

Caroline Chisholm

Caroline Chisholm came to Australia in the early 1800s along with many others new settlers. She was married to a sea captain called Archibald. Although originally from Britain, Caroline and Archibald had worked in India, helping British soldiers and their families. They were very excited as they left India to come to a new land. The first European settlers had arrived in Australia only 50 years before.

"Where will we be living, Archibald?" asked Caroline.

"We will be at Sydney, the largest town. My duty will be to help guard the convicts who have been sent out from the over-crowded prisons in England."

When they arrived in Sydney they found it to be a busy, bustling sea-port with narrow, unpaved streets. The horses and carts had churned up the dirt roads so much that they were scarcely useable. Some of the people were rich. They had fine horses and elegant carriages. There were also some wealthy land owners with well-built homes, but most people had tumble down shacks, or small dingy houses to live in. However, hundreds had no homes at all. They slept under trees or in the shelter of rocks. This is what worried Caroline. She was especially concerned for the young women and girls who had no home.

"Why are there so many young girls on the streets all day and night?" Caroline asked the wife of an officer.

"Oh, my dear, the government in England sends out these immigrants. They are expected to find work and a home when they arrive in Sydney, but there's not enough work for all the people who arrive here," was the reply.

Caroline decided that she wanted help the young women. She took as many as she could into her own home, but there were hundreds more sleeping on the streets and in the parks.

"Something must be done!" she said to Archibald. "These girls need a big home where they can be sheltered and protected. I'm going to see if any of our friends can help me do something for them."

At first no one was helpful. Then after a lot of persistence, Caroline finally persuaded the governor to allow her to use an old building for the girls. The walls were cracked and it was rat infested. The only light was from her own candle.

Caroline poisoned the rats and cleaned up the old building as best she could. Soon she had ninety young women to care for. She asked friends to give food to feed the girls. She then tried to find jobs for the girls. Many of the jobs were on farms in the country. The girls, who had come from the crowded cities of England, were too afraid to go to the country on their own, so Caroline went with them. The roads

were rough and there were rivers without bridges to be crossed. The hot sun would beat upon them and the rain poured into the open cart. Bushrangers made the journeys dangerous. These men would often hold up travellers in order to rob them.

As time went on Caroline worked at bringing together again the families of convicts. Many people had been imprisoned for small crimes like stealing a loaf of bread. As punishment, these people had then been sent to Australia to work. They were therefore separated from their families. Caroline arranged for wives and children who had been left behind in England to join their fathers and husbands in the new colony.

Caroline is remembered most of all today for her kindness to needy young women, at a time when their troubles were ignored by everyone else. She loved God and shared His love with others, giving up her own comforts to help those in need.

God is Love - Themes for Christian Studies 5

Activities

1. How did Caroline help?
2. What can Christians learn from her example?
3. How did Caroline carry out the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:35-36?
4. Read the list of the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. Which fruits of the Spirit do you think Caroline showed the most?
5. Show the fruit of kindness by being an 'angel' to someone this week. Do not let the person know that you are going to be their angel. Plan ways of showing kindness towards that person, but do your acts of kindness in secret. You can do anonymous jobs for them, or make gifts for them. Write the person's name on the gift and leave it in a place for them to find. You could also make message cards. Write something that would make the person feel happy. It could be a verse from the Bible.

6. Writing project

Imagine that you lived in England in the 1800's. You have stolen a loaf of bread because your family is hungry and you have no money. You are caught and you are sent to Australia on a ship because there is no room in the prisons. You arrive in Australia alone, and far away from your family. Write a story explaining your situation. Before you do, read some of these convict letters. They may help to give you some ideas. By the way, *New Holland* was the name for Australia in those days.