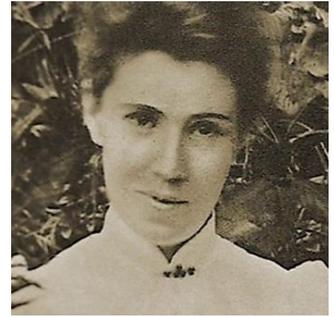


Amy Carmichael (1867 - 1951)



- The eldest of seven siblings, Amy Carmichael was born on the **16 December 1867** in the small village of Millisle, County Down, *Northern Ireland* to a wealthy family. Her father and uncle owned and managed several flour mills.
- Amy describes her idyllic surroundings as "**a little old world village of white washed cottages on the shore of the Irish Sea**".
- Amy was trained by her Presbyterian parents in Godly principles.
- At the age of **15**, while a student at a Wesleyan Methodist school in 1883 Amy made a personal decision to follow Christ.
- Her Father, who had contracted double pneumonia at the age of 54, died from this illness in 1885 when Amy was approaching her 18th birthday. This greatly altered the finances and future of the family.
- Amy stayed with her mother at this difficult time at which **she developed a heart of passion and dedication to Christian mission work** which had significant impact upon the society in which she lived.
- One Sunday morning as Amy, her mother and siblings were returning home from church, they met a poor old woman carrying a heavy bundle on her back. Instantly, Amy and her brothers relieved the woman of the bundle and helped her along to the icy stares of the 'proper' Presbyterians. At first they were embarrassed and wondered what these 'respectable' people would think but 1 Cor 3:12-14 flashed into Amy's mind, "*Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble...the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is*". She wrote of this incident years later, "***We went on. I said nothing to anyone, but I knew that something had happened that had changed life's values. Nothing could ever matter again but the things that were eternal.***"
- During this time Amy was also spiritually influenced by the **Keswick conventions** sweeping through Europe. Some friends invited her to Glasgow, Scotland where she attended similar meetings. An emphasis during the conventions included a **focus on missions and the needs of the world**. During one of these meetings Hudson Taylor spoke of the four thousand who die ever hour without Christ. Amy later wrote in her journal, "***Does it not stir up our hearts, to go forth and help them, does it not make us long to leave our luxury, our exceeding abundant light, and go to them that sit in darkness?***"
- In Victorian Britain, **opportunities for women, both in terms of careers and missionary work were limited**. In this sense, it seemed unlikely that Amy would become involved in and lead mission in the way that she did. However, it is a joy to know **that God is not bound by societal norms and expectations or indeed by individual weaknesses, fears and ailments**.
- Amy's **involvement in Christian mission predominantly took place in India**. However, **her missionary work and training began at home**. Unlike the recommendations of

mission organisations today, **Amy did not undergo an organized training regime prior to being led further afield.**

- Nevertheless, her exposure to and experience of working with a variety of different people within different contexts in the UK helped prepare her for the challenges that she would inevitably face in a completely different culture.
- Amy **began by gathering the children of the neighborhood to her home for meetings.** She was also burdened for the girls who worked in the flour mills and she had started a ministry for them at one of the local churches. She prayed that God would provide the funds for this, which He did and she built a hall for ministry to the girls at the mills. Many came to Christ and many were protected from lives of sin because of the influence of the ministry. **This would be Amy's emphasis for the rest of her life – to reach out to the downcast and rejected, to love them, win them to Christ and build them up to help others.**
- On March 3rd, 1893 at the age of 24, Amy first set out for **Japan** as the first missionary sent out by the Keswick Convention. Here she served for **fifteen months** before suffering severe health issues. Although Amy's time in Japan was short, **it was a time of much growth and training that would continue to profoundly impact her ministry.** It was here she began wearing the traditional Japanese dress, an innovation that would continue later in her ministry in India. All the workers and children in Amy's ministry wore Indian clothing and had Indian names.
- A year later, after receiving medical attention, working briefly in China and a brief break at home, Amy set sail for India, where she remained until her death on 18th January 1951.
- **Her first several years were spent as part of an evangelistic team.** By 1901, Amy's focus had shifted from traveling evangelism to **the rescue of orphans who were dedicated at Hindu Temples to the worship of the gods.** This was the beginning of the Dohnavur Fellowship; a group of women dedicated to the rescue and upbringing of these orphans who were used as sexual servants in the temples. **Amy's missionary career in India lasted over 55 years** without leave.
- Though she did not underestimate the difficulties that she encountered, Amy immediately began learning the language (first Urdu, then Tamil) of the local people. Significant to note is that though Amy sought to relate to the people with whom she was working she was deeply concerned by, and unwilling to adopt, practices and customs that conflicted with her Christian beliefs. This is also a challenge for missionaries within today's society. **As a consequence of her willingness to listen and learn and simply love the people, Amy gained respect and thus her Christian witness had an impact upon the society.**
- Again in India much of the missionary community shunned Amy's ministry to orphans. Some believed the temple children did not exist while others looked down on the acts of service and emphasis at Dohnavur to the education, physical care and character building of each child. On one occasion **Amy asked a visiting missionary to help her carry a bucket, the missionary replied he would rather "carry his Bible."**
- Amy and her associates practiced John 15:7; trusting God to guide them by the Word and provide for their needs one day at a time. She had the following principles for prayer:

