

# Biographies

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## Aji Kumar

Each year in southern India, millions of fervent Hindu worshipers endure a dangerous trek up a holy mountain, called Sabarimala, to pay homage to the Hindu god Ayyappa. In the mid-1990s, a 15-year-old boy named Aji Kumar joined the treacherous journey to fulfill the vows his Hindu parents had made to their god.

Previously, the tedious worship of multiple gods proved unfulfilling for Aji. This pilgrimage, he hoped, would change that.

According to legend, Ayyappa, one of more than 30 million gods in the Hindu religion, is a protector from evil and giver of good fortune. In preparation for the trip, Aji fasted for 41 days. Weak and malnourished, the teenage boy hiked up the 3,000-foot mountain without shoes, in accordance with sacred tradition.

Aji was tired and afraid. Pilgrims literally fight each other to get to the shrine; in 1999 a stampede of worshipers killed 53 people.

Along the way, Aji bathed in the Pampa River, which is said to release a person from a lifetime of sins. When he finally reached the 18 stairs leading to the shrine, he was so exhausted that he dropped the sacred articles he was carrying, and a policeman had to help him.

“If you are the true God,” Aji prayed to Ayyappa, “then why didn’t you give me strength? Why didn’t you keep the sacred things from falling?”

For years, his family adhered to the meticulous Hindu traditions. They attended temple services and followed specific worship creeds. They routinely bathed, fed and garlanded the idols. But they felt no peace.

Currently, Hinduism is the third-largest religion in the world. Hinduism can be traced back to ancient Indian seers who transmitted to their followers their ideas about ultimate truth. The earliest Hindu writings date from roughly 1500 B.C. There are a variety of sacred writings—the Vedas and Upanishads. The Code of Manu set down many prescripts for life, including the caste system—a social structure based on birth and wealth.

One day, a Christian explained how Aji could know Jesus personally, how Christ came to set people free. But Aji continued to worship Hindu idols. When he found his mother reading the Bible one day, he was furious.

“We have enough gods and goddesses,” he told her, snatching the Bible away. “If our relatives come to know that we have received Jesus, they will desert us.”

Tradition says that if a Hindu does not obey the stringent requirements of his gods, sickness and calamity will afflict him. Suffering is explained through karma, the idea that a person carries the collective force of his actions.

Hinduism literally means “religion of India.” Currently, 82 percent of India’s population are professing Hindus. The religion is so tied to the heritage of India that the idea of worshipping only one God, like in Christianity, is offensive.

Aji belonged to a political group that persecuted Christians, interrupting church services and other Christian meetings. During the Hindu festival of Onam, Aji and others from the political group set out to sabotage a Christian meeting at a local college. Armed with sticks and stones, they planned to disconnect the sound system’s power supply. Before they could cause a disturbance, a speaker announced, “Who is Aji Kumar, who has come to disrupt the meeting?”

The speaker continued, listing specific sins Aji had committed. Aji was astonished—and angry. He didn’t want to listen to the man and was embarrassed in front of his friends.

“Don’t be afraid,” the speaker continued. “Stand up, Aji Kumar.”

Aji felt a sensation of extreme heat in his body, “like I was sitting on fire,” he says. His heart tugged at him. Finally, he stood up, joined the speaker, and prayed and received Christ.

Soon after, Aji began studying the Bible. As a result of his faith, several in his family abandoned their idols and received Jesus. Today, Aji works as a missionary in India.

Hinduism is a difficult religion for Western Christians to classify. With a kaleidoscope of gods, there is no central creed or founder, and no universal text on which the faith is based. Instead, it is a religion of relativism, where few Hindus worship the same way. This actually appeals to many Americans, explaining why more than 1 million practice some form of the religion stateside.

Westernized Hinduism is often philosophical. It may include practices such as meditation, yoga and rituals. “Hinduism is more a way of life than a religion,” says Madasamy Thirumalai, the author of *Sharing Your Faith with a Hindu*.

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/how-to-know-god/hinduism-to-christianity.html>

For Aji, it took a personal encounter with God to bring him out of that way of life. “In Christianity, I found there is a living God who loves me,” he says.

# Amy Carmichael

A common method for parents putting their children to bed is saying their prayers. Amy Beatrice Carmichael however, wouldn't stop at prayers. She would also smooth out a space on her sheets; then invite the Lord to come sit down beside her. This was an early sign of Amy's willingness to talk and listen to what her Heavenly Father had to say.

## AMY CARMICHAEL'S EARLY LIFE

Amy Carmichael was the first Irish daughter born to David and Catherine Carmichael, December 16, 1867, in Millisle, County Down, Ireland. There would be six brothers and sisters to follow her. Amy shared a bedroom with two of her sisters and was always having to shake her two brothers, Norman and Ernest from following her everywhere! Her father ran a flour mill, owned by Carmichaels for the last hundred years, and the family- big as it was- was never in need. Mr. and Mrs. Carmichael were devout Christians and raised their children in equal devotion to the Lord.

## AMY CARMICHAEL'S MINISTRY WITH THE SHAWLIES

Amy's family moved to Belfast when she was sixteen, and two years later, her father died. With his passing, and a fall through of the mill's finances, she would spend the next ten years being a right hand to her mother and tutor to her younger siblings. But this wasn't enough to deter Amy from reaching out to help those less fortunate. She made weekly trips into the slums of Belfast with a local pastor to hand out tracts and food to the impoverished. It was there that she first discovered the 'shawlies'- girls her age and younger who worked in the mills. Seeing their hunger for God's love and hope, she set up Bible studies, held at the Rosemary Street Presbyterian Church. The presence of the shawlies caused complaint and gossip amid the congregation, but Amy didn't care. She was doing what God needed her to do and that was all that mattered!

