

Biographies Level 7

The following biographies are studied in *Themes for Christian Studies* Level 7

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God's Smuggler

Many people today show bravery in serving God. Some people face dangers as they take His word to places where it is forbidden. They must trust God to protect them. Brother Andrew is a person who has served in such places.

Andrew, son of a blacksmith, grew up in a typical Dutch town. Living in Holland, a free country, Andrew had great concern for people in countries where the gospel could not be preached. Some of these countries were Russia, Hungary, Albania and China. In those days, the Socialist government did not allow religious freedom.

When Andrew grew older he conducted missions to these countries. With his car packed with Bibles, concealed in all sorts of secret compartments, he would drive his car through border crossings. As he did, he prayed that the Lord would 'close the eyes' of the border guards. God did it time and time again.

Here is a story about one of Andrew's experiences. He had just made it through the Hungarian border without being caught. God had again made seeing eyes blind. He drove on through the beautiful country side which followed the River Danube. He started to feel hungry so decided to stop for some lunch. He drove down a sandy lane and stopped at a little clearing at the water's edge. In order to get to the camp stove, Andrew had to move several boxes of gospel literature that the guards had just overlooked. No sooner had he opened the can of peas and carrots when he heard the roar of a speed boat approaching. The boat was heading towards Andrew at full throttle. In the bow, stood a soldier with a drawn machine-gun. At the last possible instant the boat swerved and coasted to a neat landing at the river's edge. Andrew now saw that there were two other soldiers in the boat. The man in the front leapt ashore followed by another one.

"Lord," Andrew prayed, "help me not to be afraid."

The first soldier kept the machine-gun on Andrew while the other ran to the car. Andrew kept stirring the peas and carrots as he heard the car door open.

"Well," said Andrew, "it is certainly nice to have you drop in this way. Would you care to join me?"

Andrew reached into his picnic box and drew out two extra plates. He motioned to the soldier to come and sit down. The soldier stared stonily and shook his head, as if to say, "I'm not going to be bribed." Andrew could hear the other soldier poking around. Any moment now he was going to ask about those boxes.

"Well," said Andrew, "if you don't mind, I'm going to go ahead and eat while the food is hot."

Andrew bowed his head and prayed. Then an amazing thing happened. While he prayed there was no sound from the soldier inspecting his car. Just as soon as he had finished praying, the door slammed. Andrew heard the sound of footsteps coming rapidly towards him. He picked up his fork and started to eat. For a moment both soldiers stood over him. Then abruptly they whirled around. Without looking behind

them, they ran down to their boat, jumped in, and roared off in a spray of white. That was the last he saw of them.

God is Protector – Themes for Christian Studies 7

Activities

1. Name some of the countries that Andrew went to.
2. Why did he want to go to these countries in particular?
3. What miracles did God do for Andrew, to enable him to get Bibles into these countries?
4. Why would you say that Andrew showed great courage?
5. What do you think could have happened to Andrew if he had been caught?
6. Write about a time when God has protected you, or someone close to you.

Simpson and his Donkey

During the First World War, Private Simpson, a British soldier, served with the Australian Ambulance Corps. The Ambulance Corps was responsible for giving first aid to the wounded and for bringing them to safety as quickly as possible. Wherever the bullets rained thickest, there Simpson was to be found, bandaging the wounded, or holding a water flask to the lips of a dying soldier.

On the second day after landing, about one hundred donkeys were brought ashore to carry tins of water to the soldiers. 'Murphy' was among them. From the moment of their first meeting, Simpson and Murphy became fast friends, and were afterwards always to be seen together. Day after day the two did their noble work, setting out with a tin of water and bringing back the wounded. The animal seemed to know that he must tread carefully to avoid the bumps and jolts over a long and tiresome road. Had he not done so, the journey may have meant death to a badly injured soldier. Often a man would be lying wounded, and no one else would know until Simpson found him or the donkey scented him out.

