

Death in the Jungle

The Auca Indians who lived in the jungles of Ecuador were a fierce tribe, feared by all other tribes. In the 1950s they were still living in their traditional tribal way. The only contact with white people they had ever had was that of the rubber traders some years before. The rubber traders had come with guns, which had terrified the Aucas. When the five young American missionaries, Nat, Jim, Peter, Ed and Roger decided to make contact with the Aucas, they were really exposing themselves to great danger.

Ed, Jim and Peter had already spent three years working with another tribe of Indians in Ecuador. These were the more friendly Quichas. The Quichas territory bordered that of the Aucas. There they had got to know Nat. He was a pilot with Missionary Aviation Fellowship. His work involved flying a single-engined plane over the jungles and landing on tiny air strips which were merely small clearings in the jungle. He helped other missionaries with transport and supplies. He enjoyed his work, even though it was dangerous.

The four missionaries began praying about going into Auca territory. God would have to open the way for them, as the government had made things so difficult. One day they came across an Auca girl called Dayuma who had run away from the tribe. They were able to make friends with her and learn some of her language. Once a week they would fly over the Auca village and drop gifts using a canvas bucket on a long rope. Their first gift was a shiny aluminium kettle filled with coloured buttons. Other gifts included salt, axe-heads, plastic combs, clothing and little parcels of food wrapped in banana leaves.

Each time they flew over there were more and more Aucas waiting to receive their gifts. They started flying lower with the hope of broadcasting a message to the Aucas through a loud speaker. With the help of Dayuma, they were able to translate the message into the Auca language. "We like you. We have come to pay you a visit," was the message.

The Aucas seemed to be responding. They started sending gifts back to the missionaries using the bucket and rope. They sent a black bird in a cage and some cotton thread.

By now, a fifth missionary, Roger, had joined the four. It was time to make a landing in Auca territory. Nat, the pilot landed the plane safely on a sandy beach four miles from the Auca settlement. They set up base here and prepared to stay for two weeks. They kept up their routine of flying over the settlement delivering gifts. It was not long before the Aucas realized that the plane was landing on the beach and their curiosity overcame their fear. Three Aucas came to investigate. The missionaries made friends with the three Aucas and one of them even agreed to have a ride in the plane.

A couple of days later the men radioed their wives as usual, saying that they had seen ten Aucas heading towards the base. That was the last message they sent. A search party some days later found their bodies in a shallow river. The five missionaries had been killed by the Aucas.

Although the death of the men was tragic, they had pioneered the way for others to spread the gospel. Many other brave Christians continued their work. Two of these were Jim's wife and Nat's older sister. Other missionaries from the U.S.A. also joined them. Even some Indians from the surrounding tribes who had previously received the Good News, came to share with the Aucas. Many Aucas eventually gave their lives to Jesus, and they will always remember the five men who gave their lives to bring them the Good News.

God is a Servant – Themes for Christian Studies 6

Activities

PART A

1. Where is Ecuador?
2. Why were the four American missionaries exposing themselves to great danger?
3. How were the Quicha Indians different to the Aucas?
4. Describe the work of Nat.
5. How did the Auca girl, Dayuma, help the missionaries prepare for reaching the Auca tribe?
6. How did the missionaries try to make friends with the Aucas, before they actually visited them?
7. What kind of gifts did they deliver?
8. What gifts did the Aucas send back?
9. What made the missionaries think that the Aucas were accepting them?
10. How did the work of these men continue after their death?
11. Read about someone else who gave his life for Jesus (Acts 7:51-60)

PART B

God is a servant

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." He is the light that had been spoken about in the Old Testament. People who knew the Scriptures knew that someone would come who would be a light in their world of darkness. Many did not recognise Jesus. They did not realise that He was the _____ that had come into the world. They were not listening. For people who did listen, they knew that Jesus had come to bring Good News. Jesus told people that they _____ be forgiven and healed if they believed in Him. People didn't have to offer sacrifices any more. Jesus had come to _____ their sins once and for all.

Missing words: forgive light could

How can I help to spread the Good news?

I can tell God that I _____ to be his servant.

I can use my gifts and _____ for Him.

I can ask God to help me meet people who need to _____ about Jesus.

I can ask God to give me the right _____ to say.

Missing words: know words want talents