The ministry with the shawlies blossomed and soon a building was purchased to seat the hundreds of girls gathering to worship the Lord. As much as at home Amy was at 'The Welcome', she now felt God's calling pulling her elsewhere; to the slums of Manchester, England. There she lived in an apartment with bugs and rats for neighbors! The conditions were terrible, the streets dangerous, but Amy remained to spread God's Word. Her health however, soon swept her out of the slums and into the estate of family friend Robert Wilson. It was in her two-year stay with Wilson and his sons that she first heard missionary Hudson Taylor speak. With his words, she felt the Lord drawing her to the same mission; 'Go ye'.

## CALLING TO GO OVERSEAS

Breaking into missionary work was no small feat for Amy. Her initial application for the China Inland Mission was rejected due to her health. She traveled to Japan in 1893, but was forced to

return to England after fifteen months, due to illness. Her recovery was long and spiritually agonizing. If God had called her to missions, why would He block the road so heavily?

#### AMY'S MISSIONARY WORK IN INDIA

In 1894, Amy received an invitation from a friend to join the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society in Bangalore. The climate would prove easier to her health and India was known as the British Empire's 'crown jewel'. The 'missionaries' that she first housed with were nothing more than complainers, concerned more about keeping themselves pampered than evangelizing the Indian people. Amy was definitely the odd one out, so it was only natural that she soon went to live with Reverend Thomas Walker and his wife in the Tinnevely district in 1896.

Thomas Walker was a gruff man, but a committed Christian... and no one had snapped at Amy where she couldn't snap back! Through grueling sessions, she learned the Tamil language, studied the Hindu caste system, and began drawing in new converts. Especially young women and girls. They came seeking sanctuary from the temples where they served as prostitutes. Often, the girls' families or other women of the temple would track them down and demand the girls back. Unlike Amy's work in Japan, it was a great shame if a person converted to Christianity. The lucky ones would be shunned from their homes; others tortured or murdered. But nor Amy or the Walkers could be deterred. If a child came seeking refuge, they were instantly given a home and hope for eternal life.

Amy's time in India lengthened and so did her adoptive family. Not only did she have the women of the Starry Cluster, a group who helped her evangelize across the villages, but as word of their group had spread, more and more girls showed up at their doorstep. Eleven-year-olds, babies, teenagers, until the family was over fifty in number! Amy realized then that her time of travelling and evangelizing was over. It was time to succumb to the cries of 'Amma' the Tamil word for 'mother'.

Amma's mission to the children of India lasted fifty-five years. She wore the traditional sari, dyed her skin with coffee or tea bags, and endured the hot and dry Indian atmosphere, all in the name of God's precious children. In 1931 however, her race for Him was jolted by a fall in 1931. Her hip and back were badly damaged and she was unable to fully walk again. The last twenty years of her mission at Dohnaveur Fellowship were directed from her bedroom. Amy's movements were limited, but her ministry was not. In twenty years, she wrote sixteen additional books of the missionary work in India. Presently, only a few of her books are still in print. When Amy passed away in January of 1951, no gravestone was planted per her request. However, her girls settled a bird bath over her burial site. On the bath was engraved one word; Amma, (Mother).

<https://www.inspirationalchristians.org/evangelists/amy-carmichael-biography/>

## Brother Andrew

Son of a blacksmith, Brother Andrew didn't even finish high school. But God used this ordinary Dutch man, with his bad back, limited education, without sponsorship and no funds to do things that many said were impossible. From Yugoslavia to North Korea, Brother Andrew penetrated countries hostile to the gospel to bring bibles and encouragement to believers.

### ANDREW'S EARLY YEARS

Andrew van der Bijl, who became known as Brother Andrew, was born in 1928 the son of a deaf father and a semi-invalid mother. Andrew was the third of six children and they lived in the smallest house in the village of Witte in the Netherlands.

### THIRST FOR ADVENTURE

As a child, brother Andrew was mischievous and dreamt of adventure. When Germany invaded, Andrew amused himself (and the rest of the village) by playing pranks on the occupying troops.

His thirst for adventure led him into the Dutch army at the age of 18 where he became a notorious commando. Andrew and his comrades became famous for wearing yellow straw hats in battle, their motto was: 'get smart – lose your mind'.

The atrocities that Andrew committed as a commando haunted him and he became wrapped in a sense of guilt. Nothing he did – drinking, fighting, writing or reading letters helped him escape the strangle that guilt had upon him.

Shot in the ankle in combat, at the age of 20, his time in the army came to an abrupt end. In hospital, bed ridden, the witness of the Franciscan Christian nurses caused him to read the Bible. Andrew studied the bible while asking many questions to a friend called Thile, who had written to him throughout his time in the army. Andrew sent questions to Thile who searched for answers from her pastor and the library. His searching within the bible did not however lead him to give his life to God whilst he was still in hospital.

### ANDREW RETURNS HOME A CRIPPLE AND SEEKS GOD

Returning home a cripple to his old town, Andrew's life was empty. He had not found the adventure he had been looking for.

Somehow however, when he returned home, he developed a thirst for God. Every evening Andrew attended a meeting and during the day he would read the bible and look up bible verses mentioned in the sermons he had heard. At last, one evening he gave up his ego and prayed: 'Lord if You will show me the way, I will follow You. Amen'.

## GOD CALLS BROTHER ANDREW TO MISSION

Soon after becoming a Christian, Brother Andrew attended an evangelistic meeting taken by a Dutch evangelist. At this meeting Andrew responded to the call to become a missionary. This call to share the good news of salvation started at home, with Andrew and his friend Kees holding an evangelistic event in their home town.