For some time this life-saving work went on, but one day the animal was struck by a bullet, and had to be left behind. Then Simpson and some of his comrade's half dragged and half carried the poor beast back to the lines. A few days later, Murphy, although slightly lame, was again at his work and as keen as ever.

One day, however, he came down the gully carrying a wounded man on his back, but his master was not there. As soon as he had delivered his burden, he trotted back up the gully. Not long afterwards he was seen sniffing at a form lying quite still on the ground. It was Simpson, who had been shot through the heart while returning slowly with a wounded comrade. The story of Simpson and his donkey will long be remembered among the bravest deeds of Anzac.

God is a Servant – Themes for Christian Studies 7

Simpson and his donkey - Activities

1. Describe the work of the Australian Ambulance Corps during the First World War.
2. What work did the donkeys carry out?
3. How do we know that Murphy had a special love for Simpson?
4. Who made a sacrifice in this story?
5. What sacrifice was made?
6. What is the greatest sacrifice anyone can make? (John 15:13)
7. Who made the greatest sacrifice for us?



Father Damien, the Friend of Lepers

Joseph Damien was born in 1840 in the village of Tremeloo in Flanders, Belgium. He was the son of a Belgian peasant, and as a boy, often helped his father with the work on the farm. Because of this he grew into a strong lad, and being very handy with tools, was able to do all kinds of useful jobs.

Joseph and his brother were brought up to understand the Christian message, and it was Joseph's brother, Pamphile who wanted to be a missionary to the Sandwich Islands.

However, Pamphile became seriously ill, and realized that he might never go to the Sandwich Islands and share the gospel with the people there.

"Would it make you happy if I took your place as a missionary?" asked Joseph one day. Pamphile's eyes lighted up for a moment and he squeezed his brother's hand, smiling.

Joseph wrote to the church for permission to be his brother's replacement on the mission. When permission was granted Joseph was very excited.

In 1863, Joseph Damien started out by sailing-ship for the South Seas. He was full of enthusiasm as he began his ministry on one of the Sandwich Islands. He worked there teaching and preaching for ten years. During this time, the disease of leprosy was detected among an increasing number of the local people. Because leprosy is contagious the authorities became increasingly alarmed for the disease was spreading at a great rate. The government decided to isolate all lepers on a separate island to prevent any further spread of the disease in the community. The island of Molokai was set aside for lepers and anyone banished to the island knew they had little or no hope of ever returning to their home and families.

Father Damien's kind heart was deeply touched by the sad plight of these poor people and he approached the Bishop of the church in the islands for permission to go to Molokai and minister to the neglected lepers. The Bishop agreed to his request and he made his way to the isolation from which he would never return.

On arrival at Molokai he was appalled at the conditions in which the poor people had been left to exist. They lived in makeshift houses, often with poor roofing that let the frequent rains in, creating mud puddles on the earth floor. They had no regular food supply and insufficient water for their daily needs. Some of the more fortunate had relatives who brought them food or clothing occasionally, but they would not venture on to the island and any such goods would be left on the beach without contacting the ones for whom it was intended.

As soon as he arrived, Father Damien set to work to supply the settlement with an adequate water supply. He asked the government for materials and, with the help of the strongest lepers, he built a reservoir in the hills and laid water pipes to the villages near the coast. His next task was to build better housing for the people. In ten years, Father Damien had seen to the building of six hundred houses. There was the need for a hospital where the more advanced cases of leprosy could be treated medically.

He nursed them, dressed their wounds, comforted them when they were dying and dug their graves when they were to be buried. As time passed, people in Europe heard of his unselfish work and sent out money and goods to help in the work.

One day as he worked in the hospital, he accidentally spilt some boiling water on his foot. "That's strange," he thought. "I can't feel anything. I should be feeling the burning."

Leprosy affects the nerves of the body and causes lack of feeling on the affected parts. The fingers and toes wear away because, without any feeling, the victim damages them on hard and sharp things. Because there is no warning pain, there is irreparable damage done to their limbs.

