

Lessons from Church History (Part 2)

WEEK 15: Lessons from Modern Evangelicalism

Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)

- Born in Northern Ireland to devout Presbyterian parents. Oldest of 7 siblings. Converted at age 15 and wrote: “In His great mercy the Good Shepherd answered the prayers of my mother and father and many other loving ones, and drew me, even me.”
- In 1887, Amy and her brothers were invited to the Keswick Convention by Robert Wilson, one of its founders. Wilson unofficially adopted Amy as his daughter. Shortly after, she felt called to overseas missions and spent 15 months in Japan.
- Wilson had a stroke, so she returned to England and then decided to go to India. She was 27, never returned home again, spending the next 54 yrs in India. She was overwhelmed by the darkness and demonic practices of Hinduism.
- Amy soon met Thomas Walker and his wife who she partnered with to evangelize the Tamil region of southern India. Early on they were routinely rejected by those wanting nothing to do with “your good news” and “your Lord Jesus.”
- In 1901, Amy saw the conversion of a 17-year-old girl named Preena who was a prostitute in a Hindu temple. The girl tried to escape several times (once having her hands branded with a hot iron as punishment). Soon girls from all sorts of horrible situations were coming to Amy for help and care.
- Most western missionaries focused on reaching the upper classes (castes), hoping their conversion would filter down and change the culture for the lower classes (castes). Amy felt called to work with the dregs of society and wrote extensively on it.
- Amy would disguise herself, staining her arms and hands when looking for girls in the temples since foreign women were not allowed entrance. Her dark eyes and complexion helped.
- Amy and the Walters established a mission compound in Dohnavur (Dohnavur Fellowship). She took in women of all ages and worked tirelessly caring for them. Thomas trained men for preaching and evangelizing. He also handled countless court cases to help extract children from the temples.
- Amy started a school for the children, training them, not for jobs and material prosperity, but to be faithful Christians. The curriculum focused on learning the Bible and building Christian character. Amy was affectionately referred to as Amma by everyone.
- Conversions were slow. In one case, a man was mauled by a tiger & brought to Dohnavur for medical help. After recovering, he was converted and told his village. They called some preachers from Dohnavur to come tell them the gospel. Many were converted and a small church established.
- New converts were persecuted for their faith. Persecution served as a winnowing fork to separate the wheat from the chaff. Amy said, “Better to be disappointed a thousand times—yes, and be deceived—than once miss a chance to help a soul. The love of God suffices for any disappointment, for any defeat. And in that love is the energy of faith and the very sap of hope.”
- The ministry steadily grew, with new land acquired and buildings built in the compound. Retreats were built in the mountains and on the coast for the children and other missionaries.
- Soon little boys were acquired. Many were used in immoral ceremonies in the temples, and some sold as sex slaves. By 1926 Dohnavur had 70 to 80 boys.
- Amy published a number of books about the work at Dohnavur which were widely read and gave attention to the work, raising awareness for support, and leading many people to visit.
- In 1931, when Amy was 63, she fell into a pit, broke her leg and ankle, and badly twisted her spine. She never fully recovered, being largely confined to her room for the next 20 years.
- By the 1940’s Dohnavur Fellowship had over 900 people, including 45 helpers and 3 doctors.
- Amy fell again in 1948 that kept her immobile for the next 2 and years till she died at age 83.

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Jim and Elisabeth Elliot (1927-1956 & 1926-2015)

- Jim Elliot was born in Portland, Oregon in 1927 to a father who was a traveling preacher and a mother who was a chiropractor. They were members of the Plymouth Brethren and Jim was raised in a devout Christian home. He enrolled at Wheaton College in 1945 to study linguistics, with plans to enter the foreign mission field.
- In March of 1947 he met Elisabeth Howard, a fellow student at Wheaton. Elisabeth, or Betty as she was called by friends, was born in Belgium in 1926 to missionary parents. The family moved to Philadelphia shortly after she was born. She enrolled at Wheaton College studying English, but before her senior year changed her major to classical Greek, which would best prepare her to translate the New Testament into an unknown language to share the Gospel with unreached people.
- As their relationship grew from classmates to friends, then into a romance, they each wrestled with marriage versus the mission field. Ultimately, God gave them (mostly Jim) clarity and they were married in 1953 in Quito, Ecuador. They worked together to learn the Quichua language to evangelize the Quecha Indian tribe. Their daughter Valerie was born in February of 1955.
- In mid-1955, Jim received word from a local pilot Nate Saint of a new uncontacted tribe in the region. After months of preparation, in early January of 1956 Jim and three other men – Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, and Pete Fleming – were flown by Saint into a makeshift camp on the beach of the Curaray River, the known border of the “Auca” Indian tribe, later referred to as the Huaorani (Waudoni) tribe.
- Initial contact was friendly, then all five men were speared to death days later in a planned attack on the river’s beach.
- The following days & weeks were a whirlwind as the story made national and international news.
- Elisabeth chose to stay at her missionary post where she took on the work of two people, continuing to evangelize the Quichua tribe while raising young Valerie. She later met two Hauorani women who taught her their tribe’s language. In 1958, she went as a missionary to the Hauorani people to serve the people who had killed her husband.
- While in Ecuador, Elisabeth wrote *Through Gates of Splendor* (story of martyrdom), *Shadow of the Almighty* (a memoir about Jim), and *The Savage, My Kinsman* (her life among the Auca/ Hauorani). She returned to the U.S. in 1963 as a writer and speaker. Over the next decade, she received 5-6 speaking requests per day.
- For 13 years she hosted a 12-min. radio program aimed at women called *Gateway to Joy*.
- She opened each episode by saying, “You are loved with an everlasting love – that’s what the Bible says – and underneath are the everlasting arms. This is your friend, Elisabeth Elliot.”
- In 1969 she was married to Addison Leitch. He passed away in 1973. She then married Lars Gren, who would care for her the rest of her life, particularly after 2004 due to dementia. She passed away in 2015, leaving a legacy of total devotion and trust in our loving God.