Before going away on mission, Andrew started work at the Ringers chocolate factory. Andrew excelled in his work despite being lame and Mr. Ringers, the owner of the factory applauded his work and evangelistic efforts. Because of his high IQ, Andrew was trained up as a job analyst within the factory. But Andrew knew that God was calling him to mission. The big obstacle however was his lack of education.

Giving up smoking, Andrew was able to start saving to buy books. Andrew bought dictionaries and commentaries and so began studying in his spare time. One day Andrew learnt about the bible college in Glasgow run by the WEC mission. At Glasgow bible college Christians could be trained up for mission in 2 years.

Unsure of God's will for his life, Andrew spent a Sunday afternoon alone with God, speaking aloud with God. Through this time, Andrew realized that he needed to say 'yes' to God who was calling him to mission. Before this, Andrew had been saying 'Yes BUT I am lame.' 'Yes BUT I have no education'. Andrew said yes. In an amazing instant, Andrew made this step of yes, and in God's grace he healed Andrew's lame leg.

## ANDREW GOES TO BIBLE COLLEGE

Andrew applied for the Bible college in Glasgow and was accepted. Sponsored by no church, no organization and lacking education, Andrew obeyed God and went despite being told by the love of his life at the time (Thile) that in going he would lose her.

## THE KINGS WAY

Throughout his time at Glasgow bible college, Andy learnt of 'The Kings Way' in providing. Andrew saw God provide every essential need he had and always provide on time. In the book God's Smuggler, Andrew describes how it was exciting waiting to see how God would provide at his time of need. God always provided, but did so, not according to man's logic but supernaturally.

One example of God providing miraculously was when Andrew needed to pay his visa. When Andrew received a visitor the day before he needed to send off his application for a visa, he was confident that the visitor would have come to give him money to pay for the visa. But the visitor was Richard, a man who Andrew had met in the slums in Glasgow. Richard had not come to give, but to ask. Andy explained that he had no money himself to give to Richard, but as he spoke, Andy saw a Shilling on the floor. This shilling was how much Andy needed to pay for his visa which would mean he could stay at the bible school. Rather than keeping the Shilling for

himself, Andrew gave the Shilling to Richard. Andy had done what he knew was right, but how would God provide? Minutes later, Andy received a letter and in it was 30 Shillings! God had provided in His way, a Kingly Manner of provision.

#### GOD CALLS ANDREW BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

Leaving bible college in 1955, God guided Andy to attend a Communist trip to Warsaw. This would be the first of many trips into Communist countries.

During his first trip to Warsaw, brother Andrew visited local churches, a bible shop and spoke with Christians in the country. Coming back to Holland, Andrew had lots of opportunities to share about his trip and how Christians lived behind the iron curtain.

Weeks later, the communist party arranged for him to attend a trip to Czechoslovakia. Andrew managed to break away from the organized trip to learn that the church was suffering and that bibles were very scarce. Officials were angry he had broken away from the official tour and had contact with Christians so he was prohibited from entering the country again. But his trip had opened his eyes to the needs of the church behind the iron curtain and this became his mission field.

In the following years, Andy dedicated his life to the needs of the church in the Communist countries. God provided Andrew with a new Volkswagen Beetle and with it, Brother Andrew smuggled bibles and literature into the countries in need. Working alone for the first few years, Andrew worked tirelessly in serving the churches behind the iron curtain. When Andrew had finished one trip he would go back to Holland where he would share his experience and then go back to one of the countries. Each trip was full of stories of how God had miraculously provided and led Andrew to meet Godly believers.

#### ANDREW MARRIES AND HAS A FAMILY

Although serving God in this way was exciting, Andrew felt alone and wanted a wife. Andrew met, Corrie and they were married on June 27th 1958 in Alkmaar, Netherlands.

Corrie was now married to a missionary and Andrew very much continued to live like a missionary, smuggling bibles into countries closed countries. Over the years, God blessed Corrie and Andrew with five children, three boys and two girls.

Andrew kept serving God behind the iron curtain but the work had become difficult to do alone. Andrew thought about how helpful it would be to have a co-worker. This began with a man called Hans and slowly grew until a number of them were smuggling bibles into the communist countries. When the doors to communist Europe were opened in the 1960's, Brother Andrew began to serve and strengthen the churches in the Middle East and Islamic world.

<https://www.inspirationalchristians.org/evangelists/brother-andrew-biography/>



## Brother Yun – The heavenly Man

Liu Zhenying, known as Brother Yun, (literally "Brother Cloud"), born 1958, is an exiled Chinese Christian house church leader and evangelist. Brother Yun was involved in the Christian house church networks in China during the 1980s and 90s. Accounts about his life and ministry are to be found in his autobiography, *The Heavenly Man*. This book tells of his life from the age of sixteen, through his three accounts of imprisonment, and ending in his exile to Germany. He gained that name from one night of interrogation when he would only answer "I am a Heavenly Man!", instead of revealing his true name, in order to protect other Christians from the police.

### Life in China

Brother Yun's book tells both of great persecution, and a surprising series of miracles of deliverance very similar (though often even more 'extreme') to those found in the Bible. Despite a life of poverty in China, he since has spoken to thousands internationally with the Gospel message. Seen as a rebel among some Chinese for not joining the government-controlled Christian organization, he was imprisoned and tortured by the government authorities. His book reports that he became a highly wanted man across several provinces. He was finally arrested and sentenced to many years in prison. However, Brother Yun continued his ministry while in prison, with more claims of miraculous results. As a result, many prisoners and even prison officials are reported to have become born-again Christians. While he gained increasing favor from some officials, he also became a target of increased persecution by others. He was repeatedly beaten and became severely malnourished. While in prison, Brother Yun writes about undertaking a total fast without food or water for 74 days.

After many years in prison, he escaped from Hangzhou from which it is reported that nobody had previously escaped. He described how he heard the voice of the Holy Spirit, telling him to simply walk out the heavily guarded prison gate. Despite the risk of being shot, he wrote later that he obeyed the voice, and walked straight through several closed prison doors in front of many prison guards, across the prison yard and finally out of the main gate. Brother Yun stated that it was as if he had become invisible to the guards who stared straight through him. Although many expressed doubts that such a thing could happen, some prison guards have lost their jobs for this 'embarrassing mishap.' It is claimed that the official investigation by the Chinese Government concluded that Brother Yun received no human help in his escape and therefore should remain free. These reports have been corroborated by prisoners who occupied the same prison cell as Brother Yun. He remains the only person to claim to have escaped from this notorious maximum-security prison.

After escaping from China, Brother Yun took asylum in Germany. In 2001 he was imprisoned in Myanmar for seven months. He continues to evangelise the countries between China and Israel, which are among the least-Christianised of the world. He is married to Deling, with whom he has two children.

# Corrie Ten Boom

## The Dutch Watchmaker Who Saved 800 Jews from The Holocaust

From 1940 to 1944, Corrie ten Boom and her family used their home in the Netherlands as a hiding place for Jews who were fleeing the Nazis.

The watchmakers had a secret. In their home above the family shop on Barteljorisstraat in the Dutch city of Haarlem, they had built a safe room. There, Corrie ten Boom, her sister, and their father would save the lives of some 800 Jews fleeing the Nazis.

The ten Boom family joined the Dutch resistance after Germany invaded the Netherlands in 1940. Guided by their religious beliefs, they quietly funneled desperate Jewish refugees to safety. But in 1944, an informer would send the Nazis straight to their door.

Corrie ten Boom survived her time in concentration camps — barely — after her father and sister died.

Once the war ended, she set up a rehabilitation clinic for Holocaust survivors, preached the power of forgiveness, and wrote books about her experience.

This is her remarkable story.

Corrie ten Boom was born Cornelia Arnolda Johanna ten Boom on April 15, 1892. The youngest of four children, ten Boom grew up in a tight-knit religious family. They were Calvinists in the Dutch Reformed Church, which emphasized service to others.

The entire ten Boom family — aunts included — lived above the watch shop run by ten Boom's father, Casper. As ten Boom grew older, she became fascinated with the mechanics of watchmaking.

"I had always felt happy in this little shop, with its tiny voices and shelves of small shining faces," ten Boom wrote in her postwar memoir, *The Hiding Place*.

After her mother's death and a failed romance, ten Boom decided that she wanted to follow in her father's footsteps. "I was finding a joy in work I'd never dreamed of," ten Boom wrote. She had long helped her father with the administration of his shop, but now decided she wanted to learn the mechanics of watch repair herself.

She had no better mentor than Casper ten Boom. "Father's patience, his almost mystic rapport with the harmonies of watchworks, these were things that could not be taught," ten Boom remembered.

Alongside work with her father, ten Boom also enrolled in school to become a watchmaker. In 1922, she became the first licensed female watchmaker in Holland.

“And so was established the pattern our lives were to follow for over twenty years,” she wrote. In addition to helping her father run the shop, she established a youth club for young girls which offered religious instruction and classes.

But the peaceful existence of the ten Boom family was fragile. War clouds were on the horizon. Soon, visitors to the watch store came with worries about a looming invasion by Nazi Germany.

Over a stretch of seven days in May 1940, everything changed for Corrie ten Boom and her family. The Nazis invaded on May 10th. By May 17th, Germany occupied the Netherlands.

Before long, the country became a dangerous place for its Jewish citizens. Throughout the early 1940s, thousands and thousands of Jews were sent to concentration camps, leading Adolf Hitler acolyte Adolf Eichmann to state with satisfaction: “In the beginning you could say that the trains from the Netherlands were really rolling; it was quite wonderful.”

Corrie ten Boom vividly recalled how the mood of the country changed. Arrests of Jewish citizens became and more and more frequent. When ten Boom had Jewish customers, she delivered their watches so that they didn’t have to risk going out.

“At any minute there might be a rap on this door,” she remembered thinking while visiting with Jewish friends. “These children, this mother and father, might be ordered to the back of a truck.”

As members of the Dutch Reformed Church, the entire ten Boom family believed firmly in the equality of all human beings before God. They especially respected Jews as “God’s ancient people.” So when a Jewish woman named Kleermaker came to their door looking for help, they opened their arms.

“In this household, God’s people are always welcome,” Casper ten Boom said. He, Corrie, and her sister Bestie agreed to shelter her.

Before long, word of the ten Boom’s generosity spread. More and more people showed up at their doorstep looking for help. And as conditions in the Netherlands grew more dangerous, the family even built a secret room in Corrie ten Boom’s bedroom.

The room was no larger than a closet but could hold about six people. It had a crude ventilation system so they could get fresh air. The ten Booms also installed a buzzer in the house in order to quickly alert anyone there to hide during security sweeps. Some people stayed for an extended period; others moved on after a few days.

Despite the peril that lurked nearby, conditions within the ten Boom house were often light and merry. People hiding in the house played music together. At one point, everyone got together to rehearse a play.

But the danger outside was present — and growing nearer. On Feb. 28, 1944, it made its way to the ten Boom’s door.

Corrie ten Boom and her family had been betrayed by a Dutch informant. That day, the Gestapo raided the ten Boom home.

After a search of the house and an interrogation of the family, Corrie, Bestie, and Casper were arrested — the Gestapo never found the Jews hiding in the secret room.

The Gestapo ultimately arrested 30 people who had been in the ten Boom home that day. Eventually, they sent everyone home — except for Casper, Betsie, and Corrie ten Boom.

“I’d like to send you home, old fellow,” one of the guards at the Scheveningen prison said to Casper, who was then 84-years-old. “I’ll take your word that you won’t cause any more trouble.”

“If I go home today,” Casper responded, “I will open my door again to any man in need who knocks.”

Ten days later, he grew ill and died in prison.

After a few months in prison, Bestie and Corrie ten Boom were transferred to the Vught concentration camp in June 1944. That September, they were transferred again, to the notorious Ravensbrück concentration camp, which had been constructed specifically for women.

There, Betsie and Corrie lived under brutal conditions. They were among so-called “inferior beings” — social outcasts, Gypsies, resistance fighters, Jehovah’s Witnesses, political enemies, prostitutes, the disabled, and the mentally ill. The Nazi guards would routinely use their prisoners for twisted experiments. Between 1939 and 1945, more than 100,000 women would die there, including Betsie ten Boom.

Although Betsie and Corrie were able to find solace in their faith during their time in the camps, Betsie became ill at Ravensbrück. On December 16, 1944, she died at the age of 59.

“We must tell people what we have learned here,” Betsie said shortly before her death. “That there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been there.”

Due to a stroke of extraordinary luck — a clerical error — Corrie ten Boom was released 12 days after her sister’s death. She didn’t learn about the mistake until later. After ten Boom left, all the women in her age group were sent to the gas chamber.

After leaving Ravensbrück, Corrie ten Boom made her way home. Everything had changed. Her sister and father were dead. The city she’d known was utterly transformed.

But Corrie ten Boom hadn’t lost herself. After the war ended, she opened up a rehabilitation center for concentration camp survivors. She took the last words of her sister to heart, and

spread the message that “there is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still” and that “God will give us the love to be able to forgive our enemies.”

In 1947, Corrie ten Boom even forgave one of her former captors at a church in Munich.

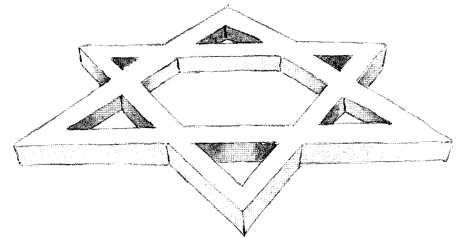
“You mentioned Ravensbrück in your talk,” he told her. “I was a guard in there.” He didn’t recognize his former prisoner. But ten Boom recognized him. Although she remembered the trauma of her captivity, she gave forgiveness when he asked for it.

“For I had to do it — I knew that,” ten Boom wrote. “The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us.”

In the next 30 years, Corrie ten Boom spent her life spreading that message. She traveled to over 60 countries to speak about the power of forgiveness.

By the time she died at the age of 91, on April 15, 1983, ten Boom had been recognized as one of Yad Vashem’s Righteousness Among Nations, an honor given by Israel to non-Jews who helped Jews during the Holocaust. Casper and Betsie ten Boom were recognized as well. Through their efforts, they’d saved some 800 lives.

Corrie ten Boom died on the same calendar day that she was born on – born April 15<sup>th</sup> 1892 and died April 15<sup>th</sup> 1983. In Judaism, this symmetry is considered a blessing for those who have completed their mission on Earth.



# David Brainerd

He died when still a young man. Only 29. But David Brainerd, a young Christian who ministered to the American Indians, (now called First Nations People). He was one of America's most influential missionaries. Though his life was brief, Brainerd's intense, passionate devotion to God affected countless Christians for many generations. Born in 1718 to a devout Christian family in Connecticut, USA, David Brainerd was orphaned at the age of 14. At twenty-one, swept up by the Great Awakening, he had a conversion experience and enrolled at university. Though an excellent student, Brainerd was dismissed in 1742 for criticizing one of the tutors. Brainerd apologized but he was not reinstated.

Brainerd studied with a pastor to prepare for the ministry and was soon licensed to preach. He went to work among the American Indians at Massachusetts. He diligently learned the Indian language but had little missionary success. So he moved on.

After being ordained as a minister, David began a new work among the Delaware Indians of Pennsylvania. Here too Brainerd saw little success in his ministry. Though often despondent because of his ineffective ministry, loneliness, and repeated illness brought on by tuberculosis, Brainerd determined to live wholly for God, whatever his outward success.

During 1745-1746, David Brainerd traveled to minister to the American Indians near Trenton, New Jersey and was amazed at the immediate responsiveness of the Indians to the Christian message. Over 100 Indians at a time came to him in the region. Brainerd poured out his life in ministry to these Indians, writing that he wanted "to burn out in one continual flame for God." He helped secure land for the Indians when theirs was threatened and soon constructed a church, school, carpenter's shop, and infirmary.

By the September in 1746 Brainerd was increasingly coughing up blood. The famous pastor, Jonathan Edwards, brought him to his home. There David Brainerd spent his last months, succumbing to tuberculosis on October 9, 1747.

Jonathan Edward's daughter Jerusha nursed Brainerd during his last illness, and a deep love developed between them. Edwards once overheard Brainerd tell Jerusha, "If I thought I should not see you, and be happy with you in another world, I could not bear to part with you. But we shall spend a happy eternity together." Jerusha contracted tuberculosis and died a few months after David, at the age of eighteen.