Father Damien went to a doctor. "Do I have leprosy, doctor?" he asked. After a thorough examination the doctor looked at him gravely and confirmed his suspicions.

Father Damien said that even if he could be cured by forsaking the island, he would not desert the lepers. They were the people to whom God had called him, and there he would remain. He worked on as a leper among the lepers until his death. Father Damien's ministry is remembered around the world. He had lived out the life of Jesus among the outcasts of the islands, showing kindness and love to them, and brought many to know Jesus personally.

God is a Servant – Themes for Christian Studies 7

Activities

1. What work did Joseph Damien do as a child?
2. Where are the Sandwich Islands?
3. Describe Joseph's work there.
4. Why were the people with leprosy sent to the island of Molokai?
5. How did Joseph Damien help the lepers on the island?
6. How did he first realise that he had leprosy?
7. Why do you think he chose to stay on the island, even after he caught the disease?
8. What do you think Jesus means when He asks us all to take up our cross? (Read Luke 9:23-26)
9. What did Jesus say about serving in John 12:23-26?

George Muller

In the 1830s, George Muller was disturbed by the number of homeless children throughout England. Although he himself had no money to provide for these children, he prayed for God's provision, and proved the faithfulness of God. He prayed for enough money to set up an orphanage, and without telling any one of the needs, started receiving funds from various Christian people.

On December 7th, 1835, he wrote in his diary:

'Today I received the first shilling for the orphan house. Afterwards I received another shilling from a German brother.

On December 9th, he wrote:

This afternoon, the first piece of furniture was given - a large wardrobe.'

On the evening of the 9th he addressed a meeting, announcing the planned establishment of the home.

"The home will only be established," he said, "if God provides the means and suitable staff to run it."... "Under no circumstances," he continued, "will any individual ever be asked for money or materials."... "The institution will be for truly destitute children and any orphan whose relatives are able and willing to pay for their maintenance will be ineligible. The children will receive a plain education. The chief and special end of the institution will be to seek, with God's special blessing, to bring the children to the knowledge of Jesus Christ by instructing them in the Scriptures."

As God continued to provide, George Muller eventually supervised the building of five large orphanages, housing thousands of children. This reminds us of the story of the loaves and fishes. The boy had only five loaves and two small fish. It seemed that the small amount of food was next to nothing compared to the amount of food needed. However, because the boy was willing to give, Jesus was able to bless and multiply the amount.

Sometimes Christians who decide to help the poor feel the same as the disciples did: so little food and so many to feed. However, God can do great things when we are willing to give what we have. Something as small as a mustard seed can grow into a big tree.

God is Provider – Themes for Christian Studies 7

Activities – George Muller

PART A

1. George Muller did not receive money for the orphans by asking people for it. How do you think he received the money?
2. Describe the education that the children received.
3. Do countries such as Australia and U.S.A. produce more than enough food?
4. What often happens to the surplus?
5. What prevents poor countries from receiving the surplus?
6. Why is it that some countries cannot produce enough food for their population?
7. What do you think God would want people to do about the food crisis?
8. Has God provided enough food for the whole world?
9. Who is responsible for the hunger that many people experience?
10. What blessings are there when we share with people who are poor? (Proverbs 22:9)

PART B - God is provider

Read:

Because God has given people a free will, He cannot change the hearts of people who are selfish and greedy. He cannot change the hearts of people who start wars and deliberately pollute the earth. However, Christians can do their part.

Peacemaker: Mary Slessor

Mary Slessor was born in Scotland in 1848. She came from a very poor family. Her father died when she was quite young, and her mother supported the four children through her job at the weaving mills. When Mary was only eleven, she started working at the mills with her mother. The family lived in one room, in a dirty street.

When Mary was a teenager, she decided to educate herself. Mary's mother was a Christian, and while attending the Presbyterian church, Mary was challenged by the need for missionaries in West Africa.

