesley Preaches

Although Carey had little interest in the gospel, he attended the local parish church with his family; the Church of England was the official government-established church of the English people.

Invited to hear John Wesley preach in the English countryside, William heard the gospel delivered for the first time under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Wesley preached of the need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the power of God's sanctification by grace alone and not by the outward "holiness" of man. Hearing the message, Christians were leaving the Church of England in droves, claiming that it had lost its love of Christ. These Christians were called "Nonconformists" or "Dissenters," and included Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists.

John Warr, William's fellow apprentice, was a strong Baptist "Dissenter." During their workday, they had heated debates over whether salvation in Christ could really change men's lives. William was skeptical that he needed a personal Savior. But, before long, Warr's words pricked William's heart, and on February 10, 1779, at the age of seventeen, he attended a Dissenters prayer service.⁸⁹

What a life-changing event! William was confronted with the plan of salvation and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. For days, he eagerly searched the Bible to discover more of the truth! Now on the same "team," the young apprentices spent their time reading the Bible aloud to each other as they completed their shoe-repair work. William was on fire to know more about Jesus.

The Importance of Choosing the Right Wife

Unexpectedly, Nichols, the shoe master, died; William had to complete his apprenticeship with cobbler Thomas Old. Within a short time, William met Dorothy (Dolly) Plackett, Old's pretty sister-in-law. From the outset, these two young people were different from each other; Dolly was not educated and was six years older than William. Christian historians have speculated on why a man who was so committed to learning would have married an unlearned woman. But William Carey was still a teenager when he met Dolly, and his reasons for the marriage never appeared in his journal writings.

I believe that William Carey married the wrong person. Because he was just a teenager and a new Christian, he married according to youthful passion and convenience instead of waiting for God to send the right person to fulfill his life and ministry—a potential snare I mentioned

in an earlier chapter. Because Dolly knew little of the Lord before their marriage, he also violated Scripture by being unequally yoked.

I respect that William remained with her and looked after her for the rest of their challenging lives together. But I would like to encourage other young people to not rush in when choosing a life partner! Marry according to your destiny and calling in Christ. Pray for the direction of the Holy Spirit and make certain that your partner shares your ministry vision.

In the summer of 1781, just before his twentieth birthday, William married twenty-five-year-old Dolly Plackett at the twelfth-century church of St. John the Baptist, in Piddington. Because Dolly couldn't read or write, she signed an X on the church's marriage register.

Two years later, on October 5, 1783, William Carey was baptized in the River Nene near Northampton by John Ryland, who would become one of his closest friends. Later, Ryland spoke with amazement of the baptism of "this poor journeyman shoemaker," never imagining that this young man would have an unparalleled impact on the entire Christian world.

Ryland wrote, "It was the purpose of the Most High, who selected for this amazing work, not the son of one of our most learned ministers, nor of one of the most opulent of our dissenting gentlemen, but the poor son of a parish clerk."⁹⁰

Too Many Deaths

William and Dolly began their marriage happy but incredibly poor. Not only was William a cobbler, but he also preached on Sundays at the Dissenters church, yet made little money. Within a short time, they had their first child, a baby girl named Ann. Tragically, when the baby was only eighteen months old, she and William became very ill with fever, and she died within days.

Heartsick, Dolly went to her funeral and then returned home to take care of her sick husband. William's mother arrived to help the young couple and discovered that they were destitute. She cleaned the house, took care of the grieving Dolly, and nursed William back to health. Even though Carey recovered, he strangely lost all the hair on the top of his head.

Trying to put the tragedy behind them, William and Dolly moved to a new cottage in Moulton. Dolly was haunted by the loss of her baby girl, but William threw himself into his work. On August 10, 1786, he was ordained as a Baptist minister and became the pastor of a small church and the local schoolmaster in Moulton. Working hard to provide for his family, he taught school during the weekdays, repaired shoes at night, and preached on Sundays.⁹¹

During this time, William also taught himself French, Italian, and Dutch. As a teacher, his most passionate subject in the schoolroom was geography. Zealously, Carey uncovered all the mysteries he could about foreign lands, and then created mural-sized maps for the students, with details on every country, capital, river, and mountain. As the months grew into years, his longing to see these lands for himself grew.

From 1785 to 1789, Dolly gave birth to three boys: Felix, William Jr., and Peter. Their laughter filled the house and helped ease the pain in Dolly's heart over the death of little Ann. But there were still times when Carey would find her sitting alone, staring into space or crying silently. William prayed for her full emotional health to return.

Unfortunately, childhood disease was too common in the eighteenth century. Dolly and William's fifth child, born in 1791, was another baby girl, Lucy. She was a sweet, healthy baby, but, during her second year, Lucy became ill with a sudden fever and died. Once again, Dolly retreated into a state of anguished depression. And once again, William dealt with it by pushing on with his work.

God of All Peoples

When God issues a call on a man or woman's heart, it might come in the roar of a thunderstorm or in the quiet of the night, but he or she hears His voice distinctly.

William had a growing conviction that God wanted to send Christian missionaries into a hopeless world. As he walked the English countryside in prayer, God brought Isaiah 54 to his remembrance: ***“Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings....Your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you”*** (Isaiah 54:2, 5–6 nkjv).

The Redeemer was not just the God of England or the God of Europe! He was “*the God of the whole earth*,” and Carey was determined to proclaim this missionary truth! Because of Zinzendorf’s earlier missionary success, at a meeting with a small group of Baptist pastors in Kettering, England, William Carey threw down copies of the Moravian newsletter *Periodical Accounts* before the men and declared, “See what the Moravians have done! Can’t we Baptists at least attempt something in fealty to the same Lord?”

Yet, every time he broached the subject with Christian leaders, the reaction was always the same. “You are a miserable enthusiast,” he was rebuked. “If God wanted the heathen of the world to be saved, He would take care of it Himself. There are enough unsaved people in our own midst.”⁹²

Carey responded, “Surely God means what He says. Surely He means for us who know Him to carry the message of redemption to all men everywhere!”⁹³

In spite of the church’s objections, William sat down to write out his missionary vision. His writings grew into a booklet that he entitled *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. It became known simply as *The Enquiry*. In it, William asserted, “If it be the duty of all men, when the gospel comes, to believe unto salvation, then it is the duty of those who are entrusted with the gospel to endeavor to make it known among all nations for the obedience of faith!”⁹⁴

Carey skillfully presented his argument for world missions in *five powerful sections*. It was an astounding proclamation of God’s call to reach the lost.

The Mission Revelation

Section One of *The Enquiry* focused on Jesus’ Great Commission: “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...*” (Matthew 28:19 niv). Carey insisted Jesus’ command to evangelize could not be restricted to the early apostles, or else baptizing believers should be restricted as well. “No!” Carey declared. As long as the majority of the world was covered in “heathen darkness,” Christians had an obligation to bring them the message of Christ’s salvation.

“If the English have been blessed to know and live in the grace of God’s salvation for a long while,” he argued, “how could they withhold such a great salvation from those in foreign lands who died without the knowledge of God’s saving grace?”⁹⁵

Section Two of *The Enquiry* retold the powerful move of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, as thousands of Christians were added to the church daily. (See Acts 2:47.) Carey reminded his readers that it was the missionaries of the first and second centuries who had spread Christianity to England, Germany, Spain, France, Egypt, and Libya.

Section Three, entitled “A Survey of the Present State of the World,” was a comprehensive account of the populations, religious beliefs, and locations of all the people of the known world, based on Carey’s eight years of study. British scholars were astounded at its detail; nothing like it had been written before!

Most importantly, Carey pointed out that most countries had “no written language and consequently no Bible, and were only led by the most childish customs and traditions.” With his gift for languages, Carey’s heart burned to provide written Bibles to the lost. Even the most cynical opponents of foreign missions were convicted by the fervor of Carey’s call.

Sections Four and Five of *The Enquiry* were practical applications of missionary work: the transportation of missionaries to their destinations, survival in foreign lands, and financial provision. He challenged his Christian brothers, “I question whether we are justified in staying here, while so many are perishing without means of grace in other lands!”

In describing the role of the missionary, Carey actually described himself:

The missionary must take every opportunity of doing them [the lost] good, and laboring, and travelling, night and day, they must instruct, exhort, and rebuke, with all long suffering and anxious desire for them, and above all, must be instant in prayer for the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the people of their charge.⁹⁶

Carey ended the booklet with a stirring challenge: “Surely it is worthwhile to lay ourselves out with all our might, in promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ!”

“Expect Great Things! Attempt Great Things!”

Thomas Potts, a successful tradesman, read *The Enquiry* and offered to publish the essay at his own expense. Immediately, Carey had invitations to speak. During one meeting, at the Kettering Baptist Church under Pastor Andrew Fuller, Carey spoke the words that became his missionary battle cry: “Expect great things [from God]! Attempt great things [for God]!”

Preaching from his favorite Bible chapter, Isaiah 54, Carey declared to the church, “Rouse up from your complacency. Find larger canvas, stouter and taller tent poles, and stronger tent pegs. Catch wider visions. Dare bolder programs. Rouse up and go forth to conquer for Christ even the uttermost parts and isles of the sea.”⁹⁷

When the congregation sat without responding, Carey turned to Fuller and cried out, “And are you, after all, going again to do nothing!” Immediately, Fuller turned to the other ministers who were there and promised, “A plan will be prepared at the next meeting at Kettering for forming a Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen.” At last, Carey’s plea had been heard, and the missionary vision that would change the face of European evangelism was launched!

The First European Missionary Society Is Born

On October 2, 1792, a group of fourteen Baptist men joined with Carey to form the first European missionary society, which they named the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel (later known simply as the Baptist Missionary Society). Their initial goal was to financially give as much as they could to mission work and then appeal to other Baptist churches to give.

Just as Jesus had His three closest disciples—Peter, James, and John—Carey had a trio of men who became the cornerstone of the Baptist Missionary Society: Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliff, and John Ryland. Friends since Carey’s ordination ten years earlier, they would remain his devoted supporters for life.

Of the three, Andrew Fuller was the man who would work hand in hand with William for the next twenty-five years, even though he lived half a world away. Fuller was seven years older than Carey and was a

self-educated farmer. In his future role as secretary of the missionary society, Fuller would successfully reach all of England, Scotland, and America with the message of Carey's work in India for the next quarter of a century.

In the body of Christ throughout the centuries, great ministries have usually had a group of dedicated Christian men as key supporters and administrators of the ministry. Evangelists Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, and Reinhard Bonnke, for example, have all had those dedicated men who remained faithful to Christ and to the specific ministry.

Just as in Carey's case, these are men who share the vision of the ministry leader. They do not have an ego problem. They are secure in their role for the cause of Christ. They provide fellowship, encouragement, and teamwork for the man or woman who is called to minister to thousands.

Today in the church, we are struggling with a "celebrity culture." Many people do not want to be called "alongside" the ministry leader. They believe that to be successful, they must have the popular, out-in-front personality. Rather than desiring celebrity status, we each should be looking for our role in team ministry, finding what we are to do in the advancement not of ourselves but of the kingdom of God.

"India, Here We Come!"

As the new mission team began its search for its first missionary applicant, Carey received a letter from Dr. John Thomas, an English physician who had lived in Bengal, India, for the last four years while working for the East India Company. Thomas was a surgeon who had already made two voyages to Calcutta. As an early medical missionary, he ministered to both the physical and spiritual needs of the Indian people, but now he wanted to return to India as a missionary of the gospel.

William was thrilled at their first meeting and pummeled the doctor with questions about Indian life and languages. He was delighted to hear Thomas's account of Brahmin leaders who had requested New Testament translations in the native Bengali language.

At that moment, William Carey clearly heard the call of God—he was to serve the people of India! When Dr. Thomas requested a companion

minister to double the missionary effort, William responded immediately, “I will go!”

He turned to the mission board members for confirmation. “We saw,” said Andrew Fuller “there was a gold mine in India, but it was as deep as the center of the earth. Who will venture to explore it?”

“I will venture to go down,” said Carey, “but remember that you [addressing Fuller, Sutcliff, and Ryland] must hold the ropes.”

“We solemnly promised him to do so,” Andrew responded, “nor while we live shall we desert him.”⁹⁸

And this great team of anointed men of God did not desert Carey throughout their long ministry together. The date of Carey’s missionary commitment was January 10, 1793.

Miracles and Obstacles

Carey was resolved to go, but there was so much that needed to be done. The team had to set sail for India in April to complete the five-month ocean journey before the monsoon winds hit the Indian Ocean. And while Dr. Thomas’s wife and daughter were excited to be returning to India, William was facing the prospect of going alone. Dolly refused to even consider going to “the ends of the earth” among foreign people and the Indian jungles.

What could William be thinking? She was pregnant with their sixth child, so they would have four children with them in the strange land of India, one a newborn infant. All of the pleading on William’s part was to no avail, until Dolly finally agreed to allow their oldest son, eight-year-old Felix, to go with his father.

The challenges continued. Carey and Andrew Fuller traveled hundreds of miles throughout England trying to raise the funds through the Baptist churches. Small congregations contributed what they could. But, not a single Baptist church in London would financially support the venture. The church leaders were certain that it would be a miserable failure and that it would do nothing to advance the kingdom of God! They were advised by Dr. Samuel Stennett, a well-known pastor and hymn writer, to “stand aloof and not commit themselves.”⁹⁹

Despite the obstacles, God’s hand was directing their course. While they were traveling, Carey met a young printer named William Ward.

Both men were confident that someday Ward would join the venture in India and help to print Indian-language Bibles. Carey saw this chance meeting as God's hand of blessing on the trip in the midst of all the challenges.

Three Were Saying No

To William Carey, it appeared that everyone wanted to stop him from his mission: first Dolly, then the Baptist churches, and now the powerful British East India Company.

For over one hundred years, the British East India Company had a royal charter that gave them complete control over all trade between India and England. To protect their monopoly, the company convinced Parliament to ban any British missionaries from India's shores without their express permission. The company was afraid that if the people were trained in the gospel and Western ways, they would no longer agree to the open trading agreement that had made the company rich and powerful.

It was a flagrant insult to the gospel by members of a "Christian" nation! No means of persuasion would allow British missionaries Carey and Thomas entrance into India. As a result, April 1793 came and went, so that the English ship on which they had originally planned to travel, the *Oxford*, sailed with only Mrs. Thomas and her daughter aboard. Carey, Felix, and Thomas were forced to stay behind, looking for another avenue.

While they prayed for God's next step, Carey uncovered a disturbing secret concerning Dr. Thomas. In the days leading up to the departure, Thomas had begun acting suspiciously. Carey was perplexed until he discovered that Thomas was in heavy debt, owing several hundred pounds to different companies and friends in England and India. Thomas admitted his weakness in handling finances and promised Carey he would take care of the debt as soon as possible. Unfortunately, this weakness would continue to plague the ministry for years.¹⁰⁰

Danish Miracle Boat

In spite of the setbacks, Carey and Thomas knew they belonged in India. Walking through the English countryside, Carey cried out to the

Lord to give them a way past the East India Company restrictions and onto Indian shores.

When Carey arrived back at the house, Dr. Thomas burst through the door with a new scheme. “I have the address of a Danish seaman,” he said. “He is waiting for his ship to dock in England on its way to India. If God is with us, there may be room aboard. Come let’s hurry!”¹⁰¹

Thomas explained that if they traveled on a non-English ship, the captain would not require the same travel permits as the East India Company. A Danish ship, the *Kron Princess Maria*, was preparing to leave England and could take them to Serampore, India, a Danish-controlled city outside of the East India Company’s jurisdiction.

Carey was exhilarated with the new plan. God was miraculously opening the doors for their journey! In faith, Carey decided to plead one more “impossible” case before Him.