1. We don't need to explain to our Father things that are known to Him.
 2. We don't need to press Him, as if we had to deal with an unwilling God.
 3. We don't need to suggest to Him what to do, for He Himself knows what to do.
- On October 24th, 1931 Amy suffered a serious fall. Other complications set in, and she had to end her usual activity. She was physically limited to her room and an occasional stroll but that did not limit her ministry.
 - In the next 20 years she wrote 13 books and many letters, and she directed the work of the mission through her associates.
 - In 1948 she experienced a second fall and from then on until her death she was confined to her bed.

LESSONS

- As exemplified in Amy's life, **it was out of a love for God that she sought His will** continually. It is significant to note that **Amy had a real heart and passion for people**. Commenting on her elder sister (Amy), Ethel recalls how she was very much concerned with both loving and serving people wherever/whenever opportunity arose.
- **A spirit of service and a love for those who others considered "unlovable" always dominated Amy's ministry** even in Europe before she begun ministry cross-culturally. In her early twenties, she worked with a group of young ladies called "shawlies" because of the shawls they wore on their heads. The proper members of Amy's church were shocked that someone would reduce them self to teaching the Bible to these low members of society. Our service should stem out of a love for God and a passion for His people.
- **Regardless of the geographical location of the Christian mission in which she was involved, Amy's love and passion for the gospel and her desire to share this with the lost did not change.** Significantly however, because of the cultural, religious and language differences that Amy encountered first in Japan, then later in India, she knew that **barriers would have to be overcome and bridges built if people were to be won for Christ**. Amy strongly criticized people who claimed to be Christian missionaries yet merely sought to impose their views norms and cultures to a foreign people in a foreign land. In one of her corresponding letters, Amy once wrote **that "missionary work was a chance to die"**. It is important for us also to trust God to help us overcome barriers that may be in the way of reaching out effectively to the people we serve, and to also work at building bridges- relationships with those we live and serve among.
- As she had done in her involvement in mission within the context of her own culture, **Amy lived a life of faith in India** and was very much dependent upon God to supply her needs. A life of ministry is very much a life of faith. Here values change and we must learn to value more those things that are eternal – a clear contrast to the world where there is a lot of competition.

- She was **dedicated in her devotional and prayer life** and she sought to encourage fellow workers to do likewise. Truly, the way in which Amy related Christian mission to her life context is of great challenge for today. This is paramount in any believer's life.
- Apart from the sacrificial love Amy gave so many she is also remembered for her writing. Amy **wrote over 35 books from the field, many being written after an accident in 1931 that left her bedridden until her death at the age of 83.** Once Amy sent a book home for publication that was denied publication and returned with the request for a rosier picture of mission work. The publisher was worried many would feel disdain at the harsh reality of the mission field she had portrayed. Amy sent the manuscript back without any changes except for title, renaming it "Things as they Are." This emphasizes the importance of writing or journaling our experiences & lessons learnt as we serve.
- Indeed, her writings continue to influence and inspire the lives of many individuals in relation to Christian mission and the key elements required for it to have an impact upon society. Amy Carmichael wrote 35 books of various kinds.
- The importance of communicating with the sending organization – this is something Amy did not do very well at, in fact she hardly wrote reports and never once went back home. We need to remain accountable to others, particularly those who support us in one way or another (by prayer, giving etc).
- **Amy exercised a simple-hearted faith in God, nurtured by a wholehearted love for God.**

Here is something that she wrote for a group of Indian girls who came together to serve Christ.

"Confession of Love"

My Vow: Whatsoever Thou sayest unto me, by Thy grace I will do it.

My Constraint: Thy love, O Christ, my Lord.

My Confidence: Thou art able to keep that which I have committed unto thee.

My Joy: To do Thy will, O God.

My Discipline: that which I would not choose, but which Thy love appoints.

My Prayer: Conform my will to Thine.

My Motto: Love to live- live to love.

My Portion: The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance.