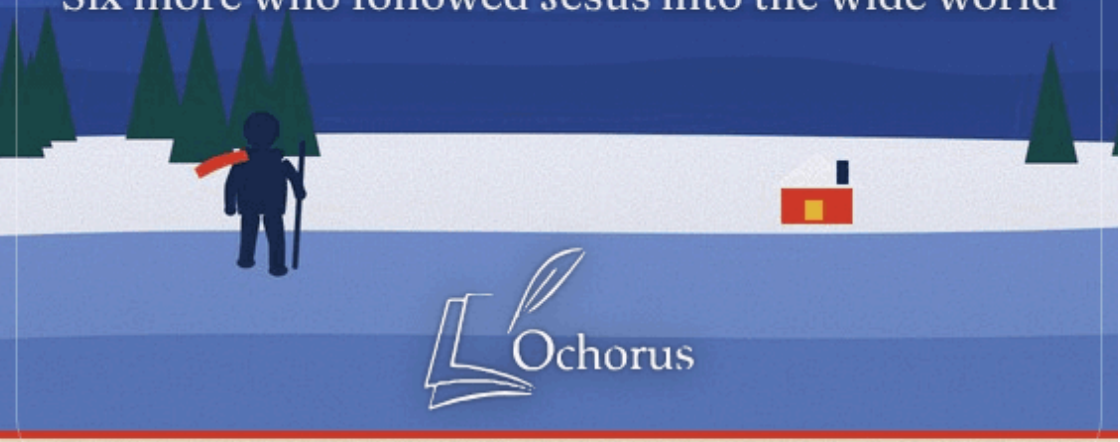
OCHORUS ORIGINALS

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Brave for God: Book Four

Six more who followed Jesus into the wide world



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Matthew 10:8

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John Paton: The Man Who Dug for Water

John Paton grew up in a poor family in Scotland, in a tiny cottage where his father prayed aloud so often and so warmly that the children half believed heaven was just on the other side of the wall. When John was a grown man he heard about the people of the New Hebrides — far-off islands in the South Seas where no one had ever told the people about Jesus, and where strangers were sometimes killed. John decided to go. When an old man warned him that he would be eaten by cannibals, John answered that once he was dead it made little difference whether he was eaten by cannibals or by worms — what mattered was doing what God had asked.

In 1858 John and his young wife Mary sailed to the island of Tanna and built a little house on the shore. But almost at once, great sorrow fell upon them. Mary and their baby son both grew sick and died, only a few months after they had arrived. John dug their graves with his own hands and buried them there on that lonely island. He said afterwards that if he had not been sure that Jesus was near him, he thought the grief would have driven him mad.

He did not run away. John stayed on Tanna alone among people who often threatened to kill him. Many nights he lay awake listening for the sound of men creeping to his door, and again and again God kept him safe. At last, when the danger grew too fierce, he escaped to another island — but he was not finished.

On the little island of Aniwa, John tried something the islanders thought was madness: he began to dig a deep hole in the ground, looking for fresh water. The people had only ever known water that fell as rain from the sky, and they laughed at the strange missionary digging downward instead of looking up. Then, far below, John struck cool, clear water bubbling up out of the earth. The islanders were astonished — water from the ground, like rain from below! If the missionary had been right about the hidden water, they began to say, perhaps he was right about the hidden God as well.

Little by little the people of Aniwa turned from their old fears to follow Jesus. John Paton gave them the Bible in their own words and lived among them for many years — the man who had buried his own family on a faraway shore and stayed anyway. He had learned that God is worth trusting even in the deepest grief, and that one brave heart, planted in a hard place, can turn a whole island toward heaven.

Mary Jones: The Girl Who Walked for a Bible

Mary Jones was a poor weaver's daughter who grew up in a little cottage among the green hills of Wales. More than anything in the world, Mary longed for one thing — a Bible of her very own, to read in her own language, Welsh. But Bibles were rare and dear in those days, far too costly for a poor girl, and the nearest one she could read belonged to a farmer two miles away. Mary walked to his house again and again, just to turn its pages.

So Mary began to save. She kept hens and sold their eggs; she gathered firewood; she did odd jobs for her neighbours; and every small coin she earned she put carefully away. It took her six long years. She was a little girl when she began, and almost a grown young woman by the time her jar of coins was full enough at last.

There was still one problem: the only man with Welsh Bibles to sell lived in the town of Bala, twenty-five miles away over the hills. So one morning Mary set off on foot, walking barefoot much of the way to save her shoes, all those miles across the Welsh countryside, clutching her hard-earned money. When she reached Bala and found the good minister, Thomas Charles, she asked him for a Bible.

At first her heart nearly broke, for the Bibles were all promised to other people — every single one. But when Mr. Charles saw how far the girl had walked, and how many years she had saved, and how she wept at the thought of going home without a Bible, he could not bear it. He gave her

one of the promised Bibles anyway, and Mary walked all the way home again, hugging God's Word against her heart at last.

But Mary's long walk did something far bigger than she knew. Mr. Charles could not forget her. He told her story to other Christians and asked: if one poor girl in Wales wanted a Bible this badly, how many thousands of people all over the world must be longing for one too? Out of that question a great work was born — a society to print Bibles cheaply and carry them into every land and every language on earth. Millions of people have held a Bible because one Welsh girl walked barefoot over the hills for hers. Mary Jones had shown the whole world how precious the Word of God is, and how far a brave heart will go to hold it.

George Liele: The Freed Slave Who Sailed First

George Liele was born a slave in America, long ago, before the great missionary societies of later years had begun. He worked on a plantation and knew the deep sorrow of belonging to another man. But one day George heard the good news that Jesus loved him and had died to set him free — free in his soul, whatever chains were on his body — and his whole life changed. He became a preacher, and even while he was still a slave he began telling others, black and white, slave and free, about the Saviour.

George preached so well and so faithfully that his master, who was a Christian, set him free to do it. Then the master died, and some tried to force George back into slavery. To keep his freedom and his family safe, George agreed to work off the cost of his passage on a ship, and in this way he sailed far away to the island of Jamaica, out in the warm Caribbean Sea.

Now here is a thing that few people noticed at the time. George Liele left his own country to carry the gospel to another land years before William Carey ever set sail for India. A man who had once been a slave became one of the very first people ever to go out from America as a missionary.

In Jamaica, George preached to the enslaved people on the sugar plantations, who suffered terribly and whom almost no one else cared for. He baptised hundreds of them and built the first Baptist church on the whole island. The rulers did not like a black man gathering the slaves to

worship, and they threw George into prison and even put him in chains. But he would not stop, and the little churches he had planted only grew.

George Liele never became famous like the missionaries who came after him. He wrote no great books and had no society behind him — only his freed heart and his love for people the world had thrown away. Yet the work he began in Jamaica went on and on after him, and some of the churches he founded still stand today. He had shown that no one is too lowly, and no past too hard, to be sent by God — and that a man who had once been a slave could carry to others the greatest freedom of all.

C.T. Studd: The Cricketer Who Gave It All Away

Charles Studd — everyone called him C.T. — was one of the most famous young men in England. He was a brilliant cricketer, among the finest in the whole country, who played for England while crowds cheered his name. He was rich as well, for his family had a fortune that would one day be his. He had everything the world says a young man should want.

But C.T. had given his heart to Jesus, and he found he could not be happy just playing games and spending money while millions of people had never once heard of his Saviour. While he was still a young man he made an astonishing choice: he would go to China as a missionary, joining a band of well-born young men who all gave up bright futures together, and whom people called the Cambridge Seven.

Then C.T. did something that made the newspapers gasp. When he came of age and his great fortune became his own, he gave nearly all of it away — thousands upon thousands of pounds — to feed the poor and spread the gospel, keeping almost nothing back for himself. He said that if Jesus Christ really is God, and died for him, then no sacrifice could ever be too great to make for Jesus in return.

C.T. served in China, and later in India, but even as an old and often sick man he could not rest while there were still people who had never heard. He read that in the very heart of Africa lived whole peoples with no missionary at all, and he could not get it out of his mind. Though everyone

told him he was far too old and too ill, he went — into the forests of the Congo — to preach where no one else would go.

There in Africa, C.T. Studd spent the last years of his life, founding a mission to carry the good news into places others had passed by. He had begun with fame, and a fortune, and a game the whole country loved, and he had traded them all for a hut in the forest and the joy of telling lost people about Jesus. He had decided, quite simply, that Christ was worth more than everything else put together — and he lived as though he truly believed it.

Lilias Trotter: The Artist Who Chose the Desert

Lilias Trotter was a young woman in England with a wonderful gift: she could paint. She saw colour and light in a way few people ever do, and one of the greatest art teachers in all of England, a famous man named John Ruskin, told her that if she gave herself to painting she could become one of the greatest artists the country had ever seen. It was a dazzling promise, and it was true.

But Lilias loved Jesus more than she loved painting. She had begun to help poor women and girls on the dark streets of London who had no one to care for them, and slowly she felt God drawing her heart toward a harder and far less glamorous life. She had to choose between the fame her teacher promised and the quiet, costly work she believed God was asking of her.

Lilias chose God. She laid down the brilliant future in art that everyone said she should have, and instead she sailed for North Africa, to the land of Algeria, to live among people who followed a different religion and who very rarely heard about Jesus. To many it seemed a terrible waste of a great gift.

In Algeria, Lilias found the work slow and lonely. Few people would listen; some who did believe were treated cruelly for it; and results came only a little at a time, like water soaking into dry ground. Yet she did not give up. She learned the language, made her home among the people, loved

the children, and stayed for nearly forty years — almost her whole grown-up life.

And her gift was not wasted after all. Lilias used her paintbrush to make little books full of beautiful pictures that told the story of Jesus in ways the people around her could understand and treasure. She had given up being famous in order to be faithful, and she had learned that the smallest, hardest life poured out for God is worth more than the grandest one kept for ourselves. The desert she chose came to bloom, in the end, because a great artist decided that Jesus was her masterpiece.

Ida Scudder: The Doctor Who Answered Three Knocks

Ida Scudder grew up in a family of missionaries in India, and she was quite sure she did not want that life for herself. She had seen how hard it was, and as a young woman she went back to America, determined to have an easier, happier life far away from all of it. But God had a surprise waiting for her in India that would change everything.

One night, while Ida was visiting her parents, three men came knocking at the door, one after another. Each had a wife who was very ill and in terrible danger, trying to bring a baby into the world. Ida offered to send her father, a doctor, at once — but each man refused in horror, because in their custom no man who was not family, not even a doctor, could enter the room, and there were no women doctors at all. A woman could only be helped by a woman.

Ida sent for a doctor anyway, but the doctor was a man, and so all three families turned him away. That single, dreadful night, all three of those young women died — not because no one could have saved them, but because there was no woman with the skill to try. Ida could not sleep. She lay awake hearing their story over and over, and by morning she knew that God was calling her, after all, to give her life to India — this time as a doctor.

So Ida went back to America, not to escape now but to study, and she trained as one of the first women doctors of her day. Then she returned to

India with her medical bag and a burning purpose: that women should never again die simply because no woman could help them.

Ida began small, seeing a few patients on the veranda of her home, but the need was so vast that the work grew and grew. She built a hospital, and then a great medical school to train Indian women to become doctors and nurses themselves, so that the healing would spread far beyond anything she could ever do alone. Thousands upon thousands of lives were saved through the doors that Ida Scudder opened. She had run away from India as a girl, but three knocks in the night had turned her back — and she had learned that God can take the very thing we most want to escape and make it the bravest, most beautiful work of our lives.

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