“God, please change Dolly’s mind!” William wanted to make the journey with his wife and all his children. Dolly had given birth to their newest child, a baby boy whom they named Jabez, and had recovered enough to make the trip. But how could he get her to change her mind?

Two important jobs occupied Thomas and Carey: persuade Dolly to make the journey and raise additional funds to take his entire family aboard the *Kron Princess Maria* before she set sail for India. The men traveled quickly to Piddington, England, where Dolly was staying with her sister, Kitty.

Miracle Money

At first, Carey’s pleas went unheeded. Dolly refused to consider the dangers of a trip halfway around the world with three young boys and an infant. Then, Dr. Thomas stepped inside the cottage door and firmly reminded a sobbing Dolly Carey that her place was by her husband’s side, and that it was God’s will both to send William to India and to keep their family together. It seemed they had reached a complete impasse when Kitty stood to her feet and announced, “I will go with you so that Dolly has someone to help with the children.” With wide eyes, Dolly acquiesced. “All right,” she said resignedly, “we will go together!”¹⁰² The house was in an uproar as they hurriedly packed their belongings for the five-month trip to India.

Now there was just the issue of the passage money to resolve. They needed an additional four hundred and fifty pounds to pay for Dolly, Kitty, and the children. William prayed, “God, You have brought me this far. You have even got Dolly and the children to come. Surely You will show us a way to get to India.”¹⁰³

Carey turned to the faithful John Ryland for help. Ryland managed to raise another two hundred pounds from Christian friends in just a day, but they were still two hundred fifty pounds short. How would they make up the difference?

Once again, the resourceful Thomas came up with an innovative solution. Servants were able to travel for free, so he and Kitty signed up for the voyage as the Careys’ servants. They were still a bit short of funds, but Captain Christmas of the *Kron Princess Maria* welcomed the missionaries aboard with the money they were able to pay. God’s provision was continuing to meet their needs even at the final hour.

Goodbye, Homeland; Hello, Destiny

As the *Kron Princess Maria* sailed out into the English Channel, William and Dolly turned to look at their homeland fading from view. Each would have been shocked to know that it was the last time they would ever see England.

Carey’s journal entry that night was full of praise: “Thursday, June 13, 1793, on board the *Kron Princess Maria*. This has been a day of gladness to my soul. I was returned that I might take all of my family with me and enjoy all the blessings which I had surrendered to God.”¹⁰⁴

One more obstacle stood between Carey and India. As male British citizens, Carey and Thomas could not even set foot on India’s soil without permission from the British East India Company. By an Act of Parliament ten years earlier, every subject of the king going to or from the East Indies without a license from the company was “guilty of a high crime and misdemeanor, and liable to fine and imprisonment.” To circumvent this law, Captain Christmas contacted a pilot boat to take the families off the ship and up the Hooghly River to a part of the shore where there were no authorities. And so the Careys found themselves lurching toward the Indian shoreline in a fragile pansi boat, waiting to begin their great adventure in God.

On November 7, 1793, William Carey and John Thomas stepped onto the soil of Bengal, India. As soon as his family and their belongings were ashore, Thomas began to preach a Christian message in Bengali to the people at the marketplace. For three hours, they listened, and Carey rejoiced! The missionary work in India had finally begun!

A Stranger in a Strange Land

Within weeks of their arrival, trouble loomed. Dr. Thomas had grossly underestimated the amount of money they would need to become established in India. Because of his many debtors, Thomas's first priority was to set up a medical practice and to begin to earn some wages. Without consulting Carey, he used the funds meant for the mission to set up his practice in Calcutta.

Unaware of their financial condition, William heard of a piece of land that his family of three adults and four children could move onto free of rent, but he needed some start-up funds to make the move and plant fields for their food. Carey requested the necessary money from Thomas. In disbelief, he was told that all of the mission money was gone, and he and his family were destitute.

Desolate, Carey wrote in his diary that night, "I am in a strange land, alone, no Christian friend, a large family, and nothing to supply their wants. I blame Mr. T. for leading me into such expense and I blame myself for being so led."¹⁰⁵

Feeling guilty over his selfishness, Thomas borrowed more money and gave it to William for the family's move into the Indian wilderness. In the next few months, the Carey family moved twice, traveling down alligator-infested rivers, trying to find a place to settle. They finally ended in the jungles of the Sundarbans, a wild and dangerous region that was plagued by tigers, swamps, and suspicious natives. Kitty and Dolly were frightened and complained daily about their surroundings.

Carey's diary entry reads, "My wife and my sister, too, who do not see the importance of the mission as I do, are continually exclaiming against me....If my family were but hearty in the work, I should find a great burden removed."¹⁰⁶

Undaunted, Carey planted his crops, worked with the natives, and provided for Dolly and the children. Amazingly, as he worked in the hot

Indian sun, his painful skin condition never reoccurred; he had been miraculously healed to serve in India! While in the Sundarbans, Carey began a serious study of the Bengali language, convinced that his first job was to translate the New Testament into the native tongue. Within a few months, Carey's faith and labor were rewarded with a remarkable offer.

Healed and Prosperous

Carey was a man of great faith. He never expected ongoing financial support from the missionary society. Once he was in India, he would provide for his family by his own abilities, with the Lord's leading.

While he was in the Sundarbans, Carey received a letter from Dr. Thomas with an unusual opportunity for both of them from a Christian business owner named George Udney. Udney had two indigo plants in the Mudnabatti area, and he needed a manager for each of them. Thomas and Carey would operate different plants, and, in exchange for their work, each would receive a two-story house and a yearly salary of two hundred fifty pounds. The offer was beyond Carey's wildest expectations!¹⁰⁷

Elated, Carey ran to tell Dolly the good news. Finally, he would be able to provide for his family and still have the funds for the continued translation of the Bible into Bengali. But Dolly was saddened by the news. It would be their third strenuous move since arriving in India the previous November. She was often sick with dysentery, and she knew the relocation would involve another arduous voyage up the Hooghly River—three long, hot weeks in a small boat with four young boys. To make matters worse, her sister, Kitty, decided to stay behind to marry Charles Short, an Englishman and the manager of the East India Company's salt factory. But, in tears, she packed for the trip.

When they finally arrived in Mudnabatti in the summer of 1794, the Careys found a lovely large house and a workforce eager to see the factory prosper. William was convinced that the Lord was directing his steps. His work in both the factory and in the Bible translation was moving quickly; he had learned the Bengali language with ease. Within a week of his arrival in India, he could preach short messages without an interpreter.

Carey wrote, “All my hope is in, and all my comfort arises from, God; without His power no European could possibly be converted, and His power can convert any Indian; and when I reflect that He has stirred me up to do this work, and wrought wonders to prepare the way, I can hope in His promises, and am encouraged and strengthened!”¹⁰⁸

The Devil Attacks Dolly’s Instability

In the fall of 1794, Dolly and Carey were both stricken with dysentery; Carey’s fever was so high that he almost died. As he was slowly recovering, dysentery overcame his five-year-old, Peter. His small body couldn’t handle the fever and constant diarrhea, and within a few hours, the lively young boy had died.

Once again, William and Dolly experienced the anguish of losing a child. But for Dolly, it was worse than in the past; this time, she slipped into a depression where William could not reach her. He prayed that she would recover once again. She did for a short while, but by March 1795, Dolly began experiencing the first of many delusions concerning her husband and their marriage.

Carey recorded in his diary, “I have had very sore trials in my own family, from a quarter which I forbear to mention. Have greater need for faith and patience than ever I had, and I bless God that I have not been altogether without supplies of these graces.”¹⁰⁹ Carey was trying to cope with his wife’s mental instability by leaning on the Lord. However, it seems to have often overwhelmed him.

Some Christian historians have questioned what happened to Dolly Carey. It was obvious that she was prone to depression, that she went to India under duress, and that she lost three precious children to disease. Although there aren’t many journal entries regarding his marriage, a letter from Carey to Dolly before they left for India reveals his earnest love for his family:

Tell my dear children I love them dearly, and pray for them constantly. Felix sends his love. Trust in God. Love to Kitty, brothers and sisters. Be assured I love you most affectionately. I am, forever, your faithful and affectionate husband, William.¹¹⁰

For a brief time in 1795, Dolly again seemed to be recovering from her mental illness, and, shortly after, she became pregnant with their seventh and final child. Another son was born to the Careys in early 1796, a

healthy boy whom they named Jonathan. But almost immediately after, Dolly's mental health slipped again, followed by a complete break from reality. Dolly experienced frequent delusions, hysterically accusing her husband of having affairs with many women, including Mrs. Thomas and the mission's servants.

Dr. Thomas wrote to the Baptist Missionary Society in London on Carey's behalf: "Mrs. Carey has uttered the most blasphemous and bitter imprecations against him, when Mrs. Thomas and myself were present." He went on to describe times when she threatened Carey's life, and why she had to be confined to her bedroom. A few months after Jonathan's birth, Carey wrote in his journal, "My poor wife must be considered as insane, and is the occasion of great sorrow."

Although few details of Dolly's sickness were ever recorded, it was certainly the darkest place in Carey's life, and it has opened him up to some criticism over the years. At what point did he realize how serious her periods of melancholy were? Did he sacrifice his wife's health in his drive to translate the Bible into so many languages? These questions are not possible to answer, since there are so few diary entries concerning Dolly's illness. But no man who has served the Lord has ever been perfect in his service.

Accused as Spies

William Carey's plan to evangelize India was divided into three parts: preach the gospel of Christ, translate the Bible into as many dialects as possible, and establish schools for biblical and secular training.¹¹¹ This was an impossible task for one man, no matter how driven he was to work day and night. Andrew Fuller understood this, and so he found four men—William Ward, Joshua Marshman, William Gant, and David Brunsdon, along with their families—to send to India in an American ship, the *Criterion*, commanded by Captain Wickes. (Unfortunately, Gant and Brunsdon died of cholera within the first few months of their arrival in India.)

On October 17, 1799, the *Criterion* docked in India with its British cargo and the new missionaries for William Carey's work. To Carey's surprise, he found that the Baptist Missionary Society had not sent two missionaries but eight adults and five children, for whom he would now

be responsible. Carey was especially delighted to hear that William Ward, the printer he had met six years earlier, was among them.

Once again, the British East India Company fought the arrival of these new missionaries. Someone reported that the missionaries were French Papists, and the British government immediately accused them of being French spies! The group fled during the night to Danish-controlled Serampore to escape British capture and prison. There was no way they could join Carey in Mudnabatti; their only option was to stay in Serampore.

Who Likes to Move?

Now Carey faced a difficult decision. Should he stay with his work at the indigo factory and use his printing presses there, or should he move his family once again and set up the mission in Serampore? Carey desperately needed the expertise of William Ward, and he was longing for Christian fellowship. His decision was made, and on January 10, 1800, the Carey family took up residence at Serampore, their final move in India.¹¹²

God's ways are wondrous when we put our trust in Him! What the enemy meant for evil in their flight to Serampore, God meant for good! In His divine providence, He had placed William Carey in the most densely populated area of India, where he could be used mightily by the Lord for the next thirty-four years.

Carey had always envisioned a Christian community of missionary workers. In Serampore, he and his fellow missionaries set up their living quarters in one large house with a chapel in the center and separate family rooms on either side. They made a voluntary agreement that everyone's earnings would be deposited into a common account, and would be used for the mission's needs above anything else. After seven years of lonely labor, Carey saw his vision of a God-honoring mission settlement finally coming to pass.¹¹³

An Unbeatable Team of Firsts

William Ward and Joshua Marshman had been handpicked by the Lord to join Carey's ministry. They would serve beside him and encourage him—as Timothy and Titus blessed Paul in the New Testament—for the next three decades.

William Ward was a kindred spirit who shared Carey's vision for printing Bibles and Christian tracts in as many dialects as possible. He set up the first large printing press in India, and they quickly published, separately, each of the four Gospels in Bengali. Carey planted God's Word by giving away copies of the Gospels to the curious natives.

Ward was also a mentor for Carey's sons. The four boys, ages four to fourteen, would run wild in the mission compound because their father was too busy and their mother was too ill to care for them. Ward and the Marshmans worked together to bring stability to the children's lives. God especially used William Ward in Felix Carey's rebellious young life; Ward taught Felix how to run the printing presses and eventually led him to Christ. Later in life, Felix spoke fondly of his mentor: "How often he has upheld me when my feet well-nigh slipped! He was my spiritual father."

Joshua Marshman was the other spiritual partner in Carey's missionary work. Marshman, Ward, and Carey became known in India, England, and America as the Serampore Triad, because of how well they worked together under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Joshua was gifted in translation work and learned Bengali quickly, so he joined Carey in preaching the gospel.

Marshman and his wife, Hannah, understood the importance of education. Shortly after arriving, they opened two boarding schools for English children and one free school for Indian children. Over the next seventeen years, the Serampore Mission would found more than one hundred schools to educate thousands of English and Indian children throughout India.

Hannah Marshman was officially the first woman missionary to India. She served as a "mother," taking care of mentally ill Dolly and all of the staff working at the Serampore Mission. Along with William Ward, Hannah disciplined and loved the unruly Carey children, and she was loved by everyone who knew her.¹¹⁴

Carey exhorted this team at the beginning of their work together:

Let us often look at David Brainerd in the woods of America, pouring out his very soul before God for the perishing heathen....Prayer, secret, fervent believing prayer, lies at the root of all personal godliness....Let us give ourselves unreservedly to this glorious cause. Let us never

think that our times, our gifts, our strength, our families, or even the clothes we wear are our own. Let us sanctify them all to God and His cause.¹¹⁵

The First Indian Convert

By 1800, Carey had served in India for seven years without a single Indian convert. Carey was not only a man of unfathomable zeal but also one of “unconquerable persistence.” He often referred to himself as a “plodder,” but his companions knew his tenacity brought powerful results.

For seven years, Carey had preached God’s Word to the Indian people and prayed for their salvation. Finally, his prayers were answered. Dr. Thomas, who had returned to work at Serampore, led the mission’s first Indian convert to the Lord.

Krishna Chandra Pal was working near Serampore as a carpenter. One day, while bathing in the nearby river, Krishna Pal slipped, fell, and dislocated his right shoulder. Knowing that Thomas was a medical doctor, he sent to the mission for help. While Thomas took care of his shoulder, he talked to Krishna Pal about the healing of his soul and offered him a tract in Bengali. After the accident, Carey and Thomas often discussed Scriptures with Krishna Pal at the mission.

One morning, Krishna Pal confessed to Dr. Thomas, “I am a great sinner; but I have confessed my sin and I am free!” Rejoicing, Dr. Thomas replied, “Then I call you my brother. Come and let us eat together in love.” This was an unheard-of invitation at the time—a Hindu eating with a non-Hindu would be breaking caste, which was culturally forbidden. The caste system in India did not allow Hindus to mix with members outside of their caste status or with foreigners.¹¹⁶

In the following days, Krishna Pal was attacked by his fellow villagers and accused of being a traitor. Despite the pressure, on December 28, 1800, he was baptized in the Hooghly River, along with Felix Carey.

“Yesterday was a day of great joy,” William recorded. “I had the happiness to baptize the first Hindu, Krishna, and my son Felix. Krishna’s coming forward gave us very great pleasure. We have toiled long, and have met with many discouragements; but, at last, the Lord has appeared for us.”¹¹⁷

Soon after, Krishna Pal led his wife, sister, and four daughters to Christ, followed by his neighbors. Petumber Singh, an educated Hindu, came to Christ and accepted the job of a schoolmaster at the Mission schools.