After David Brainerd's death, Jonathan Edwards edited and published his diary, describing it as an example of a devotional life "most worthy of imitation." This diary was to influence many missionaries in future generations, including William Carey and Henry Martyn, who went to India and Jim Eliot, the twentieth century missionary who gave his life ministering to the Auca Indians.

# Elisabeth Elliot

## ELISABETH'S EARLY YEARS

Elisabeth Elliot was born on December 27, 1926 in Brussels, Belgium, where her parents served as missionaries. Before she was a year old, they moved to America to Germantown, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia. Her family grew when they came to America, and Elisabeth gained four younger brothers and one younger sister.

While they lived in Germantown, Elisabeth's father was the editor for the Sunday School Times, which was a weekly journal that contained Sunday School lessons that were used in several Sunday School classrooms in churches throughout the country.

## CALLING TO ECUADOR

A true pioneer in the world of Christianity, Elisabeth went to Wheaton College and studied Greek, because she desired to translate the Bible for the remote regions in the world. While at the college, she met Jim Elliot. After graduation, Elisabeth went on a missionary expedition to Ecuador with other students from Wheaton, including Jim Elliot.

In the first year of their missionary journey, Jim and Elisabeth worked in different regions. A year after entering Ecuador, Jim joined Elisabeth in the Quichua Indian tribe. In 1953, Jim and Elisabeth were married and continued to serve in Ecuador. They had a daughter, Valerie Elliot Shepard. When the Auca tribe in Eastern Ecuador killed Jim Elliot and his four missionary partners, Elisabeth refused to give up on the people in that tribe. She continued to live in the region with her daughter and Rachel Saint, the sister of another one of the missionaries that the Auca tribe killed. They lived among the Quichua tribe.

While living in the Quichua tribe, two Auca women lived with Elisabeth for one year. During that year of living with the two Auca women, Elisabeth came to understand why the tribe killed her husband and the other missionaries. The tribe feared that outsiders were going to come into their tribe and take away their freedom. With that understanding, Elisabeth and Rachel Saint were able to go to the Auca tribe and build relationships with them. They led the people of the tribe to Jesus. The tribe saw and understood the forgiveness and grace that Elisabeth and Rachel extended to them.

Elisabeth wrote two books while she lived in Ecuador that contained her experiences and Jim's experiences with the Auca tribe. She wrote *Through the Gates of Splendor*, which gives an account of her and Jim's experiences with the Auca tribe.

## ELISABETH'S RETURN TO AMERICA

After spending two years with the Auca, Elisabeth came to America with her daughter in 1963. Elisabeth met Addison Leitch, a Bible college lecturer, and married him in 1969. During their marriage, Addison and Elisabeth toured the United States with speaking engagements.

Elisabeth never limited her message to women. She would inspire other Christians to live their lives, both men and women, with a passion to live for God.

Four years after they were married in 1973, Addison lost his battle with cancer and died. Valerie was thirteen when Elisabeth married Addison. When he died, Valerie was devastated to lose the father that she knew. She knew about Jim Elliot her biological father, but she knew Addison as a father who was present with her.

At the age of 89, on June 15, 2015 Elisabeth Elliot died. As her soul resides in heaven, her legacy lives on earth with her writings and stories.

Elisabeth was never afraid to tell where the woman's place was. She believed that women in the military needed to be in non-combative places because they would be needed at home, even if they were single. Also, she believed strongly that a married woman, especially to a pastor, was to support his ministry and not begin her own career. Her beliefs came because she counseled so many women whose marriages were falling apart because the women insisted on working outside of the home. Also, she studied the Bible and understood what it meant for women. Elisabeth didn't like addressing the issue, but she was very bold and forthright in her answers.

#### BOOKS WRITTEN BY ELISABETH ELLIOT

In her lifetime, Elisabeth wrote and published twenty-four books. She continued to travel and speak all over America sharing her story, her knowledge, and wisdom of God's Word until her health stopped her in 2004. Her most popular book is *Through the Gates of Splendor*.

*Through the Gates of Splendor* tells the story of Jim Elliot and their encounter with the tribes in Ecuador that eventually took his life.

#### QUOTES FROM ELISABETH ELLIOT

"God never denies our hearts' desire except to give us something better."

"I have one desire now—to live a life with reckless abandon for the Lord, putting all my strength and energy into it."

"Leave it all in the Hands that were wounded for you."

"Fear arises when we imagine that everything depends on us."

"We cannot give our lives to God and keep our bodies to ourselves."

"And underneath are the everlasting arms."

<https://www.inspirationalchristians.org/evangelists/elisabeth-elliott-biography/>



# Khalid Mansoor Soomro

Khalid Mansoor Soomro is from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. He was an ardent follower of Muhammad until he decided to put a challenge to some Christian students at his school. This dramatic testimony tells the first-person perspective of how a Muslim convert came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

## Khalid's Story

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15, NKJV)

I belong to a Muslim family. When I was 14 years old, I was studying in a convent school in Pakistan. My parents had forced me to learn the Qur'an by heart when I was seven, and so I did. I had a lot of Christian fellows (or acquaintances) at school and was surprised to see them studying because I had always found Christians to be of a low profile in the society.

I discussed and argued a lot with them about the accuracy of the Qur'an and rejection of the Bible by Allah in the Holy Qur'an. I wanted to force them to accept Islam. Often my Christian teacher told me not to do so. He said, "God may choose you as he chose the Apostle Paulus." I asked him to explain who Paulus was because I knew Muhammad only.

## A Challenge

One day I challenged the Christians, suggesting that we each burn the other's Holy book. They should burn the Qur'an, and I should do the same with the Bible. We agreed: "The book which would burn, would be false. The book which would not burn would have the truth. God himself would save his Word."

The Christians were frightened by the challenge. Living in an Islamic country and doing such a thing could lead them to face the law and meet its consequences. I told them I would do it by myself.

With them watching, first, I set the Qur'an on fire, and it burned before our eyes. Then I attempted to do the same with the Bible. As soon as I tried, the Bible struck my chest, and I fell to the ground. Smoke surrounded my body. I was burning, not physically, but from a spiritual fire. Then suddenly I saw a man with golden hair at my side. He was wrapped in light. He placed his hand on my head and said, "You are my son and from now on you will preach the gospel in your nation. Go! Your Lord is with you."

Then the vision continued, and I saw a gravestone, which had been removed from the tomb. Mary Magdalene spoke to the gardener who had taken the body of the Lord. The gardener was Jesus himself. He kissed the hand of Mary, and I woke up. I felt very strong as if someone could strike me, but I would not be hurt.

## **A Rejection**

I went home and I told my parents what had happened, but they did not believe me. They thought the Christians had me under some magic, but I told them that everything had happened before my very own eyes and that many people were watching. They still did not believe me and kicked me out of my home, refusing to accept me as their family member.

I went to a church close to home; I told the priest all about what had happened. I asked him to show me the Bible. He gave me the Scriptures, and I read about the event I had seen in the vision with Mary Magdalene. That day, February 17, 1985, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.

## **A Calling**

My family rejected me. I went to various churches and learned about the Word of God. I also followed many Bible courses and eventually went into Christian ministry. Now, after 21 years, I have had the joy of seeing many people come to the Lord and accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

Thanks to the Lord, I am now married and have a Christian family. My wife Khalida and I are involved in the work of the Lord and have been able to share the miracles God has done in our lives.

Even though it is not easy and we face many hardships, we feel like Paul who went through hardships and suffering for the glory of his Savior, Jesus, who himself suffered during his walk on earth and his time on the cross.

We thank God the Father for sending his Son to this earth and giving us free, eternal life through him. Likewise, we thank God for his Spirit who encourages us day by day to live for him.

# Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi

**Occupation:** Civil Rights Leader

**Born:** October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India

**Died:** January 30, 1948 in New Delhi, India

**Best known for:** Organizing non-violent civil rights protests

## Biography:

Mohandas Gandhi is one of the most famous leaders and champions for justice in the world. His principles and firm belief in non-violence have been followed by many other important civil rights leaders including Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela. His renown is such that he is mostly just referred to by the single name "Gandhi".

## Where did Mohandas Gandhi grow up?

Mohandas was born in Porbandar, India on October 2, 1869. He came from an upper-class family and his father was a leader in the local community. As was tradition where he grew up, Mohandas' parents arranged a marriage for him at the age of 13. Both the arranged marriage and the young age may seem strange to some of us, but it was the normal way of doing things where he grew up.

Mohandas' parents wanted him to become a barrister, which is a type of lawyer. As a result, when he was 19 years old Mohandas traveled to England where he studied law at the University College London. Three years later he returned to India and started his own law practice. Unfortunately, Mohandas' law practice wasn't successful, so he took a job with an Indian Law firm and moved to South Africa to work out of the South African law office. It was in South Africa where Gandhi would experience racial prejudice against Indians and would begin his work in civil rights.

## What did Gandhi do?

Once back in India, Gandhi led the fight for Indian independence from the British Empire. He organized several non-violent civil disobedience campaigns. During these campaigns, large groups of the Indian population would do things like refusing to work, sitting in the streets, boycotting the courts, and more. Each of these protests may seem small by themselves, but when most of the population does them at once, they can have an enormous impact.

Gandhi was put in prison several times for organizing these protests. He would often fast (not eat) while he was in prison. The British government would eventually have to release him because the Indian people had grown to love Gandhi. The British were scared what would happen if they let him die.

One of Gandhi's most successful protests was called the Salt March. When Britain put a tax on salt, Gandhi decided to walk 241 miles to the sea in Dandi to make his own salt. Thousands of Indians joined him in his march.

Gandhi also fought for civil rights and liberties among Indian people.

### **Did he have other names?**

Mohandas Gandhi is often called Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma is a term that means Great Soul. It's a religious title sort of like "Saint" in Christianity. In India he is called the Father of the Nation and also Bapu, which means father.

How did Mohandas die?

Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948. He was shot by a terrorist while attending a prayer meeting.

### **More Facts about Mohandas Gandhi**

The 1982 movie Gandhi won the Academy Award for best motion picture.

His birthday is a national holiday in India. It is also the International Day of Non-Violence.

He was the 1930 Time Magazine Man of the Year.

Gandhi wrote many books. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi have 50,000 pages!

He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times.

[https://www.ducksters.com/biography/mohandas\\_gandhi.php](https://www.ducksters.com/biography/mohandas_gandhi.php)

## **Richard Wurmbrand** (1909 – 2001)

“He stood in the midst of lions, but they could not devour him.” – Philadelphia Herald

Richard Wurmbrand was born the youngest of four boys in a Jewish family on March 24, 1909, in Bucharest, Romania. Gifted intellectually and fluent in nine languages, Richard was active in politics and worked as a stockbroker. On Oct. 26, 1936, Richard married Sabina Oster, who was also Jewish. They placed their faith in Jesus Christ in 1938 as a result of the influence of a German carpenter. Richard was ordained as an Anglican, and later Lutheran, minister.