Mary went to Africa and dedicated her life to helping the people of Calabar, (now in Nigeria). The hot, humid climate, and prevalence of malaria made life difficult, but she didn't give up. Mary is remembered for her work as a peace maker among the people. The slave trade, which had developed in earlier years, had made human life cheap. White people would arrive on African shores and offer black traders all kinds of gifts for capturing men, women and children, who would then be forced on to ships and taken to faraway places to work for the whites. Although this practice was no longer in existence when Mary arrived, the bribery and corruption of earlier years had caused tribesmen of Calabar to become cruel and unconcerned for the value of human life. Fighting, drinking and cruelty to women were common. Mary rescued hundreds of unwanted babies, particularly twins. The tribesmen came to respect her and she convinced them of the need to talk about their troubles instead of fighting. She set up court cases and reasoned with the tribesmen.

She also set up schools and cared for the sick. She built a hospital and set up training centres for women. Mary never stopped working. She finally died in Calabar in 1915.

God is Peace – Themes for Christian Studies 7

Activities

1. Describe Mary's childhood.
2. What were some of the hardships she endured in Africa?
3. What was the slave trade?
4. What problems arose after the slave trade ended?
5. How did Mary help?

Martin Luther King

Martin Luther King was the minister of a Baptist church in Alabama, U.S.A. In 1955, a Negro woman called Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. Although not the first incident of its kind, it stirred King and some others into action. King believed that he must take action against injustice in a non-violent way. He called for a boycott of the city's bus services by the whole Negro population. It was decided that on the Monday, no Negroes would ride on buses. That evening a meeting was held in one of the city's churches. Thousands gathered outside. It was decided that the boycott would continue, and a campaign would be launched. King delivered a speech which explained how the campaign would be run.

He told the crowd that love must be their ideal. 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' He believed that if they failed to do that, their protest would be meaningless, and only bring shame upon themselves. He told the people that in spite of the mistreatment they had received, they must not become bitter, and end up hating white people.

The campaign continued for over a year. As they were met with violence, King continually reminded the people of their non-violent stand. One night, King's house was bombed while he was at a meeting. He spoke to the crowd who gathered at the scene. After assuring them that his wife and baby were alright, he told them to go home and put down their weapons. He reminded them that the problem could not be solved through retaliatory violence. Remember the words of Jesus, he said: 'He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword.' King told the people again that they must love their white brothers no matter what they did to the Negroes. He believed that meeting hate with love was the only way.

Just before his death, Martin Luther King said:

*"I still have a dream today,
That one day war will come to an end,
That men will beat their swords into ploughshares
And their spears into pruning hooks...
With this faith we will be able to speed up the day
When there will be peace on earth
And goodwill towards men.
It will be a glorious day
The morning stars will sing together
And the sons of God will shout for joy."*

Shortly before Jesus died, He was arrested. One of His friends reached for his sword, and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest.
Jesus said: *"Put back your sword, for all those who draw the sword will die by the sword. "Matthew 26:52*

At His death Jesus said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34*

Activities – Martin Luther King

1. Who was Martin Luther King?
2. Why was Rosa Parks arrested?
3. What does this tell us about the laws in the U.S.A. at the time?
4. If you were a black person, how would you feel?
5. How did Martin Luther King stand against the injustice without violence?
6. What is a boycott?
7. How did the boycott affect the government?
8. How long did the campaign go on for?
9. Why did Martin Luther King only believe in protesting in a non-violent way?
10. King told his people that they must not hate white people, even though white people had mistreated them. What did Jesus say about this? (Matthew 5:43-48)
11. How should a Christian react when someone does something wrong to them?
Choose the correct answer:
 - ◆ ignore that person
 - ◆ stand up for the truth in a non-violent way
 - ◆ fight back with violence
12. How did Jesus put His own words into practice at His crucifixion and the time leading up to it? Read...
 - ◆ Luke 23:34
 - ◆ Matthew 26: 50-54
13. Find out more about Martin Luther King. Find out how he died.