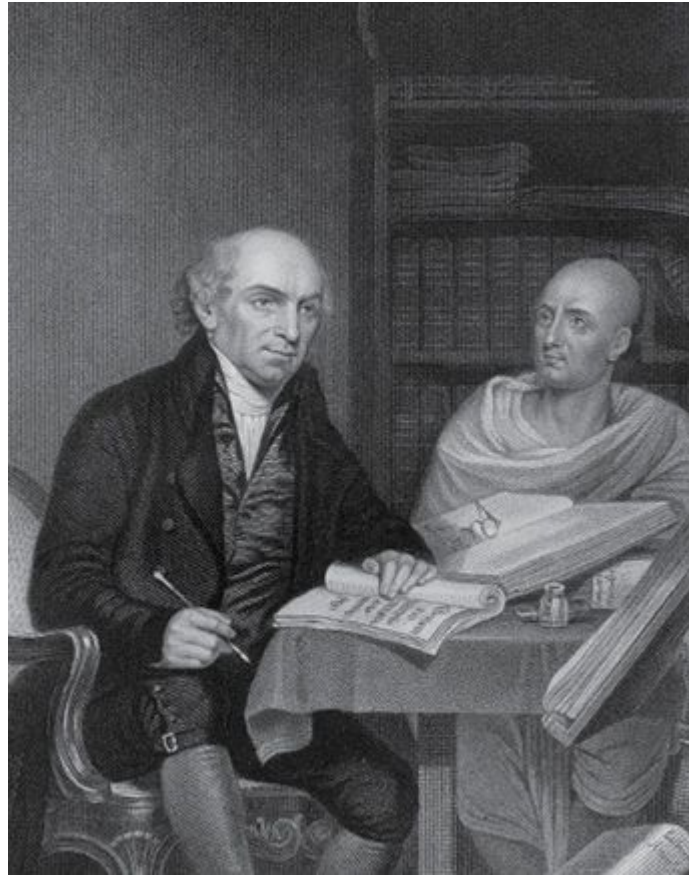
The long-awaited harvest had begun!

The Word of God...in Bengali

March 5, 1801, was a day to remember in Serampore. The complete Bengali New Testament was finally printed and bound in special black leather. This New Testament was the heart of eight years of labor for Carey and months of work from the printing staff. Carey had also learned Sanskrit, the language of the educated people of India. While studying it, Carey said it was “the hardest language in the world.”¹¹⁸ But, before long, he mastered it and then began working on a Sanskrit New Testament.

That same year, Fort William College was founded in nearby Calcutta to train young Englishmen to lead in finance and government. They needed to learn Bengali and Sanskrit to be successful. Who was better equipped to teach them than William Carey? He was the only Englishman fit to be a professor of Bengali and Sanskrit in India.

With no textbooks, Carey wrote a grammar book for both languages to use in the classroom. With little formal education and no college background, Carey was first an instructor, then a professor, and finally dean of the department of native languages in this prestigious British college, where he would work for the next thirty years.



William Carey, engraved by J. Jenkins.¹¹⁹
(Ken Welsh/Bridgeman Art Library)

Carey knew the job was God's provision for his real work: translating the Bible and spreading the Word. With his salary, he purchased additional printing equipment and paper, and he hired workers for the presses. Through the college, Carey also became so well-connected to British leaders that he was allowed greater freedom in his evangelizing and translating work.

Soon after, Carey and Ward wrote and printed the first Bengali dictionary for use by college students and government leaders alike. Within two years of his new position, Carey excitedly wrote to Fuller, "We have opened a place of worship in Calcutta where we preach on Sunday, Wednesday, and Thursday in English and Bengali."¹²⁰ For the next thirty years, Carey spent as much time in Calcutta as he did in Serampore, spreading the gospel of Christ in the bustling Indian city.

In the fall of 1801, Dr. Thomas contracted a raging fever and died on October 13 at forty-four years old. His health had been steadily failing.

In spite of Thomas's difficulties in handling finances, he had been loyal to the missionary vision to the end of his life, and Carey greatly missed his friend.

The Killing Fields of India

Human kindness and social reform were always close to Carey's heart. As a boy, he had secretly cheered for the American colonies to win their freedom from England and refused to pray for an English victory at King George's command. He was outspoken against slavery in the late 1700s, long before it was abolished in England.

Once arriving in India, Carey was sickened by more than one Hindu practice that destroyed innocent lives. Newborn babies were sacrificed to the Ganges River god to bring good luck or to appease the false god's anger. Carey wrote to the British governor-general, Lord Wellesley, pleading for this practice to be put to an end. The decree to ban infanticide was finally written into law in 1802.

Another horrific Hindu custom, called *sati*, or "method of purity," took many more years of prayer, petitions, and pleading before the British governor-general finally banned the practice. Sati was the practice of burning widows alive on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands. According to the Hindu clerics, the widow was promised that "if she will offer herself on the funeral pile, she shall rescue her husband from misery and take him and fourteen generations of his and her family with her to heaven, where she shall enjoy with them celestial happiness."¹²¹

To Carey's horror, the widows agreed to the practice, allowing themselves to be tied down to the funeral pyre and burned along with their husband's corpse. It would take nearly thirty years of outrage and prayer by the Christian missionaries before sati was finally declared illegal in India.

The Gift of Charlotte

After twelve years of suffering from delusional paranoia, Dolly Carey died on December 7, 1807, at fifty-one years of age. Carey wrote a letter to his son Felix, who was, by then, a missionary to Burma:

Your poor mother grew worse and worse from the time you left us, and died on the 7th December about seven o'clock in the evening. During her illness she was almost always asleep, and I suppose during the

fourteen days that she lay in a severe fever she was not more than twenty-four hours awake. She was buried the next day in the missionary burying-ground.¹²²

There are few diary notes on the tragedy of Dolly's final decade and death, or on how William Carey felt at the end of their twenty-six-year marriage. Perhaps the helplessness he felt concerning his wife's illness accounted for his frequent comments on his own unworthiness and his desperate need for the grace of God to complete his mission work.

For some time, the Serampore missionaries had been friends with Charlotte Emilia Rumohr, a Danish countess who lived in the large home next to the mission. She had joyfully witnessed the baptisms of Krishna Pal and Felix, and had then become a supporter of the missionary work. She was a petite, well-educated woman, fluent in seven languages, and had a heart to serve Jesus Christ.

During her teen years, Charlotte had been burned severely in a fire, which had injured her legs. She moved to India with her family in the hopes that the warm climate would bring healing. Although she spent a good bit of the day lying on her couch, she was still a positive influence for Christ to everyone who knew her.

Six months after Dolly's death, in May 1808, Carey and Charlotte were married. They were both forty-six years old at the time. Even though Charlotte had to spend much of her day resting, she was an enormous encouragement to her husband, helping him with his challenging translation work and the growing ministry. Their thirteen years of marriage were happy ones. Carey shared, "We enjoy the most entire oneness of mind. Her solicitude for my health and comfort is unceasing, and we pray and converse together on those things which form the life of personal religion, without the least reserve."¹²³ William Carey had been blessed with his soulmate.

During the years of their marriage, three of Carey's sons, Felix Jr., William, and Jabez, were missionaries in parts of India, Burma, and the Spice Islands. Felix became a skilled medical missionary, as well as a scholar and a printer. The young men had been raised in the gospel's power and went out to successfully continue the work for Christ. Jonathan, Carey's youngest son, chose a law profession instead and worked in the city of Calcutta, not far from the Serampore work.

A Devastating Fire

As William Carey's influence in India grew, new Bible translations rolled fresh off the printing presses, and his successes were reported around the world. In 1807, he was given a Doctor of Divinity degree by Brown University in America. In 1808, the New Testament was published in Sanskrit. In 1809, the entire Bible was published in Bengali. In 1811, New Testaments in Marathi and Punjabi were completed. By 1812, the entire Bible was translated into Sanskrit.

The Serampore team also spent five years, from 1807 to 1812, working on what Carey called *A Universal Dictionary of the Oriental Languages*. Derived from Sanskrit, Carey declared it was to help "biblical students to correct the translation of the Bible in the Oriental languages after we are dead." Seen as an astounding triumph, it was finally ready to go to press.

Then disaster struck! On the evening of March 11, 1812, as William Ward sat at his desk completing the day's work, smoke began to pour from the hall from the south side of the print shop. Quickly, Ward closed all the windows and doors, and he, Joshua Marshman, and the native workers poured water through the roof for four hours until the fire appeared to be out.

Tragically, as Ward and Marshman checked for damages, someone (who was never discovered) opened several windows in the print shop, and the fire blazed back to life, sweeping through every corner of the building.¹²⁴

In the devastating loss, the final draft of the universal dictionary, ten different versions of the Bible, several other manuscripts, and many hand-cut type fonts were completely destroyed. With tears streaming down his face, Carey walked among the ruins with Marshman and Ward.

"In one evening," he said, "the labours of years are consumed. How unsearchable are the ways of God!"¹²⁵ William and Charlotte wept together in anguish over the loss of so many years of work.

Once again, Carey turned to his Savior and left the tragedy in God's hands. He didn't understand, but he trusted the God who was the Author and Finisher of his faith. Fortunately, five printing presses and much of the foundational type had survived. The next day, William gathered his

heartbroken colleagues around him and said, “We must stay the course, trusting God, who has brought us safe thus far. We can rebuild and replace what was lost.”¹²⁶

Famous Around the World!

To William’s astonishment, the Serampore disaster made his mission famous all over Europe and America. When the news of the fire reached Europe, churches throughout the continent prayed for the mission and sent ten thousand pounds to India to fund the replacement of what had been lost. Andrew Fuller had to circulate a letter asking people to stop sending money! Hearing of the mission’s success in the gospel, churches in England and the United States requested a portrait of William Carey to place in their halls in his honor.

And so, in His faithfulness, God used the fire disaster for the good. God doesn’t cause these things to happen, but He is faithful to make good come from there. *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28 nkjv).

As British churches took notice of all that the Serampore mission was accomplishing for Christ in India, they petitioned Parliament to immediately end the East India Company’s ban on missionaries. William Wilberforce, the dynamic force behind the banning of slavery in England, joined the missionary cause. Wilberforce declared that the fight to allow missionaries in British India was “the greatest of all causes, for I really place it even before the abolition, in which, blessed be God, we gained the victory!”¹²⁷

In 1813, the British Parliament amended the charter of the East India Company to allow missionaries to enter the country at will “to promote the happiness of the Indian people.”¹²⁸

Although the cause of the Serampore fire was never discovered, what Satan meant for evil, God used for great good for the Indian people. Within one year of the fire, Carey reported to John Ryland, “Thirteen out of eighteen translations are now in the press, including a third edition of the Bengali New Testament. Indeed, so great is the demand for Bibles that though we have eight presses constantly at work I fear we shall not have a Bengali New Testament to sell or give away for the next twelve months, the old edition being entirely out of print.

“We are going to set up two more presses, which we can get made in Calcutta, and are going to send another to Rangoon. In short, though the publishing of the Word of God is still a political crime here, there never was a time when it was so successful! *‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts’* (Zechariah 4:6).”

Missionary Society Under Attack

With the ban lifted, the Baptist Missionary Society quickly sent additional missionaries to India. The first one to arrive at Serampore, on August 1, 1814, was Eustace Carey, William’s nephew. Several new missionaries followed shortly after, and what should have been a great blessing was turned by Satan into a spiritual disaster.

The new missionaries were eager young men with their own ideas of how to run a Christian mission. Carey was grieved as they impatiently disagreed with the more mature missionaries at every turn, eventually complaining to the missionary board back in England. At one point, they even accused Carey of accumulating personal wealth, although all of the money he had ever received for his work had been deposited into the common mission account.

To make matters worse, in June 1814, Carey’s staunch mission board supporter, John Sutcliff, had died. The following year, Carey’s dearest friend and confidante, Andrew Fuller, became gravely ill and died, as well. The death of Andrew Fuller affected Carey more deeply than any other. For almost a quarter of a century, Fuller had “held the ropes” as he had promised, and there was no other brother in Christ that Carey loved as much.¹²⁹

That year, the leadership of the Baptist Missionary Society passed into the hands of a new generation. Carey had been gone from England for more than twenty years, and most of the new missionary board members had never met him. In an attempt to gain control of its world-famous missionary work, the board issued an order that all of the Serampore mission property must be signed over to their committee at once. Heartsick at this turn of events, Carey quietly refused.

Mission Split

The Serampore Mission had been run by the leading of the Holy Spirit for over two decades. Carey was convinced that it was not God’s will

that it should be run by a committee from the other side of the world. When a new missionary printer, William Pearce, was sent from the Baptist Missionary Society, he and the other young missionaries deserted the Serampore Mission to set up one of their own.

Carey was heartbroken, especially because his nephew, Eustace, was one of the leading dissenters. To Carey's great disappointment, the young men did not venture out to an un-evangelized part of India but remained in the same area, establishing a rival mission in Calcutta, just fourteen miles away. For Carey, this break in Christian fellowship was one of the hardest things he had ever faced. He wrote, "Nothing I ever met with in my life—and I have met with many distressing things—ever preyed so much upon my spirits as this difference has."¹³⁰

Once again, William remained steadfast in his call. The number of Bible translations increased to twenty-five. In 1818, Carey and Marshman introduced the first newspaper ever printed in an Asian language. The Bengali paper was followed by the first English periodical, *Friend of India*, produced by Joshua Marshman and, later, by his son, John. The periodical was written in both English and Bengali and kept the Indian people informed on important spiritual and secular issues. It was published continuously for the next fifty-seven years. The number of Indian schools continued to explode, with more than 126 native schools containing ten thousand boys and girls educated in Serampore and the surrounding districts.

Serampore College Is Founded

With unconquerable persistence, William Carey prayed that God would give him a new vision for India's future. The answer to that prayer was a school of higher education.

In 1818, Carey established Serampore College, the first nondenominational Christian college in India, where natives were educated in math, science, and biblical studies. The graduates shared the gospel *and* became a successful part of India's cultural development.

The Serampore College began with thirty-seven students—nineteen native Christians, and the rest Hindus. Carey wrote to his son William, "I pray that the blessing of God may attend it, and that it may be the means of preparing many for an important situation in the church of God."¹³¹

But the college created a new furor in England! The Baptist Missionary Society refused to financially support a school that was nondenominational and not established under the Baptist name. Fortunately, Christians in England and India rallied around Carey and donated five thousand pounds to the school. The Serampore Mission added four thousand pounds of its own. The main building was constructed, and the college was launched!

Serampore's Danish government was eager to support Carey, and the school became the first degree-awarding college in Asia. By 1829, hundreds of Indian citizens were enrolled in classes where Carey taught divinity, botany, and zoology.

For several years following the school's opening, Carey and the Baptist Missionary Society were at odds. In Carey's final years, however, they reconciled, and he relinquished the Serampore property to the mission board with the understanding that he and Joshua Marshman would live and work there for the rest of their lives.

As a confirmation that this was God's work, Serampore College is still open and graduating Indian students today, nearly two hundred years later!

Losing Loved Ones

By God's grace, even as Carey aged, he led a powerful and productive life. However, the life of a missionary is often challenged by the loss of those he holds dear. From the beginning of 1821, Charlotte's frail health began to decline, and, on May 30, 1821, after a thirteen-year-marriage to William, she went home to the Lord. She had been Carey's dearest love, and he mourned her deeply.

The following year, Felix Carey was diagnosed with liver disease. He had rejoined the Serampore Mission and was working with Ward and the printing presses when he became seriously ill. On November 10, 1822, at age thirty-six, Felix Carey died. Just seven months later, William Ward was struck with cholera and went home to the Lord.

How Carey mourned: "This is to me a most awful and tremendous stroke and I have no way left but that of looking upward for help."

Carey could have quit. He had never taken a sabbatical or gone on furlough in all his years of ministry. Yet spreading the gospel was always

his all-consuming mission in life.

A Thirty-Year Prayer Answered

Following a time of mourning, Carey married again at the age of fifty-nine. His third wife, Grace Hughes, was a forty-five-year-old widow who loved the Lord and faithfully served beside Carey in the ministry. Grace lovingly cared for Carey during their eleven years together.