During World War II, Richard and Sabina saw opportunities for evangelism among the occupying German forces. They preached in bomb shelters and rescued Jewish children out of the ghettos. Richard and Sabina were repeatedly arrested and beaten and, at least once, nearly executed. Sabina lost her Jewish family in Nazi concentration camps.

In 1945, Romanian Communists seized power and a million Russian troops poured into the country. Pastor Wurmbrand ministered to his oppressed countrymen while engaging in bold evangelism to the Russian soldiers.

Between 1945 and 1947, Richard distributed 1 million Gospels to Russian troops, often disguising the books as Communist propaganda. Richard also helped arrange the smuggling of Gospels into Russia.

On Feb. 29, 1948, the secret police kidnapped Richard as he traveled to church and took him to their headquarters. He was locked in a solitary cell and labeled “Prisoner Number 1.” He was tortured for his faith, but he stood firm and did not deny Christ. In 1950, his wife, Sabina, was also imprisoned. She was forced to serve as a laborer on the Danube Canal project, leaving their 9-year-old son, Mihai, alone and homeless. He was then taken in by Christian friends, who risked imprisonment to care for the child of a political prisoner. Sabina was released after three years, and Richard was also later released, only to be re-arrested and then released in an amnesty in 1964.

In December 1965, two organizations paid a \$10,000 ransom to allow the Wurmbrand family to leave Romania. Reluctant to leave his homeland, Richard was convinced by other underground church leaders to leave and become a “voice” to the world for the underground church. Richard, Sabina and their son, Mihai, left Romania for Norway and then traveled on to England.

Richard began his ministry of being a voice for persecuted Christians in the West, where he also wrote his testimony of persecution, *Tortured for Christ*. Later, Richard moved to the United States, and in 1967 the Wurmbrands officially began a ministry committed to serving our persecuted Christian family called *Jesus to the Communist World* (later renamed *The Voice of the Martyrs*). This work continues today in more than 60 countries where Christians are persecuted.

## Sundar Singh

Singh was raised a member of the Sikh religion. Prior to his conversion, Sundar attended a primary school run by the American Presbyterian Mission where the New Testament was read daily as a "textbook." Sundar "refused to read the Bible at the daily lessons because he thought it was false.

In the midst of such confusion and while only fourteen years old, his mother died, and Sundar underwent a crisis of faith. His mother was a loving saintly woman and they were very close. In his anger, Sundar burned a copy of one of the Gospels in public. Within three days Sundar Singh could bear his misery no longer. Late one night in December 1903, he rose from bed and prayed that God reveal himself to him if he really existed. Otherwise -- "I planned to throw myself in front of the train which passed by our house." For seven hours Sundar Singh prayed. "O God, if there is a God, reveal thyself to me tonight." The next train was due at five o'clock in the morning. The hours passed. Suddenly the room filled with a glow. A man appeared before him. Sundar Singh heard a voice say, "How long will you deny me? I died for you; I have given my life for you." He saw the man's hands, pierced by nails.

Amazed that his vision had taken the unexpected form of Jesus, Sundar was convinced in his heart that Jesus was the true Savior, and that He was alive. Sundar fell on his knees before Him and experienced an astonishing peacefulness which he had never felt before. The vision disappeared, but peace and joy lingered within him.

Despite his family's pleas, bribes, and threats, Sundar wanted to be baptized in the Christian faith. After his father spoke words of official rejection over him, Sundar became an outcast from his people. He cut off the hair he had worn long like every Sikh man. Against great opposition, he was baptized on his birthday in 1905, in an English church in Simla.

Conventional Indian churches were willing to grant him a pulpit, but their rules were foreign to his spirit. Indeed, he felt that a key reason the gospel was not accepted in India was because it came in a garb foreign to Indians. He decided to become a sadhu, so that he could dedicate himself to the Lord Jesus. He was convinced that this was the best way to introduce the Gospel to his people since it was the only way which his people were accustomed to. As a sadhu, he wore a yellow robe, lived on the charity of others, abandoned all possession and maintained celibacy. In this lifestyle, he was free to devote himself to the Lord. Dressed in his thin yellow robe, Sundar Singh took to the road and began a life of spreading the simple message of love and peace and rebirth through Jesus. He carried no money or other possessions, only a New Testament.

Sundar journeyed much. He traveled all over India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Between 1918-1919, he visited Malaysia, Japan and China. He preached in Europe and in Jerusalem. He traveled and preached in India and Tibet. Sundar visited Tibet every summer and in 1929, he visited there and was never seen again.

# Thinking about biographies

Use the Thinking Hats to write a summary of the biography.

## 1. The White Hat (The facts)

- What is the name of the person? (Write this as a heading)
- When was the person born and when did they die?
- Where were they born?
- Where did they work?
- What was the main type of work they did?



white

## 2. The Yellow Hat (The good points)

- How did this person help other people?
- Write about one good point that stands out to you in the biography.
- What were the strengths of this person's character?



yellow

## 3. The Black Hat (The bad points)

- What difficulties (hardships) did this person experience?
- Write about any sad events that happened in the person's life.
- What difficulties were the people of the country experiencing? What needs did they have?
- Were there any times in this person's life when they acted wrongly or made a wrong decision?



black

## 4. The Red Hat (Emotions)

- Write about one amazing event in the biography and explain how you felt when you read or heard it.
- Describe some of the emotions of the person and why they felt happy, sad, angry, worried or otherwise.



red

## 5. The Green Hat (The creative hat)

- What creative ideas did this person think of to solve problems?
- If this person did not choose to carry out the work they were called to do, what might have happened? (How would it have been different for people of that country.)



green

## 6. The Blue Hat (What we can learn from the biography)

- What did you learn from the life of this person?
- What does it challenge you to do?



blue