She celebrated with him when, on December 4, 1829, the British governor-general, Lord Bentinck, signed an order finally declaring the practice of sati illegal throughout India! With tears streaming down his face, Carey read the order in English and then translated it into Bengali at the governor's request. He had fought for and prayed for this edict for *thirty years*! God had been faithful to answer his prayers.

In 1830, India suffered a devastating financial crisis when the banks and holding companies in Calcutta failed. As a result, Fort William College was suddenly closed, and Carey lost his teaching position of thirty years. The financial crisis wiped out all of the Serampore funds as well. Thankfully, with the help of donations, Serampore College remained financially sound, and Carey continued to teach there and to revise the Bengali New Testament once more.

Throughout his years in India, improving the Bengali translation was Carey's dearest project. In June 1832, he completed his last revision of the complete Bible in Bengali. It was his fifth edition of the Old Testament and eighth edition of the New Testament. He walked into the pulpit at the Serampore church with this final edition in his hands and spoke before the congregation, "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*" [Luke 2:29–30].¹³²

"Not the Shadow of a Doubt"

In 1833, at the age of seventy-one, William Carey's health began to fail. In July, he had the first of three strokes, which left him bedridden. Friends and loved ones traveled to visit Carey from across India. His three surviving sons, Jabez and William Jr., both missionaries in India, and Jonathan, an attorney in Calcutta, spent many hours with their father. People flocked to say their good-byes, including the governor-general of India, dignitaries, missionaries, and friends throughout the country.

Carey had become a father to so many who admired him for his unsurpassed dedication and his deep relationship with Christ. Daniel Gogerly, a young English missionary, visited with him and quietly asked Carey the question that lay on his heart:

My dear friend, you evidently are standing on the borders of the eternal world; do not think it wrong, then, if I ask, "What are your feelings in the immediate prospect of death?"

The question roused Carey from his rest, and, opening his eyes, he earnestly replied, "As far as my personal salvation is concerned, I have not the shadow of a doubt; I know in Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day; but when I think that I am about to appear in the presence of a holy God, and remember all my sins and manifold imperfections—I tremble."¹³³

In the last days of Carey's life, a young Scottish missionary, Alexander Duff, came to visit at his bedside. At the end of that visit, Carey left a final word with Duff: "Mr. Duff, you have been saying much about Dr. Carey and his work. After I am gone, please speak not of Dr. Carey, but rather of my wonderful Savior."¹³⁴

Joshua Marshman daily spent time at Carey's bedside. They had served the Lord together for thirty-four years. He was comforted that Carey was peaceful about entering into the joy of the Lord. With a lingering smile, Carey reassured Marshman, "Friend, I have no fears; I have no doubts; I have not a wish left unsatisfied."

"On Thy Kind Arms I Fall"

On Monday morning, June 9, 1834, William Carey went home to the Savior that he had served so faithfully. He had arrived on India's shores at the age of thirty-one, and, he had left at seventy-two. When Marshman reached Carey's room that morning, "he found that he had just entered into the joy of his Lord." His wife, Grace, and son Jabez were with him.¹³⁵

At his request, Carey was buried beside his beloved wife Charlotte. He had a simple headstone to mark his grave with his name, age, and an inscription from an Isaac Watts hymn, "A wretched, poor, and helpless worm / On thy kind arms I fall." To the very last, Carey trustingly placed himself in the charge of a kind and loving Savior.

Three years after Carey's death, Joshua Marshman, the last of the Serampore Triad, passed away. The very day after his funeral, the British Baptist Missionary Society closed the Serampore Mission.¹³⁶ But nothing anyone did could ever diminish the anointing of God that had surrounded Carey's life and fellow missionary workers.

They are inscribed in Christian history as dynamic instruments of the Holy Spirit, opening wide the nation of India to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They set the bar high for future missionaries by creating a Christian environment in which the gospel of Jesus Christ could flourish.

A True Friend of India

William Carey's impact on India was unparalleled in both the spiritual *and* secular world. He was an industrious pioneer in agriculture, horticulture, and education. He founded the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, which later became the model for the Royal Agricultural Society of England. He also introduced India's first steam engine to run his presses.

By establishing the great Mission Press, Carey was the driving force in India's initial printing and publishing industry. Not only did Carey and the Serampore mission team translate and print the first Bengali Bible, but they also established the first Bengali newspaper and periodical. Essentially, they formed the foundation for modern Bengali publishing.



An Indian postage stamp in honor of William Carey.

Carey's unrivaled passion for cultural and social reform ended the horrific practices of infant sacrifice and sati and made the Sanskrit language available to the less-educated members of Indian society.

His Baptist Missionary Society was the model for missionary organizations formed all over Europe and America, including the London, Glasgow, Anglican, and American Baptist unions. Within fifty years of his death, this one ordained English missionary became a band of 20,000 men and women sent out by 558 Christian agencies to lands throughout the world.

By the end of his life, Carey and his team had translated and printed the complete Bible into six languages, and portions of the Bible into twenty-nine additional languages, including Bengali, Hindi, Marharashtra, Sanskrit, Mandarin, Cochin Chinese, Oriya, Telinga, Bhutan, Persian, Malay, Tamil, and Tongkinese.

Throughout his journey with Christ, William Carey never lost his faith. Whether life was heartbreaking or joyful, he had learned as had the apostle Paul, to be content in whatever circumstances he found himself. (See Philippians 4:11–12.) Fulfilling the call on his life and bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to India was the primary purpose of his existence. There was nothing of importance to Carey beyond this call.

Sixty years earlier, because of Carey's daydreams of foreign adventures, he had been nicknamed "Columbus" by his childhood friends.

Little did they imagine that he would become greater than Columbus, a discoverer of worlds which seemed to have eluded the famous Italian, an adventurer who crossed the seas, not seeking to dispossess others of their gold, but to distribute as lavishly as possible "the unsearchable riches of Christ."¹³⁷

*Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.
(Psalm 96:3 nkjv)*

Will you declare the greatness of God among the nations?

Chapter 4

Adoniram Judson

America Sends Her First Missionary

Walking up the icy plank on a winter's day in Salem, Massachusetts, Adoniram Judson boarded the British ship *Packet* bound for England. It was January 1811, and Great Britain was at war with France; but, like many American citizens, Adoniram never gave the war a thought.

Two weeks out to sea, Judson's Bible reading was interrupted by anxious cries: "It's a French privateer! We must outrun her!" In a few short hours, the ship was captured by the French ship *L'Invincible Napoleon*. Judson was immediately taken aboard the new vessel and thrown into the dark, dank hold with the British sailors. The ship tossed harshly in the wintry Atlantic, and the hold was filled with the unbearable smells of sick and unwashed men. Never before had twenty-two-year-old Adoniram experienced such fear and hopelessness. God's training had begun in earnest for his future missionary life.



Adoniram Judson

After several weeks at sea, *L'Invincible Napoleon* docked in Bayonne, France. Adoniram was dragged down the gangplank in irons on his way to prison. Fearing he would never see another day of freedom, he began to shout in English, "This is a mistake! I am an American! I am not British!" Minutes later, a stranger jostled against him and whispered hoarsely, "Lower your voice!"

Hastily Judson explained that he was an American who had been aboard a British ship captured by the French. The stranger, an American officer from Philadelphia, promised a way of escape but warned, "You had better go on your way quietly now."

The French prison was underground, dark, and dismal. Adoniram was revolted by the vermin-covered straw spread over the damp floor. He paced for hours, wondering if his rescuer would ever come. As he leaned against a column to rest, the cell door swung open, and in walked the American officer in a black, floor-length military cloak; he never once looked in Judson's direction.

Suppressing a cry of joy, Adoniram pretended to be indifferent to the entire scene. As the American sauntered past the column, he swung his great military cloak around Judson, whose slender figure was almost lost in the folds. Judson crouched as low as possible while walking awkwardly ahead. How would they ever get past the guard? Then he heard the jingling of silver coins; the American officer wisely slid silver into the jailer's hand as they walked through the open gate.

Once the heavy metal doors clanged shut behind them, the American cried, "Now, run!" The men raced through the city to the wharves and onto an American merchant ship, where Judson shed tears of relief.¹³⁸

For the first time in his life, Adoniram Judson had experienced the despair of captivity and the glory of freedom; but it wouldn't be the last time, for he consecrated his life to serving the Lord on hostile foreign soil.

Devoted for Life!

"The motto of every missionary, whether preacher, printer, or schoolmaster ought to be 'Devoted for life!'"

—Adoniram Judson

As a brilliant scholar in the early nineteenth century, Adoniram Judson seemed destined for a prestigious career as a United States statesman. Instead, for the love of Christ, Judson renounced worldly success and surrendered all that he had—his academic standing, his fame, his earthly possessions, and his precious family—to spend thirty-eight years sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the people of Burma (present-day Myanmar, located just east of India). Adoniram became “the father of American missions,” the first American citizen to become a foreign missionary.

“Devoted for life” was the cry of Judson’s heart. To the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century missionaries, this devotion meant spending the rest of one’s life ministering the gospel in a foreign country, sometimes without a single furlough home. There were no short-term missions for these men and women. This was the description of Judson’s heart for ministry.

Judson’s vision was to translate the Bible directly from the Hebrew and Greek into the Burmese language. He knew that there was no greater hope for the Burmese people than having the Word of God in their hands. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, he worked on the translation for twenty-eight years, using such precision that his translation is still used in Myanmar today.

During his tireless ministry in Burma, Judson experienced both the *triumph* and the *tragedy* of mission life: he saw thousands of lives transformed in Christ yet faced years of persecution, imprisonment, and family tragedy. Not all missionaries are called to make the sacrifices that Adoniram made in Burma, suffering much for the cause of Christ. But Judson was an overcomer. “*And they overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death*” (Revelation 12:11). Never giving up the “fight of faith,” he was known for his famous quote “The future is as bright as the promises of God!” An uncompromising disciple of Jesus Christ, Adoniram has earned a compelling place as one of God’s missionary generals.

At the Birth of a Nation

Adoniram Judson came into the world during the birth of a nation. On August 9, 1788, the same year that the Constitution of the United States was ratified, Adoniram was born in the small town of Malden, Massachusetts. His father, Adoniram Sr., was a thirty-six-year-old Congregational pastor who had married young Abigail Brown just two years earlier. Adoniram Jr. was the eldest of four children; he had two sisters, Abigail and Mary (who died as an infant), and a brother, Elnathan.

It was obvious from a very early age that Adoniram was a gifted child. When he was just three years old, his mother taught him to read while his father was away on a preaching tour. Imagine his father's surprise when Adoniram read an entire chapter of the Bible aloud when he returned home! The senior Judson was a stern man who required obedience in his household, but he was proud that his namesake was brilliant at such a young age.

It is important to recognize the power of parents in developing the gift of a child. Today people talk about a "village" raising a child; they want the church, the school, or even the television to do it. Yet the Bible speaks in more than one place of the parents' role: "*For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just*" (Genesis 18:19 niv). The role of the parent is to give a child a foundation for his character and to help him to develop his gifts. Judson's parents recognized this truth.

"Old Virgil—Academic Genius"

By the time Adoniram was ten years old, he had read most of the books in his father's library and gained a growing reputation in academics, especially in mathematics. His father enrolled him in Captain Morton's College of Navigation in Wenham, where Adoniram advanced quickly and became so accomplished in his Greek studies that his classmates nicknamed him "Old Virgil" in honor of the ancient Greek scholar. His father was increasingly proud and often boasted, "Son, you will be a great man someday!"

At sixteen, living with his family, now in Plymouth, Massachusetts, Adoniram was accepted to Rhode Island College (later renamed Brown University) in Providence, Rhode Island. Although most New England

Congregationalists attended Harvard or Yale, by 1804, those schools had strayed from conservative biblical teaching and were steeped in Deism and the French Enlightenment.

Deism is the belief that there is a creator but that he never intervenes in human affairs. It was almost as if they were saying, “God made you, and then He went on vacation!”

The Enlightenment introduced the philosophy that man didn’t need God or institutionalized religion. He was a “freethinker” who had the ability to reason about the deep things of life for himself. The freethinkers challenged the legitimacy of the Bible as the Word of God and rejected all miracles, choosing *reason* in place of *revelation*. This errant teaching led the young college students far from their Christian roots.

Adoniram was an ambitious student who was able to skip his freshman year and enter Rhode Island College as a sophomore. He worked doggedly, resolved to become the great man that his father expected him to be. For three years, Adoniram’s foremost goal was to graduate as the valedictorian of his class. As soon as he learned that he had attained this high honor, he sent a note to his proud father, saying, “Dear father, I have got it! Your affectionate son, A. J.”¹³⁹ Unfortunately, unknown to Adoniram Sr., young Judson had learned more than advanced academics at school. The heresies of the Enlightenment were not just running rampant at Yale and Harvard; they had seeped into Rhode Island College, as well.

“I Don’t Believe in Your God!”

Jacob Eames was Adoniram’s closest friend, an intelligent and polished student who was a confirmed Deist. They developed a strong friendship and spent hours discussing how they would make their marks on the world. They could become lawyers, politicians, or playwrights—there was no limit to where their talents could take them! By the time they parted company at Adoniram’s graduation in September 1807, Judson no longer believed in the God of his parents; he was a confirmed Deist, too.

After returning home to Plymouth, Adoniram opened a private school for young girls, Plymouth Independent Academy, where he taught for a year and published two textbooks: *The Elements of English Grammar*

and *The Young Lady's Arithmetic*. But he was restless; it was time to launch on a “personal discovery tour.”

Arguing with his parents over his plan to leave, Adoniram's anger seethed until he finally shouted, “Stop! I don't want to be a teacher or a pastor! I don't believe in heaven or hell or your God! I am a Deist!”¹⁴⁰ Silence followed. Adoniram Sr. was stunned and became furious. How could his successful son, the apple of his eye, turn his back on his Christian faith? Using Scriptures, he reasoned with his unyielding son for hours. “Point by point, the intellectual Adoniram demolished every thesis his father set out to prove.”¹⁴¹ His mother and sister wept bitterly; they prayed and pleaded with him, but to no avail.

Saddling his horse, Judson first rode to Albany to see the latest “wonder of the world,” Robert Fulton's newly invented steamboat, the *Clermont*. He embarked on the *Clermont* and traveled to New York City, where he joined a group of young actors to experience theater life as an actor and a playwright. But the actors were just delinquents with little income and, within weeks, “living a reckless, vagabond life” had lost its glamour; Judson turned his horse toward the west to continue his journey.

Lost and Dead

Soon after, Adoniram stopped at a country inn for the night. The landlord led him to a room. “I am sorry,” he said, “but all I have left is this room next door to a young man who is deathly ill.”

“It is no matter,” Judson replied. “I will have no trouble sleeping.” But he was wrong!

Throughout the long night, Adoniram tossed on his hard cot, listening to the young man's desperate groans and his caretakers' hasty footsteps. Adoniram was tortured by thoughts of the dying young man. *Am I prepared to die?* he wondered. Immediately, Adoniram felt ashamed of himself. What would the clearheaded, witty Jacob Eames say to his weakness?

Still, Judson couldn't help himself. *Was the dying man a Christian? Did he have a praying mother at home?* Thankfully, the biblical words sown in him by his parents were still at work. It is a good reminder: plant the Word in the heart of your children and loved ones. If they go

astray for a time, don't be discouraged; the Word of God still resides in their hearts. (See Proverbs 22:6.)

Finally, at four in the morning, the room next door to Judson's became eerily quiet, and he drifted off to sleep. With the sunshine of morning, Adoniram felt embarrassed about his "superstitious illusions" of the night before. As soon as he had dressed, he went in search of the landlord.

"How is my ill neighbor this morning?" he inquired. "He is dead, I'm afraid" was his sad reply.

"Do you know who he was?" Judson questioned warily.

"Why yes; he was a young man from Rhode Island College—a very fine fellow—his name was Jacob Eames."¹⁴²



Judson was stunned! *Jacob!* Those dying groans had come from Jacob! Adoniram had been lying just a few feet away as his friend perished! For hours, Adoniram sat in the inn, overwhelmed with grief and confusion; he mounted his horse unsure of where to go next. "Jacob was lost in death!" The single thought occupied his mind, and the words *Dead! Lost! Lost!* continually rang in his ears. In his heart, Adoniram knew that salvation in Christ was true. In despair, he turned his horse toward Plymouth and home.

A Not-So-Dramatic Conversion

Adoniram arrived at his parents' home in Plymouth on September 22, 1808. He had experienced so much disillusionment in just six weeks of travel. He wept bitterly as he recounted Eames's death and his own fear and confusion. Adoniram and Abigail welcomed their son home with tender embraces and forgiveness.

Within a few weeks, even though he was still uncertain what he believed, Adoniram was invited to enroll in Andover Theological Seminary, where he could closely study the Bible and renew his faith. He immersed himself in the Word and biblical teachings, and, steadily, his doubts and questions began to fade away. “While I had no sudden lightning conversion,” he wrote, “I began to entertain a hope of having received the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit continued to draw Adoniram to Christ. On December 2, 1808, “he made a solemn and complete dedication of himself to God.”¹⁴³ From that moment, he never turned back.

Following the Eastern Star

A year passed at Andover. Judson began to ask himself, *How shall I so order my future as best to please God?*¹⁴⁴ He came across a sermon entitled “The Star in the East” by Dr. Claudius Buchanan, a chaplain of the British East India Company. The message was based on Matthew 2:2: “*For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*” Buchanan shared his personal experiences of the power of the gospel to change lives in Asia. His sermon “fell like a spark into the tinder of Judson’s soul.”

Within a short time, Adoniram had made his decision. “It was during a solitary walk in the woods behind the college, while meditating and praying on the subject,...that the command of Christ, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,’ was presented to my mind with such clearness and power, that I came to a full decision,... resolved to obey the command at all events.”¹⁴⁵ Somehow, Adoniram Judson would bring the message of Christ to the lost in Asia!

The Haystack Missionaries

Just as the missionary call was emblazoned on Adoniram’s soul, four young men from Williams College in Massachusetts enrolled at Andover Seminary. They shared the story of their missionary call in connection with the “Haystack Prayer Meeting.”

Four years earlier, on the campus of Williams College, Samuel J. Mills, Harvey Loomis, James Richards, Francis Robbins, and Byram Green had gathered outdoors in Sloan’s Meadow for their weekly prayer meeting. When a sudden rainstorm split open the skies, the students fled for shelter under a nearby haystack. Huddled together, they began

talking and praying about their growing desire to bring Christ to foreign nations by founding an American missionary movement focused on eastern Asia.



Haystack Monument in Mission Park at Williams College.

That Saturday afternoon in August 1806, under the leadership of Samuel Mills, the young men consecrated themselves “to send the gospel to the lost of Asia.” They named their student missionary group “The Society of the Brethren.” Soon, other students from Williams College joined their ranks. Today, in Williamstown, Massachusetts, on the exact spot of that decision to launch American missions, stands the famous Haystack Monument, commemorating that momentous decision.

“I Have Much Farther to Go”

God’s timing is never a coincidence. In 1810, while Adoniram was still a Bible student, several of “the brethren” from Williams College arrived at Andover Seminary full of excitement about God’s call to become American missionaries. Adoniram quickly formed a bond with the men: Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, Gordon Hall, and Samuel J. Mills. As they began to quietly plan what they hoped would become the first American missionary society, Judson was unanimously selected as their missionary candidate.

But, as Adoniram’s graduation was quickly approaching, his parents had different expectations for their brilliant son. The tension grew when he was offered a prestigious Congregational position: assistant pastor of the Park Street Church, under the Reverend Edward Griffin, the first pastor of the now historic Boston church. This was quite an honor for the seminary graduate. Park Street Church had the fastest-growing congregation in Boston at the time and was influential in the nation’s political and social affairs as well. Just a few years later, the head pastor

was Edward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The church became an early birthplace of the abolitionist movement in America.

Ecstatic over the news of Adoniram's job offer, his father swelled with pride, and his mother embraced him exuberantly, saying, "Adoniram, you will be so near home!"

"No!" came Adoniram's swift reply. "Mother, I shall never live in Boston! I have much farther than that to go." Once again, the senior Judson was shocked by his son's plans. His ambitions for Adoniram to be an influential man in the fledgling nation were overthrown. Adoniram's mother and sister broke down in sobs of fear and grief.

But he was convinced that his life and intellectual gifts would not be wasted doing missionary work. As one biographer noted, "It is a mistake to suppose that a dull and second-rate man is good enough for the heathen. The worst-off need the very best we have. God gave His best, even His only-begotten Son, in order to redeem a lost world. Christianity will advance over the earth with long, swift strides when the churches are ready to send their best men, and the best men are ready to go."¹⁴⁶ Judson was ready to go, but how would he get there?

America's First Missionary Society

The young missionary hopefuls wrote a proposal to the Congregational Board of Ministers in Boston with their vision for an American missionary society. Adoniram stood before the board and read in a clear, commanding voice that "they considered themselves as *devoted* to this work *for life*, whenever God, in His providence, shall open the way." It was signed by Adoniram Judson Jr., Samuel Nott Jr., Samuel J. Mills, and Samuel Newell. (The names of Luther Rice, Gordon Hall, and James Richards were added later.)¹⁴⁷

The General Association held a follow-up meeting in Bradford, Massachusetts, and the decision to form the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was unanimous. American missionary work overseas would finally become a reality!

Enthralled by the events taking place right before their eyes, the young men accepted an invitation for lunch at the home of John Hasseltine, a Congregational deacon. Seated at the table, engrossed in their missionary

plans, Adoniram's attention was drawn to the lovely face and wavy black hair of Hasseltine's youngest daughter, Ann. His heart skipped a beat as Ann served his food while laughingly catching his eye. In that brief moment, Adoniram's life was changed forever.

Caught His Eye

Ann "Nancy" Hasseltine was born in Bradford, Massachusetts on December 22, 1789. She was the youngest of five children and a lively little girl who grew to be a young woman more interested in parties than in God. Her parents' home had a large ballroom, and Ann was a natural hostess with a fondness for social gatherings and laughter.

At sixteen, Ann's life changed. "I began to discover a beauty in the way of salvation by Christ. He appeared to be just such a Saviour as I needed. I committed my soul into His hands."¹⁴⁸ Now, at twenty years old, Ann—or, Nancy, as many friends called her—was teaching school, pouring her love of life and of Christ into her students. Her personality was very different from Adoniram's intense, intellectual manner, but Adoniram Judson loved Ann Hasseltine at first sight.

A Shocking Letter

After a brief courtship of Ann, Adoniram sent a letter to her father asking his permission to marry her. The courageous young man painted a clear picture of future missionary dangers:

I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to perhaps see her no more in this world? whether you can consent to her departure to a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life? whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death? Can you consent to all this, for the sake of Him who left His heavenly home and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion and the glory of God?"¹⁴⁹

The letter caused John Hasseltine and his wife, Rebecca, great pain, but Hasseltine gave his consent. Ann was always a woman of courage and determination. She confided to a friend,

I feel willing and expect to spend my days in this world in heathen lands. I have come to the determination to give up all my comforts and enjoyments here and go where God, in His providence, shall see fit to send me....He has my heart in His hands, and when I am called to face danger, He can inspire me with fortitude, and enable me to trust in him. Jesus is faithful; his promises are precious.¹⁵⁰

A Momentous Decision

Before the marriage could take place, Adoniram was sent to London to ask the London Missionary Board to partner with the new American Missionary Board. It was then that he was captured by the *L'Invincible Napoleon* and taken to France, then set free by his American military rescuer. His meeting with the London Missionary Board was not successful.

On September 18, 1811, the American Missionary Board made a momentous decision. It would formally appoint Adoniram Judson Jr., Samuel Nott Jr., Samuel Newell, Gordon Hall, and Luther Rice as the first American missionaries to eastern Asia. The American missionary movement was born!

That year, Adoniram wrote to Ann with high hopes for their future. "May this be the year in which you will change your name; in which you will take a final leave of your relatives and native land; in which you will cross the wide ocean, and dwell on the other side of the world, among a heathen people. What a great change will this year probably effect in our lives!"¹⁵¹

Married, Anointed, and Sent

As 1812 began, Massachusetts was bursting with rumors of war between England and the United States. The young missionaries were determined to set sail before a naval conflict would put a stop to all sea travel.

On February 3, 1812, Adoniram said his final good-byes to his family in Plymouth. The rest of the month was a blur of activity. On February 5, Adoniram and Ann were married by Parson Allen in her home in Bradford. The next day, he and the other young missionaries were ordained in Salem.

On February 19, 1812, an icy, windy day in New England, Adoniram and Ann set sail aboard the brig *Caravan*, destined for Calcutta, India, along with Samuel Newell and his new bride Harriet Atwood. Harriet had just turned seventeen and was a frail young woman; she and Ann were childhood friends and were facing the future missionary life together. Samuel and Roxana Nott, Gordon Hall, and Luther Rice followed a few days later on the sailing ship *Harmony*.

The Water Baptism Controversy

Through the long sea voyage, Adoniram had much on his mind. When men and women came to Christ in foreign lands, they would be water baptized into their faith. But should he baptize their children as well? Was infant baptism truly the right answer according to the Bible?

Judson was also thinking of his upcoming meeting with William Carey and his fellow Baptists in Calcutta. With his usual intensity, Adoniram immersed himself in studying every Bible reference to water baptism. At one point, he told Ann, “Baptism is always linked with believing. I am afraid the Baptists may be in the right!”¹⁵² Slowly and quietly, Judson became convinced that baptism by immersion was for the believer. But leaving the doctrine of infant baptism meant leaving the support of the Congregational Mission Board, as well. It was a frightening prospect.

Ann was confused by Adoniram’s growing conviction, so he wrote her a simple letter, addressing it to her pet name, “Nancy.” “Thus, my dear Nancy, we are confirmed Baptists, not because we wish to be, but because truth compels us to be.”¹⁵³ Adoniram and Ann kept quiet about his changing doctrine during the voyage while he prayed for God’s leading.

Advice: “Forget Burma!”

After four months at sea, the Judsons and Newells arrived in Calcutta, India, on June 18, 1812, and traveled up the Hooghly River, just as William Carey had done twenty years earlier. Ann described her first sight of foreign soil: “I have never witnessed nor read anything so delightful as the present scene. This city is by far the most elegant that I have ever seen.”¹⁵⁴

Unfortunately, the East India Company was not happy to see them. The Judsons met with the same harsh treatment that Carey had years

earlier. As soon as they arrived, the missionaries were required to check in at the local police station and were bluntly told that they could not stay in India.

What a sharp contrast to the warm welcome they received from William Carey, who met them in Calcutta and invited them to stay in beautiful Serampore until the *Harmony* arrived and the missionaries could make their future plans.

Adoniram had felt a call to Burma ever since reading Michael Syme's book *Embassy to Ava* while in Andover. However, when he spoke about his desire to go to Burma, the missionaries in Calcutta responded with a unanimous cry, "*Forget Burma!*" The nation of Burma was ruled by a despotic emperor who hated Western culture. Beheadings and crucifixions were common punishments for small crimes. Although William Carey's oldest son, Felix, had founded a mission station there, he'd had no missionary success. The cry "*Forget Burma!*" continually echoed in Adoniram's ears!¹⁵⁵

Cast Out of India

While in Serampore, the Judsons and Newells received an order from Calcutta. "You must return to America aboard the *Caravan!*" the British commanded. With the help of Joshua Marshman of Serampore, the American missionaries received permission to sail for the Isle of France (present-day Mauritius) instead. The first ship available, the *Colonel Gillespie*, could take only two passengers. The Newells would be the first to leave since Harriet was expecting their first child.

Four days after the Newells' departure, the *Harmony* finally arrived in Calcutta with Hall, Rice, and the Notts on board. It was a happy reunion after seven months of separation, but the merriment soon turned to concern. Adoniram finally confessed his conviction concerning water baptism. By this time, after studying the Scriptures, Ann supported her husband's decision. Hall and Nott were shocked.

"But Adoniram," they protested, "this will mean an end to our mission together! We cannot run a unified mission with two conflicting denominations. And your financial support from the American Board will cease." Only Luther Rice remained oddly silent during the heated discussions. Ann was terrified; she had never considered sacrificing their mission together while so far from home.

Adoniram was resolute. It was God's Word; he must be baptized and become a Baptist. After writing a letter to Serampore with his desire for baptism by immersion, he and Ann were baptized by William Ward in Calcutta on September 6, 1812. Two months later, Luther Rice was also immersed in baptism. John Marshman wrote to several Baptist ministers in Boston with the exciting news: "There are now three American Baptists on the missionary field!" Soon after, the American Baptist Missionary Union was born.

What a blessing resulted from the missionary passion of a handful of Andover students. Their desire to send American missionaries to the foreign field resulted in two societies: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Baptist Missionary Union—the first, an outreach of the Congregational Church, the other, an outreach of the Baptists of America. The message of Jesus Christ was spreading across the globe.

A Tragic Loss

Saddened by the change of circumstances, Samuel and Roxana Nott and Gordon Hall left Calcutta to begin a mission work in Ceylon. The Judsons and Rice stayed behind. Losing all patience with the missionary "intruders," the East India Company ordered them to immediately board a ship bound for England.

Desperately searching for another possibility, the Judsons found *La Belle Creole* about to sail for the Isle of France. Adoniram secretly approached the captain of the *Creole*. "Will you take us on board without a passport?" he inquired hopefully. "Yes!" the captain answered. "There is my ship; you can go on board if you please!"

The Judsons and Rice hurried aboard. Ann could hardly wait to be reunited with Harriet and see the new baby. But when they reached the Isle of France, they were met with horrifying news! Harriet's baby girl had been born during a terrible storm at sea; both mother and child had caught pneumonia, and the baby had died just five days later. After landing, Harriet had succumbed to her fever as well and passed away. Devastated, Samuel Newell left the Isle of France to join the Notts' mission in Ceylon.

"We Shall Go to Rangoon!"

Where would Adoniram and Ann go? Luther Rice, already fighting health problems, decided to sail back to America. He pledged to the Judsons that he would not desert their missionary work; his role would be to travel to the American Baptist churches and raise money and missionaries for their work in Asia.

Desperate to find a place to start their missionary enterprise, Adoniram searched for a ship leaving the Isle of France immediately; he found one—the creaky old *Georgiana*, bound for Rangoon (Yangon), Burma! Secretly, Adoniram had never given up the idea of Burma. On June 22, 1813, a year after their arrival in Calcutta, Adoniram and Ann were bound for the port of Rangoon on Burma’s southern coast.

Standing on the deck of the *Georgiana* as she slipped out to sea, Adoniram couldn’t help but rejoice! This was the opportunity he had been waiting for! He wrote later, “Dissuaded by all our friends against Burma, we commended ourselves to God.” He had little idea of the trials and triumphs that awaited them.

The *Georgiana* was a small vessel, and it was a difficult voyage, especially for Ann, who was eight months pregnant. During a raging storm at sea, she went into premature labor and gave birth to a stillborn son. Cold and seasick, the grieving parents turned to the Lord for their hope. After a treacherous three-week voyage, on July 13, 1813, the Judsons stepped ashore at Burman—the country that would become their home for life.

The American Baptist Society Is Born

Curious onlookers lined the docks—women dressed in bright tunics, and little children, naked and smoking small cigars—all fussing over Ann, the first white woman to visit Rangoon.¹⁵⁶ Adoniram and Ann were taken by bamboo chair to Felix Carey’s mission house. Shyly opening the mission door at their knock, Felix’s young Portuguese wife welcomed the Judsons warmly into their home. A medical missionary, Felix had traveled to Ava, the capital, to vaccinate the royal family against smallpox.

Within a few weeks, Felix made a decision to leave the mission for good with his family and accept a position in Emperor Bodawpaya’s royal government. The Judsons, who knew nothing of the Burmese language and culture, were sad to see them go. Tragically, while the

Careys were traveling up the Irrawaddy River on their way to Ava, their boat capsized, and Felix's wife and children drowned. In a fog of grief, Felix roamed the countries of southern Asia for several years before returning to his father's ministry in Serampore.

The Judsons ministered alone for the next three years. In the meantime, Luther Rice returned to America and traveled extensively, telling the thrilling story of the pioneer missionaries. Adoniram wrote a letter to Luther that November, encouraging him to choose missionaries for Burma with great care: "Choose men with some natural aptitude to acquire a language; men who live near to God and are willing to suffer all things for Christ's sake, without being proud of it."¹⁵⁷

The Baptists in Boston were invigorated by the news of the Judsons' arrival in Burma and immediately organized the Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel in India and Other Foreign Parts.¹⁵⁸ Southern and western Baptist churches soon joined them, and missions became the rallying point for the fledgling Baptist denomination; its members became dedicated to spreading the gospel around the globe.

Burma and the "Golden Face"

Ann was enchanted with the beauty of Burma. They were surrounded by a colorful landscape, lush vegetation, and gently rolling hills. But the city of Rangoon was dirty and impoverished. Rangoon's highlight was the Shwedagon Pagoda, the most sacred of the Buddhist temples, with its gold-plated spire that towered above the city.

Just as the Calcutta missionaries had warned, Burma was led by a tyrannical emperor who was referred to as "The Golden One" or "The Golden Face." He ruled with an iron hand, and the people lived in fear of his displeasure.

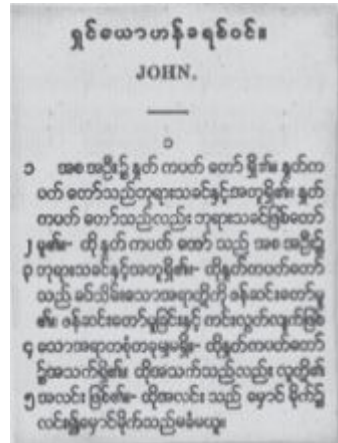
Buddhism was the only religion allowed. To the Buddhists, there is no god or supreme being; there is no human soul to be forgiven or saved. Buddhists believe in the continuous life cycles of birth, death, and rebirth as they progress from lower life forms to human beings. In this country that knew nothing of Christ and His sacrifice for mankind, Adoniram and Ann Judson stood alone as beacons of light.

Just Go Out and Speak

“My only object at present,” Judson wrote to Luther Rice, “is to prosecute, in a still, quiet manner, the study of the language, trusting that for all the future ‘God will provide.’”¹⁵⁹ Conquering the Burmese language, with its series of half circles and small curlicues, was the only hope of reaching millions of lost natives with the gospel. Working for hours each day, Adoniram became an expert on the technical knowledge of the language.

Ann’s role, on the other hand, was to become acquainted with her new countrymen. Just as she had in America, Ann exercised her gift of hospitality in Burma. She ran the house, directed the servants, went to the market to purchase food, and visited with the wife of the viceroy; as a result, she became more fluent in understanding and speaking the Burmese of the common citizen. Both of the Judsons went out and did what they needed to do; they hit the ground running.

“I am frequently obliged to speak Burman all day,” Ann wrote home. “I can talk and understand others better than Mr. Judson, though he knows more about the nature and construction of the language.”



An image from the Burmese Judson translation of the book of John.

On December 11, 1813, she recorded, “Today, for the first time, I have visited the wife of the viceroy. She received me very politely, took me by the hand, seated me upon a mat, and herself by me. She was very inquisitive whether I had a husband and children and whether I was my husband’s first wife—meaning by this, whether I was the highest among them!”¹⁶⁰

Ann had no way of knowing that her warm relationships with the Burmese officials would save them from death in the years ahead.

The Birth of “Sweet” Roger Williams Judson

The next two years were filled with busy Burmese life and the happy news that the Judsons were expecting their second child. On September 11, 1815, with only Adoniram to help with the delivery, Ann gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Overjoyed, they named him Roger Williams Judson, in honor of colonist Roger Williams, the American Baptist who founded Rhode Island as a colony of true religious freedom.

Baby Roger was a continual blessing to his parents, a sweet, smiling, alert, blue-eyed boy. As he grew, he was happiest when he was in the same room with his father as he worked. During this time, Adoniram wrote home, “Thanks be to God, not only for ‘rivers of endless joys above, but for ‘rills of comfort here below.’”

But in the spring of 1816, baby Roger developed a fever and a cough that seemed to worsen with each passing day. Without any medical assistance, Ann and Adoniram cared for him as best they could. But on May 4, 1816, baby Roger closed his eyes and died in his sleep at just seven and a half months old.

Adoniram and Ann were gripped with grief, especially being so far from family and friends. It was the viceroy’s wife who reached out to them and showered them with sympathy during this painful time.

Help from William Carey

On July 13, 1816, three years after their arrival in Burma, Adoniram completed a book on Burmese grammar. Two weeks later, his first Burmese tract, *A View of the Christian Religion*, was completed as well. Now, how to have them printed?

The Burmese loved literature and were waiting to read about this Jesus who was called “the Son of God.” Then Adoniram received a gift—a printing press and Burmese typeface sent by William Carey. He wrote to the society at home: “It is with great pleasure that we announce the valuable present of a press and Burman types, made to us by the Serampore brethren.”¹⁶¹

To make the blessing complete, the American Baptists sent a missionary printer, George Hough, who arrived with his family in the

fall of 1816. Within a few weeks, one thousand copies of Judson's first tract and three thousand copies of a Burmese catechism written by Ann were published and distributed throughout Rangoon. Immediately, the inquisitive Burmans came to the mission house clamoring for more. The message of Christ was finally being heard!

It is hard to overemphasize the importance of the written word to the gospel missionary. If I hand out a gospel tract while ministering in the Philippines today, the people there will treasure it. I have watched young men sit down on the curb to read it the very moment they receive it. In Western nations, we do not value gospel material as we should; it has become too common to us and has lost its preciousness to our hearts and minds.

"Of how much real happiness we cheat our souls by preferring a trifle to God!" Adoniram proclaimed.

Telling the "Christ Story"

"Ho! Everyone that thirsteth for knowledge come in here!" These words of encouragement rang from Adoniram's lips as he sat beside the road in Rangoon. He and a newly arrived Baptist missionary, James Colman, had built a Burmese *zayat*, or open-air chapel, where religious and political men gathered to share their ideas. Adoniram would sit under the *zayat* all day, calling out in Burmese fashion to passersby, welcoming any who would stop and listen to him as he preached the gospel of redeeming grace.

On April 4, 1819, six years after arriving in Rangoon, Judson conducted the first public Christian service in the *zayat*. Years later, his son Edward would write, "To Adoniram Judson, the most important work was the oral preaching of the gospel—this was his first love."

Moung Nau was a young Burmese man who came to that first service and listened with an open heart to the Christian message.

"I think that the grace of God has reached Moung Nau's heart," Judson joyously recorded on May 5. "He expresses repentance for his sins, and faith in the Saviour. He professes that from the darkness and sins of his whole life, he has found no other Saviour but Jesus Christ; and he proposes to adhere to Christ, and worship Him all his life long....Praise and glory be to His name forevermore! Amen."¹⁶²

A Trophy of Victorious Grace

The Spirit of God was moving among the people of Rangoon. Six long years of planting and watering for Adoniram and Ann, but the seed of Christ's sacrifice had finally taken root!

Several more young men joined Adoniram and MOUNG NAU in their Bible discussions. Judson sent for five thousand copies of his tract to be printed by the Houghs, who had temporarily moved to Serampore. Hundreds of curious Burmese clamored for new tracts every day.

On Sunday, June 27, 1819, the first Burmese converts to Christianity were baptized—MOUNG NAU, MOUNG BYAA, and MOUNG THAHLAH. (*MOUNG* is “young man” in Burmese.) That evening, in the mission house, Adoniram and Ann rejoiced with “joy unspeakable and full of glory!”

“This event,” Ann wrote in her journal, “this single trophy of victorious grace, has filled our hearts with sensations hardly to be conceived by Christians in Christian countries. This event has convinced us that God can and does operate on the minds of the ignorant with the truth of His own Word!”¹⁶³

Appeal to the “Golden Face”

No sooner were the baptisms held than the black clouds of persecution appeared on the horizon. Fearing retaliation from the government for this public display of Christianity, the once-curious Burmese began to avoid Adoniram and the new converts.

Judson was determined to end their fear. “I’m going to travel to the capital to see the Golden Face himself,” he told Ann, speaking of the Burman emperor. Only a few European men had ever been in the “Golden Presence.” The old emperor had recently died and his grandson, Emperor BAGYIDAW, had assumed the throne after a bloodbath that had taken the lives of thousands. It was this cruel man that Adoniram was determined to face.

“Our business must be laid before the emperor,” Adoniram wrote home. “If he frowns upon us, all missionary attempts within his dominions will be out of the question. If he favors us, none of our enemies can touch a hair of our heads. But there is One greater than the emperor, before whose throne we desire daily and constantly to lay this

business. O Lord Jesus, look upon us in our low estate, and guide us in our dangerous course!”¹⁶⁴

In late December 1819, Judson and Colman traveled the treacherous 350 miles up the Irrawaddy River to Ava, where they petitioned the governor’s office for an audience with the emperor “to behold the Golden Face.” The night before, Judson solemnly recorded, “Tomorrow’s dawn will usher in the most eventful day of our lives. Tomorrow’s eve will close on the bloom or the blight of our fondest hopes. Yet it is consoling to commit this business into the hands of our heavenly Father—to feel that the work is His, not ours.”¹⁶⁵

“Our Fate Was Decided”

The Golden Palace appeared to be on fire! As Adoniram and Colman approached the capital, the palace’s golden dome appeared ablaze from the sun’s glistening rays. Adoniram and Colman prayerfully entered the great palace hall with Ava’s governor. The spacious hall was filled with golden idols, golden-inlaid furniture, and bejeweled tapestries. They had entered the domain of a ruler who believed he was divine.

At the announcement of the emperor’s approach, everyone in the court cast themselves prostrate on the floor. The two American missionaries knelt down to show their respect. As Emperor Bagyidaw entered the room in a white tunic and robes, he glared at the two Western visitors.

“Who are these men?” he demanded.

“We are the religious teachers you have heard about, O great one!” Judson answered in Burmese.

The Emperor was shocked. “You speak like a Burmese man. How can this be? What have you come for?”¹⁶⁶

The governor presented the emperor with Adoniram’s petition to teach the Christian religion without persecution and included Judson’s Christian tract. After hearing the petition, the Golden Face read the first line of the tract: “There is only one eternal God and besides Him there is no other God.” In disgust, he threw the brochure onto the floor and walked away.

“In that brief moment,” penned Judson, “our fate was decided.”¹⁶⁷ It was time to return to Rangoon, but they had lost all hope that the gospel would ever flourish under the emperor’s condemnation.

“The Emperor Cannot Stop It!”

Was it time to leave Rangoon? Judson wondered. Things looked bad, but God was still bringing in a harvest. Before Adoniram and Coleman even arrived back home, Moungh Shway-gnong, a well-respected Burmese teacher, had confessed his allegiance to Christ. The Lord was giving them new believers in the face of the emperor’s disapproval. *But how can we escape the emperor’s wrath?* Adoniram worried. The simple answer was that they could move to Chittagong, a region of Burma under British control (now in Bangladesh), and share Christ free from the emperor’s eye.

To Adoniram’s surprise, the new Burmese Christians stood strong in the face of persecution. “Do not leave!” they pleaded with Adoniram. “Stay at least until a little church of ten is collected, and a native teacher is set over it. This religion of truth will spread of itself. *The emperor cannot stop it!*”¹⁶⁸ The heroism of these disciples kept Judson and Ann in Rangoon.

James Colman and his wife moved to Chittagong to begin a new mission there. And the church of Jesus Christ continued to grow to fifteen...twenty...and then twenty-five believers.

Awakening Missionary Fire

Ann was setting sail for America. After nine years, the tropical climate of Burma had taken its toll on her. In the nineteenth century, with few advanced medicines, doctors believed that the air of a sea voyage could heal patients of many illnesses.

On September 5, 1821, Adoniram posted a letter soon after Ann’s departure: “Dearest Ann, Oh! how consoling it is to give up myself, and you, and the interests of the mission, into the faithful hands of Jesus....The Lord reigns, and I feel, at times, that I can safely trust all in His hands, and rejoice in whatever may betide. If we suffer with Christ we shall also be glorified with Him.”¹⁶⁹

For the feisty Ann Judson, a time of “rest” in America was anything but that! In her two-year stay, she traveled throughout New England sharing the testimonies of the Burma mission. At the encouragement of Christian friends, she published a book entitled *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire*.

Ann's vibrant testimony awakened missionary enthusiasm in America, especially among the Baptists. She returned to Rangoon in December 1823 with two new missionaries, Jonathan and Deborah Wade, who served faithfully in Burma for the next twenty-five years.¹⁷⁰

Completing the Burmese New Testament

While Ann was in America, a medical missionary, Dr. Jonathan Price, and his wife, Hope, arrived in Rangoon. Dr. Price was welcomed with open arms for his medical skill, especially in cataract surgery. When his reputation reached the emperor's ears, Price was summoned to appear at the royal court. Since the doctor's Burmese was very poor, Judson accompanied him. Perhaps the Golden Face would allow the men to plant a mission in the capital city after all.

On August 28, 1822, Judson made his second trip up the Irrawaddy River to Ava. Because of Dr. Price's medical knowledge, the emperor openly welcomed the two men and invited them to move to the capital, where they could live under his protection. "It will be an opportunity to spread the gospel in the capital," Judson rejoiced. "Perhaps the emperor will change his mind concerning freedom of religion in the country!"

Adoniram returned to Rangoon to await Ann's return from America, and Dr. Price remained in Ava, looking for a new direction to his ministry since the death of his wife to cholera months earlier.¹⁷¹

It was a time for great rejoicing of another kind for Adoniram. On July 12, 1823, the manuscript for the Burmese New Testament was finally completed after ten long years of diligent and difficult labor.

Accused as Spies

Shortly after Ann returned to Burma, in January 1824, the Judsons moved to Ava, leaving the Wades to continue the mission in Rangoon. Adoniram's hopes rang high as he looked around the beautiful capital city and envisioned the lives that could be transformed for Christ. Ann wrote home, "We have worship every evening in Burman and a number of the natives assemble, and every Sabbath Adoniram preaches in Dr. Price's house. We feel it an inestimable privilege."¹⁷²

But within weeks, the favorable atmosphere of Ava took a 180-degree turn. And, with it, the Judsons' lives changed forever.

The threat of war between the British and the Burmese emperor had the capital in an uproar. They were fighting over control of the borderland between Burma and Bengal. The emperor had no conception of the size and power of the British Empire. He foolishly commanded his forces to attack Chittagong; the British shelled Rangoon; war had begun!

Suspicion fell immediately on the white foreigners living in Ava. Henry Gouge, a rich, young British merchant, was first imprisoned, then had all his gold and property seized. Once the authorities saw that Gouge had donated funds to Judson and Price, the American missionaries were immediately accused of being paid spies for the British!

Seventeen-Month Hell

Just as the Judsons sat down to supper on June 8, 1824, the door of the mission house flew open, and a dozen Burmese officials rushed in! One was a “spotted face,” a criminal and prison executioner who had a small red spot branded on each cheek. The “spotted face” criminals served as cruel guards in the Burmese dungeons.

“Where is the teacher?” called one official gruffly.

“Here.” Judson stepped forward, standing as a shield in front of Ann.

“You are called by the king!” said the officer—the dreaded Burmese words spoken at the arrest of a criminal. Immediately, the Spotted Face seized Adoniram, threw him roughly to the floor, and wrapped a metal chain around his arms so tightly that blood began to flow.¹⁷³

“Please, stop! Please don’t take him,” Ann pleaded with the Spotted Face. “I will pay you money.”

“We should take her, as well,” came the reply. But the officer in charge ignored the remark and took Adoniram alone, leaving a weeping Ann Judson behind.

Adoniram was dragged to the dreaded *Let-may-yoon*, or “death prison,” where three pairs of iron fetters were riveted to his ankles. Dirty and bleeding from the fetters, Judson was thrown into a dark prison cell along with one hundred other prisoners. The stench of unwashed bodies, rotting food, and human excrement was unbearable, and Adoniram retched from the smell alone.

“Horror of horrors, what a sight!” Judson wrote later. “Never to my dying day shall I forget the scene: a dim lamp in the midst, just making darkness visible, and discovering to my horrified gaze sixty or seventy wretched objects, some in long rows made fast in the stocks, some strung on long poles, some simply fettered; but all sensible of a new acquisition of misery in the approach of a new prisoner.”¹⁷⁴

As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he saw Gouger; Dr. Price; a Scotsman, Captain Laird; and several other white foreigners already fettered in a corner of the room. Prison, deprivation, and the unceasing threat of death would be their companions for the next seventeen months.

“The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25 niv). Never had this Scripture seemed more real to Adoniram than now.

Tortured in the Death Prison

The death prison was a large rectangular wooden “box” with no ventilation, except through the chinks between the boards and through the door. A thin tin roof separated the wretched prisoners from the rays of the tropical sun, as the daily temperatures reached over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Vermin scuttled from all corners of the room and found homes in the prisoners’ clothing. Food was not provided by the prison. Friends from the outside had to bring food each day, or the prisoners would starve to death.

Each night, the *aphe*, or “father,” of the prison would approach Judson and the other foreigners with an evil grin. Together, the prisoners were strung up on a bamboo pole that was lowered from the ceiling. The pole was passed between their fetters, and they were hung by their feet until only their heads and shoulders touched the ground. The tortuous position gave much pain and little sleep, but they did not die. In the morning, they were lowered to the ground once again.

Each day, at three o’clock in the afternoon, a powerful gong would resonate through the outside courtyard; the guards would march into the deathly quiet room and approach one or two prisoners. Without a word, the chosen ones would follow the guards out of the room, shuffling in their iron fetters to their executions. Each day, the question hung in the air, which prisoners would be chosen next?¹⁷⁵

A Wife's Fight for Justice

Ann ran to the prison door; she hadn't seen Adoniram since his arrest days earlier. Tears coursed down her cheeks, and she hid her face in her hands as her haggard, ashen-faced husband crawled to the gate, still bleeding from his ankles. Leaving the prison later that morning, the courageous Ann was determined; by God's grace, she would fight for justice for her innocent husband.

Resolutely, Ann visited as many government officials as possible throughout the long months of imprisonment, pleading for Adoniram's release.

Finally, the governor of Ava agreed to see Ann and expressed some sympathy: "I cannot release them from their fetters or from prison, but I can try to make them more comfortable." But the weeks wore on and nothing changed. With each visit, Adoniram looked more like the living dead.

Daily, the prisoners heard the guards sharpening their knives for beheadings or talking of hangings in the courtyard. And, daily, Ann arrived with food, reports from the outside, and encouragement for the desolate men.

Silver and the Buried Bible

One morning, the officials informed Ann, "We will be visiting your house tomorrow." Ann hurried home to hide valuables before they arrived. "I secreted as many little articles as possible," she wrote later, "together with considerable silver, as I knew, if the war should go on, we should be in a state of starvation without it."¹⁷⁶

Carefully carrying the bag of silver to bury in the backyard, Ann remembered their greatest treasure and ran back into the house. She wrapped Judson's completed manuscript of the Burmese New Testament in a piece of muslin. Ann would not let ten years of Adoniram's hard work be destroyed in a moment! She buried the bag and prayed for God's divine protection over the contents.

At the prison, in hushed whispers, she told her husband what she had done. He praised her ingenuity, but they knew that the manuscript would not survive underground. Digging it up in the dark of night, Ann followed Adoniram's directions. She sewed the manuscript into an old,

hard pillow and brought it to him in the death prison. For the next few months, Adoniram slept each day with his head securely nestled on the Word of God.¹⁷⁷

Keeping Adoniram Alive

The next months were a blur of petitions, pleadings, and dashed hopes. Ann's work to free the prisoners and to provide for their needs was relentless. For a short time, she and Adoniram were permitted to spend a few hours a day together in a small hut in the prison yard—a blessing, since she was eight months pregnant. But then, without warning, the hut was destroyed, and the white foreigners were sent to the dark inner prison. The guards ripped Adoniram's pillow away with no idea of the treasure it held.

“What crime has he committed to deserve this additional punishment?” Ann sobbed to the elderly governor of Ava.

The old man's heart melted as he spoke between his own tears. “I was ordered to execute them, but I refused. The least that I can do is to put them out of sight....I promise you, I will never execute your husband. But I cannot release him from his present confinement, and you must not ask it.”¹⁷⁸



Ann visits Adoniram in prison

Despite Adoniram's agony in prison, God was faithful to move on the hearts of Burmese officials to keep him alive!

For the next three weeks, Ann did not visit. On January 26, 1825, she delivered a baby girl, Maria Elizabeth Judson. When she returned to see Adoniram, Ann looked fragile and worn as she carried the tiny baby in

her arms. Looking at the helpless child, Adoniram wondered, *What will the future hold for her now?*

Within weeks, the foreigners were seized and forced to walk seven miles to a new prison. The hot gravel seared Adoniram's feet and made walking unbearable. Finally, the men were thrown into carts to complete the journey to Oung-pen-la prison, outside of Ava. For seven months, the prisoners lived in another death camp, close to starvation and with the continued threat of execution. If it hadn't been for MOUNG ING, one of Judson's earliest converts, the prisoners and Ann, who had followed Adoniram to Oung-pen-la with baby Maria, would have starved to death.¹⁷⁹

"If I had not felt certain that every additional trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy," Adoniram wrote, "I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings." There, in the valley of the shadow of death, God's hand would still comfort and provide. For the Judsons, the words of Psalm 23:4 were life: *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me"* (nkjv).

The New Testament Miracle

The war had been going badly for the Burmese. Panic reached the city of Ava as the British army approached the capital. On November 5, 1825, the long-awaited orders finally came. A treaty had been signed! Adoniram was released from prison! The little Judson family, all three of them emaciated and ill from seventeen months of sacrifice, was transported to the capital so Adoniram could translate government documents. Their bodies were nearly depleted of all strength, but their hearts were full of joy!

Adoniram was still a prisoner of the Burmese government, but he was allowed to go to his house in Ava with Ann and little Maria. There, a miracle was waiting for them! MOUNG ING had found Adoniram's old pillow lying discarded in the prison yard. Carrying it home, Ing was astounded to discover the hidden treasure inside—the Burmese New Testament had been protected from discovery or destruction, purely by the grace of God! Adoniram was moved to tears by God's goodness in the midst of the cruel persecution they had suffered.¹⁸⁰

In March 1826, Adoniram was finally released to the English; overcome with joy, he wrote, “It was on a cool, moonlight evening, in the month of March that, with hearts filled with gratitude to God and overflowing with joy at our prospects, we passed down the Irrawaddy, accompanied by all we had on earth. Our feelings continually soared: What shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits toward us?”¹⁸¹

After all of this pain and suffering, the Judsons were still serving God and one another; they were a living testimony to the value Christian couples should place on their commitment to God and to each other. Their marriage covenant was consecrated to Him and not prone to the breakups we see so often today due to selfishness on the part of one or both parties.

The Terrible Price of Peace

Adoniram and Ann stopped for a brief time in Rangoon to see if they had any possessions left, but the mission house had been destroyed by the war. Thankfully, the Wades and the Houghs had escaped unharmed to Calcutta.

Leaving Burmese territory behind, the Judsons met the Wades at Amherst, a jungle village under British control near the west coast of Burma. They would begin their new mission in Amherst with fresh hope. But first, the British and Burmese governments insisted that Adoniram use his translation abilities to negotiate the final peace treaty.

Ann was in fragile health; she was still recovering from a life-threatening bout of typhus. She longed for Adoniram to refuse the order and remain with her and Maria. But the British government had promised to negotiate for a “freedom of religion” clause in the treaty. Religious freedom for Burma! It would be worth the sacrifice of a few more months apart. On September 30, 1826, Adoniram arrived in Ava to begin serious translating work. Within days, he realized that the emperor was not going to grant the religious freedom he had promised.

In the first weeks that Adoniram was gone, Ann cheerfully supervised the building of a bamboo house and two schoolrooms for the new mission. She wrote delightedly to Adoniram, “I have this day moved into a new house and for the first time since we were broken up at Ava, feel myself at home. The house is large and convenient, and if you were here, I should feel quite happy!”

“Our parting was much less painful than many others had been,” Adoniram wrote later to Ann’s mother. “We had been preserved through so many trials and perils that a separation of three or four months seemed a light thing. We parted, therefore, with cheerful hearts.”¹⁸²

But without warning, Ann collapsed from a raging fever. Perhaps the typhus was returning? Even with the careful attendance of British doctors nearby, her body had suffered so much from the year and a half of deprivation that she couldn’t fight the ravages of fever again. On October 24, 1826, at just thirty-seven, Ann Hasseltine Judson passed away.

Her Spirit Is Rejoicing

On November 24, Adoniram received a letter from the British superintendent at Amherst. He opened it hurriedly, concerned that something had happened to Maria. With a broken heart, he read the stark words on the page: “To sum up the unhappy tidings in a few words, ‘Mrs. Judson is no more. She died the other day at Amherst of remittent fever, eighteen days ill.’”

Ann was no more? How could this be? In anguish, he recalled his beloved Ann, “who had given him her heart in her girlhood, who had faithfully followed him for fourteen years, over land and sea, through trackless jungles and strange crowded cities, with a heroism unparalleled in the annals of missions...dearest Ann.”¹⁸³

Inconsolable, Adoniram could not bear that he had not been there for her as she had been for him while in prison. He cried before the Lord for days, “with bitter, heart-rending anguish,” he wrote of his surrender to “the comfort which the Gospel subsequently afforded—the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings life and immortality to light....While I am writing...these lines, her spirit is resting and rejoicing in the heavenly paradise.”¹⁸⁴ But his heart was broken.

Tragedies and Triumphs

Adoniram returned to the mission in Amherst and to little Maria. He preached in Burmese for the first time since he had been dragged into prison nearly two years earlier, and he welcomed the natives who had accepted Christ without fear of Burmese persecution. A new missionary

couple, George and Sarah Boardman, arrived from America, and their commitment to Christ encouraged Judson in his grief.

But one more tragedy awaited him. Maria, who had never been a very healthy baby, became seriously ill with dysentery. No amount of care from Mrs. Wade or the doctors could overcome this newest onslaught. Adoniram wrote home to Ann's mother, "On April 24, 1827, my little daughter Maria breathed her last, aged two years and three months, and her emancipated spirit fled to the arms of her fond mother."¹⁸⁵

Shortly after, Adoniram joined the Boardmans and the Wades in a new mission in Moulmein. Villagers flocked to the mission house to hear messages of salvation through the blood of Christ. But for Adoniram, it was a season of grieving and prayer. He built a hut that he named "the Hermitage" in the jungle near Moulmein, and lived there alone. Other than short spurts of missionary work, Adoniram spent hours walking through the jungle, praying for the Lord's comfort and direction, asking for a renewal of the joy of his salvation.

As mature Christians, we need to realize that it is okay when someone who has been wounded emotionally or spiritually needs time to heal. It doesn't mean that they are walking away from the Lord or from their call. Sometimes, we don't give people enough time to process the pain; time is necessary to get over disappointment, loss, and grief. When ministers need time to heal, we need to love them, support them, and pray for them, or we will lose them.

For Adoniram, it was a quiet time, but God was at work in the deep wells of his soul. The fields for Christ were white for harvest in Burma, and Adoniram was being prepared to reap those souls for the kingdom of God.

"Are You Jesus Christ's Man?"

When he came out of his solitary time, Judson was on fire for the gospel once again. He set out for the Shwedagon celebration in Rangoon, where tens of thousands of Burmese would flood the city to worship at the gold-covered spire. Judson wrote to Cephas Bennett, their new missionary printer, "Send me all of the tracts and Scripture pamphlets that you can get your hands on, as quickly as possible!" The Burmese would be ripe for God's planting; on festival days, the missionaries would scatter all of the seed that they could.

“During the festival,” he wrote to Jonathan Wade, “I have given away nearly ten thousand tracts, giving to none but those who ask. There have been six thousand requests at the mission house alone. Some Burmese have come three months’ journey, from the borders of Siam and China—‘Sir, we hear that there is an eternal hell. We are afraid of it. Do give us a writing that will tell us how to escape it.’

“Others come from the interior of the country, where the name of Jesus Christ is a little known—‘Are you Jesus Christ’s man? Give us a writing that tells about Jesus Christ.’”¹⁸⁶

God was opening doors that had been sealed shut. Ann would have been so excited!

When he returned to Moulmein, the little church had grown with the baptism of many Burmese and Karens—an ethnic group near the Thai-Burma border. Two million pages of tracts and Scriptures had been printed and distributed. George and Sarah Boardman had moved inland to Tavoy to set up a mission in the heart of the Karen population. By the end of 1830, Adoniram sent a report to the American Baptist Mission: “Two hundred and seventeen people have been baptized this year alone, one hundred and thirty-six at Moulmein, seventy-six at Tavoy, and five at Rangoon!”¹⁸⁷ It was the fruit of God’s faithfulness.

“The Best of All, God Is With Us”

The greatest barrier to mission work in the tropics was the very real threat of disease. In February 1831, after leading countless Karen natives to Christ, George Boardman passed away from tuberculosis. His wife, Sarah, continued to minister in the jungle, taking her young son, George Jr., with her. (The other two Boardman children had passed away from jungle fevers.) Adoniram began making more frequent trips to Tavoy to help with the growing revival.

The Karens shared a miraculous story of how God had prepared them for the gospel message:

My lord, your humble servants have come from the wilderness to lay at your feet a certain book, and to inquire whether it is good or bad, true or false. We Karens have no books, no written language; we know nothing of God or His law. When this book was given to us, we were charged to worship it, which we have done for twelve years. But we

knew nothing of its contents, not so much as in what language it is written. We have heard of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and are persuaded of its truth, and we wish to know if this book contains the doctrine of that gospel.

Amazingly, it was *The Book of Common Prayer with the Psalms*, published at Oxford University, England. “It is a good book,” Adoniram told them, “but it is not good to worship it. You must worship the God it reveals.”¹⁸⁸

Within six weeks, Judson had baptized twenty-five Karens, including an elderly man who had embraced the gospel of Christ and now wanted to be water baptized before he died. “The old man went on his way,” Judson wrote, “rejoicing aloud, and declaring his resolution to make known the eternal God and the dying love of Jesus.... ‘*The best of all is,*’ the old man shouted, ‘*God is with us.*’

“Yes,” Adoniram continued, “the great Invisible is in these Karen wilds....He is present by the influence of his Holy Spirit, and accompanies the sound of the Gospel with converting, sanctifying power. ‘*The best of all is, God is with us.*’”¹⁸⁹

Today, there is still a great love and desire for the gospel among the Karen people of Myanmar. I had the honor of preaching among the Karens in the northern forests of former Burma, and they were a very kind and humble people, hungry for the gospel of Christ.

It Is Done!

Throughout 1832 and 1833, Adoniram spent weeks secluded in a small hut in Moulmein, working on the translation of the Old Testament. Finally, on January 31, 1834, at the age of forty-six, Adoniram could shout the victory “The Bible is done!”

“Thanks be to God, I can *now* say I have attained. I have commended it to His mercy and grace; I have dedicated it to His glory. May He make His own inspired Word, now complete in the Burman tongue, the grand instrument of filling all Burma with songs of praise to our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ! Amen.”¹⁹⁰

Twenty-one years earlier, a youthful Adoniram and Ann Judson had stepped on the shores of Burma; now, a seasoned missionary of God could rejoice that the Bible translation he had longed to write was finally

complete. Adoniram was ready for the next phase of his life in Christ to begin.

God Brings Sarah

Eight lonely years had passed since Ann had died in Amherst. In the years that followed her death, as Adoniram made trips to Tavoy, his relationship with Sarah Boardman became more personal. As a young widow, she had worked among the Karens for three years. Once again, Adoniram had fallen in love with an accomplished, godly woman wholly committed to serving Christ.

On April 10, 1834, Adoniram and Sarah Hall Boardman were married in Tavoy among the people she loved. They moved back to Moulmein the following day with little George, her son.

Adoniram and Sarah began a vibrant ministry life together. At forty-six, Judson still had a full head of auburn hair and was in robust health. He walked vigorously two miles a day over the hills of Moulmein to keep himself strong for ministry. He preached seven sermons a week in Moulmein and spent his days revising the Old Testament while Sarah wrote catechisms, taught Bible studies, and translated *The Pilgrim's Progress* into Burmese. They ministered together as kindred spirits, free from the persecution of the Golden Face.

When Adoniram traveled to Calcutta, and they spent a few months apart, he wrote to Sarah of his desire to return home quickly: "How joyfully do I hope to embark...to see the hills of Moulmein...and how joyfully do I hope to see your dear face and to take you in my loving arms."¹⁹¹

On October 31, 1835, Sarah gave birth to their first child, Abigail Ann Judson. She was a special joy to her mother, who had sent young George home to America the year before to begin his formal education. A year and a half later, on April 7, 1837, Sarah gave birth to a son, Adoniram Brown Judson. In the next three years, she gave birth to two more boys, Elnathan and Henry.

Great Praises and Deep Pain

"Every morning we come around the family altar," Adoniram described in a letter to his stepson, George, "your mother and myself, your sister, and your brothers; it is our earnest prayer that all our children

may *early* become partakers of divine grace. I hope you will never neglect the duty of *secret prayer*...praying to God, in the name of Jesus Christ” (March 3, 1839).¹⁹²

In 1840, Adoniram’s revision of the Old Testament was complete, and by October, the entire Bible was in print. He had labored to translate directly from the Hebrew “to make every sentence a faithful representation of the original.” His early passions were accomplished: the Bible was complete and the Burmese church was flourishing. “There are now above a thousand converts from heathenism, formed into various churches throughout the country,” he recorded.¹⁹³

On the heels of these days of praise followed months of pain. The next year, in March 1841, Sarah delivered Luther, a stillborn son. Shortly after, she and all four children were struck with dysentery, and the Judsons were forced to sail to Calcutta to recuperate. While they were there, little baby Henry, just a year and a half old, succumbed to illness and was buried beside the graves of William Carey and his associates. How different India was now that the Serampore Triad had gone home to heaven.

Christ Above All

In the next three and a half years, Sarah gave birth to three more sons, Henry Hall in 1842 (named for his brother), Charles in 1843, and Edward in 1844. Just three months after Edward was born, forty-one-year-old Sarah was fighting a losing battle with the dysentery that had plagued her off and on over the years. The doctors insisted that her only hope for recovery was a sea voyage to America away from the oppressive heat and parasites of the tropics.

On April 26, 1845, Adoniram and Sarah boarded the ship the *Paragon* with their three oldest children, Abby Ann, Adoniram, and Elnathan. The children would join George Jr. in America and continue their education there. The three youngest children remained with missionary families in Moulmein until their parents could return.

Adoniram was heartsick at the breakup of his family. “These rendings of parental ties are more severe...than any can possibly conceive who have never felt the wrench. But I hope I can say with truth that *I love Christ above all*; and I am striving, in the strength of my weak faith, to gird up my mind to face and welcome all His appointments.”¹⁹⁴

“Let the Will of God Be Done”

In the Isle of France, the Judsons transferred to the *Sophia Walker*, bound for the United States. For a few weeks, Sarah appeared to be recovering, but then she took a turn for the worse.

Sarah was in perfect peace through her final sickness. She longed to see George Jr. again after a ten-year separation, but she was at rest with the Father’s will. “I am in a strait betwixt two—let the will of God be done.” At three in the morning on September 1, 1845, after a final kiss for Adoniram, she fell asleep and woke up in heaven. Later that day, her body was buried on the British island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic, in “a beautiful, shady spot.” By evening, the *Sophia* had put out to sea once again, while the grieving husband and children clung to the Lord for comfort and understanding.¹⁹⁵

Sarah Boardman Judson had faithfully served the Lord in Burma—writing, preaching, translating, and ministering beside two missionary husbands. She had also given birth to eleven children, three with George Boardman and eight with Adoniram; six of her children survived to adulthood. She lived a life fully surrendered to Jesus Christ.

A Hero’s Welcome

Six weeks later, after thirty-three years in Burma, a reticent Adoniram Judson stepped on the shores of Massachusetts once again. For the past three decades, the stories of his victories and his sacrifices had been circulated throughout America, and he was considered a hero far and wide. Yet, because of a recurring throat ailment, when asked to speak, he could barely talk above a whisper.

A welcome meeting was set up at the Bowdoin Square Church in Boston, and Adoniram sat on the platform with the church dignitaries, feeling humbled and out of place. As one pastor stood to speak of Judson’s missionary accomplishments, an older man walked down the center aisle and slowly mounted the platform. As he approached, Adoniram gasped and reached out to embrace the gentleman. It was Samuel Nott!¹⁹⁶

Adoniram had thought that all of the original members of the first missionary group were gone. He knew that Newell, Rice, and Hall had all died of tropical diseases and that Samuel Mills had been lost at sea.

He had never heard that Samuel Nott had become ill while serving in Ceylon, had returned to America, and had been a pastor in Massachusetts for the past thirty years. They had been mere boys when they'd left America's shores to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost; now, they stood before the body of Christ as seasoned and honored men of God.

Raising a Storm

While attending a missionary meeting in Philadelphia, Adoniram was introduced to a young writer, Emily Chubbock, who wrote fanciful stories under the pen name Fanny Forester. Adoniram was searching for a biographer to write Sarah's life story, and Emily had a great deal of writing talent.

As they worked together on Sarah's biography, Emily confessed a little-known secret to Judson—since girlhood, she had harbored a desire to become a foreign missionary. Although she was only twenty-seven years old, half Judson's age, a difficult home life had made her wise beyond her years. Adoniram was surprised at their compatibility.

Within a month, the “famous Burman missionary” shocked the Christian world by proposing marriage to the “fiction writer” Emily Chubbock. She equally stunned her friends in the literary world by saying yes.¹⁹⁷ Despite of raising a storm of protests from all directions, Adoniram and Emily planned to marry the following June.

The month before the wedding, Judson tearfully left ten-year-old Abby Ann in Plymouth, and eight-year-old Adoniram and six-year-old Elnathan with their stepbrother George in Worcester, so that they could live and grow in the safety of America. On June 2, 1846, in a small, quiet wedding, Adoniram and Emily were married in her parents' home in Hamilton, New York, and set sail for Rangoon a month later.

At fifty-seven, Adoniram realized that he would never see his native land again. That day, he recorded, “Although I feel sadness, I have no regrets. I am returning to my home.”¹⁹⁸

“The Happiest Year of My Life”

Adoniram was overjoyed to see four-year-old Henry and two-year-old Edward when they arrived in Moulmein. Sadly, little Charlie had died a

year earlier from a tropical fever. The boys could not remember Sarah, and they shyly embraced Emily as their new mother.

After a brief but unsuccessful stay in Rangoon, the Judson family traveled back to the mission in Moulmein. Emily finished Sarah's biography, and Adoniram worked to complete a Burmese-English dictionary for the new missionaries pouring into the Burmese nation. By this time, there were thirty-six thriving Baptist churches in the coastal lands of Burma. Adoniram continued to preach the message of Christ's love among them.

In June 1847, Adoniram and Emily celebrated their first anniversary. In the midst of mothering the little boys and enjoying a loving husband, Emily wrote to her sister, "It has been by far the happiest year of my life!"¹⁹⁹

Six months later, on December 24, 1847, she gave birth to a beautiful, healthy baby girl, Emily Frances Judson. The little boys were delighted with their pink-skinned baby sister. Their home was filled with love for Christ and for one another. It was a short season of refreshment for Adoniram.

"O the Love of Christ!"

Two years later, at sixty-one years old, Adoniram was still walking the hills of Moulmein. "He continues his system of morning exercise, started as a student at Andover," Emily wrote home, "and is not satisfied with a common walk on level ground, but always chooses an uphill path, and then goes bounding on his way with all the exuberant activity of boyhood!" Emily was not able to join him as she was battling a persistent cough.

Daily, Judson's fervency for the gospel seemed to increase still more. "Every book we read, every train of thought, seems to me that, more than ever before, 'Christ is all his theme,'" Emily wrote home.²⁰⁰ "What deep cause have we for gratitude to God!" Judson exclaimed to his wife. "O the love of Christ!"²⁰¹

Shortly after, Adoniram caught a severe cold, accompanied by a high fever. He was sure he would recover quickly, but, instead, the illness settled in his chest, and dysentery followed soon after. For the next few months, Adoniram spent most of his time in bed.

With a great deal of time to pray, he exclaimed to Emily one night, “I have gained the victory at last! I love every one of Christ’s redeemed as I believe he would have me love them. And now I lie at peace with all the world, and what is better still, at peace with my own conscience.”²⁰²

Steadily, Adoniram grew worse, and his doctors insisted, as always, that his only hope was a sea voyage, to transport him from the suffocating tropical air of Burma to fresh ocean winds. With apprehension, Emily booked Adoniram on the French ship the *Aristide Marie*, due to sail for the Isle of France. She could not accompany him because it was late in her second pregnancy.

“I Feel So Strong in Christ!”

“I am not tired of my work,” Adoniram confided to Emily before sailing, “neither am I tired of the world. Yet when Christ calls me home, I shall go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from his school....Death will never take me by surprise; I feel so strong in Christ!”²⁰³

On April 6, 1850, the *Aristide Marie* put out to sea with Adoniram on board and fellow missionary Thomas Ranney as his companion. Within days, Adoniram’s strength was gone. As Ranney sat beside his bed, the missionary spoke in barely a whisper, “I am glad you are here. I do not feel so abandoned. You are my only kindred now—the only one on board who loves Christ; and it is a great comfort to have one near me who loves Christ.”²⁰⁴

“Adoniram’s death,” Ranney told Emily later, “was like one going to sleep. The gentle pressure of his hand showed the peacefulness of his spirit about to take its homeward flight.” On Friday afternoon, April 12, 1850, “Adoniram Judson reached his golden shore.”²⁰⁵ Because the ship was far from any shore, he was buried at sea in the Bay of Bengal, a few hundred miles west of the country that he loved.

Three weeks later, Emily gave birth to a son she named Charles, but the baby did not live beyond the first day. Her consolation was in Christ and in the three precious children she had with her at all times. Three months later, word finally reached her of Adoniram’s death; she lovingly packed all of their personal belongings and returned to the United States with their little ones.

At home, Emily was well-received by the Baptist community; she worked tirelessly to gather papers for an official biography of Adoniram to be written by Dr. Francis Wayland, the president of Brown University. Sadly, many of Judson's personal writings had been destroyed through the hardships of life in Burma. As often as possible, she reunited all six of the Judson children and George Jr. so that they could remember their father and share as one big family.

Tragically, Emily never recovered from the persistent cough that had overtaken her in Burma. On June 1, 1854, at the early age of thirty-six, Emily Chubbock Judson passed away from tuberculosis and joined the missionary saints in heaven.

Judson's Legacy—Larger than Life

Adoniram Judson left a legacy that is larger than life.

At his death, he left the Burmese Bible, a Burmese grammar book, and a Burmese-English dictionary, all of which are in print and used widely in Myanmar today. His Bible translation remains the most popular in the nation; every dictionary and grammar book written in the last two centuries has been based on the one he originally created.

When Adoniram set sail on the *Aristide Marie*, there were 100 churches and 8,000 believers in Burma as a result of his missionary call. Today, despite fierce government opposition, the Christian church continues to flourish with nearly four million believers, half of which are Baptists; many are descendants of the Karen tribe.

Each July, the churches in Myanmar celebrate "Judson Day," commemorating his arrival with his young bride on that long ago July afternoon. On the campus of Yangon University (once named Judson College) stands Judson Church. In that same city (formerly Rangoon), where Adoniram and Ann labored so tirelessly, a Baptist seminary was founded that still operates today as the Myanmar Institute of Theology, open to all Protestant denominations. In a final triumph to God's faithfulness, the Judson Baptist Church and Ann Hasseltine Judson Memorial Chapel stand on the very site of the Oung-pen-la prison.

In the United States, Judson is considered a significant catalyst for the formation of the American Baptist Associations. There are more than thirty U.S. churches named after him, as well as Judson University in Illinois; Judson College in Alabama is named in honor of Ann. During

World War II, a ship, the *SS Adoniram Judson*, was named in his honor, and Judson Press, in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, publishes Christian books under his name.

“Resolve to Send the Day into Eternity!”

Adoniram suffered untold persecution and tragedies. But he had the honor of marrying three exceptional women whose faithful commitment to Christ and diverse talents helped him spread the gospel of Christ throughout Burma.

Of Adoniram’s thirteen children, seven survived to adulthood. His four sons and stepson all attended his alma mater, Brown University. George Jr., Adoniram Brown, and Edward all became distinguished ministers. Edward founded the Judson Memorial Baptist Church in Market Square, New York City, which still welcomes a large congregation today. Abby Ann became the director of a girl’s school, and little Emily Frances became a wife and a mother of eight children who continued the Judson line.

In Malden, Massachusetts, a tablet was placed in the first Baptist meeting house that reads:

IN MEMORIAM
REV. ADONIRAM JUDSON
BORN AUG. 9, 1788
DIED APRIL 12, 1850
MALDEN, HIS BIRTHPLACE.
THE OCEAN, HIS SEPULCHRE.
CONVERTED BURMANS, AND
THE BURMAN BIBLE HIS MONUMENT.
HIS RECORD IS ON HIGH.

In December 1810, before his ministry had begun, Adoniram penned the following words. By the time he was laid to rest in the ocean forty years later, he had emblazoned them on the soul of Christian history:

God is waiting to be gracious if we would not run away from Him.... A few days, and our work will be done. And when it is once done, it is done to all eternity. A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity.

The same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone forever. How we wish to see each day marked with usefulness! It is too

late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power.

Let us, then, each morning, resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever. And at night let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone—indelibly marked. Good-night.”²⁰⁶

Adoniram Judson had indelibly marked the Christian church for eternity.

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. (Psalm 2:8 nasb)

Are you praying for the unsaved of the nations as a part of your inheritance?