

# The Life and Legacy of Jim Elliott

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Could we turn to Matthew's Gospel, the last chapter - chapter 28? And we'll read verses 18-20. Matthew 28:18-20. "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" We rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go. That last hymn in 1956, five men sang it together and went out together to die. I want to speak tonight on the life and legacy of Jim Elliot, the 20th century martyr and missionary in Ecuador. All that can really be learned about him are in these three books, and I want you to note them. "Shadow of the Almighty," which is the biography - the life of Jim Elliot by his wife Elisabeth, published the first time 2 years after his death in 1958. "The Journals of Jim Elliot," written by him over a period of about seven years from age 21 to 28. And "Through Gates of Splendor," the account written a year after their death. The account of the mission to the Auca Indians and the death of those courageous men.

Elisabeth Elliot once said of her husband, "At the age of 21, Jim began an adventure that would require the ultimate sacrifice. That adventure was to follow Christ to the mission field of Ecuador. And ultimately, face death at the hands of an unreached jungle tribe. It was a year and a half ago approximately that one of our pastors, Philip Neeley, shared a summary of Jim Elliot's life with the men in our church. Philip had gone away for two days of reading alone, and he always takes a choice book with him and it was the life of Jim Elliot. And Philip described Jim to our men as a man of purity, a man of purpose, a man of priorities, a man of the past - meaning he loved history, he learned from the past, and a man of power. And I thought, in thinking of Jim Elliot, I thought of Bunyan's character, one of his characters in "Pilgrim's Progress." Mr. Great-Heart. That was Jim Elliot. But then, here comes Mr. Valiant-For-Truth. Well, that was Jim Elliot also. And I feel sure among his friends and his college classmates at Wheaton College in the suburbs of Chicago, and other Plymouth Brethren church leaders, that he seemed at times larger than life. But he was a real guy who smiled and laughed and joked and cried a lot; who loved to cut up and tease others too much at times, and he would be rebuked for it by his pious friends. But he was preeminently a young man that, from his youth, was in a serious pursuit to know Christ. So, I want us tonight to look at Jim Elliot's life under five headings. The making of the man. The marriage. The mission. The martyrdom. And the meaning for us today - his legacy.

## The Man

So first, the making of the man. What did God do; what did God use to shape Jim Elliot into who he became? Now, there's many ingredients often in a good recipe. And God's recipe for Jim Elliot's life included a lot. His birth: Philip James Elliot was born October 8th, 1927 in Portland, Oregon. He died January 8th, 1956 in the Curaray River in eastern jungles of Ecuador along with his four friends, at the age of 28 years and 3 months to the day. He was born into a godly Plymouth Brethren family, to Fred and Clara Elliot. Four children. Two older brothers, Bob

and Burt. And then Jim, the third, and then a younger sister Jane. And their home, when you read the accounts, their home exemplified godliness and consistent Christianity that was really lived out. Daily, without exception, Jim's father led the family in Bible reading and prayer. Always after breakfast. Elisabeth Elliot said later that quote, "Jim's father was always showing his children that the Bible was to be obeyed and lived out, and that the Christian life was a happy and rewarding one." So, Jim came to Christ in such a context around the age of six years old, and his future years proved it to be a genuine conversion.

Now, toward the end of his college years, he wrote Elisabeth Howard, his friend, who was known to him always as "Betty." He wrote Betty about his father. He says, "I blush to think of the things I've said, as if I really know something at all." By the way, a sentiment I've had often. "I blush to think of things I've said in the past as if I really know something of all the Bible teaches, when I think I know nothing. But my father... my father's faith is a kind I've seen nowhere else. It is so real and practical that it shatters everything I've seen. He knows God. We've had some happy times together, and I cannot estimate what enrichment a few months with dad might do for me both practically and spiritually."

Mr. Elliot said, "I pray regularly for my children, and I pray regularly with them." Every Lord's Day, the family were all in church Bible classes and corporate worship at their Plymouth Brethren assembly in Portland. And every child was in all the services by the time they were six weeks old. Mrs. Elliot believed, "It doesn't hurt children at all to sit quietly through the church meetings. It's good for their nerves." Well, their childhood was happy and wholesome at their country place on the eastern slope of Mount Tabor in Portland. Their home was one of those homes that people loved to be in. Have you ever been to one of those Christian family's homes and you say when you leave, man, what a blessing to have been there. That's the way it was at the Elliot home. What a family! How they love and enjoy one another. I want to go back there again. They were always having visitors - missionaries, preachers, friends from college. And the children - the four Elliot children love having people in their home. Family times were special. Sledding yearly near Mt. Hood, day long picnics on the Oregon coast, or trips to their grandparents' homestead where they would work the produce or tend the sheep. Their local Brethren assembly had church life that was real and fellowship that was vital and wonderful. In summary, Jim's life was consistently on the path to a remarkable Christian life even as a young man. By the age of 13 or 14, he was choosing to discipline his life spiritually daily. And he began telling his friends about Christ and about salvation.

In 1941, he entered Benson Polytechnic High School in Portland, and he excelled as a student. He would write editorials for the student newspaper. He starred in several school plays. He excelled in public speaking. And he was so good at drawing, he wanted to be an architect. He was planning on being an architect. He was so good at drawing, that the teacher kept his drawings as examples for future classes. A classmate said of him, "Jim carried a small Bible that would sit on top of his textbooks on his desk in class. It would only take an audience of one or two for him to open the Bible and begin talking and sharing. He always prayed before eating his lunch, and he never missed a chance to talk to me about Jesus Christ."

In his sophomore year of high school, he began to write short letters, at times to his brothers and sisters. One note to his younger sister Jane. Now, he's a 17 year old brother, writing to a younger sister some advice. "Jane, begin each day with private reading of the Word

and prayer. John Bunyan said, 'sin will keep you from this book, or this book will keep you from sin.' Give out gospel tracts too to those you meet on the way to school. And make a bold start at the beginning of high school. It's easier that way than later. And memorize Scripture on your rides to and from school. Redeem the time, Jane. Time is costly because it is so fleeting. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved." Now that's a 17 year old boy pastoring his little sister. By his senior year, his desire for his future in architecture shifted to the mission field. He would set an alarm every night so he would have plenty of time for reading and prayer before school, which became the priority of the rest of his life.

In the fall of 1945, he entered Wheaton College in the western suburbs of Chicago, which was a long way from Portland, Oregon. Now with one goal he went there - to prepare himself to take the gospel to a foreign mission field. He didn't know where yet, but he was determined to prepare himself. Like Paul, this one thing I do... that was Jim Elliot. He had no money for college, and he didn't know where it was going to come from. But God honored his faith, and he always had it through gifts of family friends, through prayer, through part-time work. And as he got into his college years, his activities increased. He majored in Greek for future Bible translation work. He became president of the foreign missions fellowship on campus. He was a class representative on the student council. He was a writer of poetry. And he was respected and admired by faculty and fellow students as a genuine, serious-minded, joyful Christian. All the while, in the busyness of college, being very consistent with morning Bible readings and private prayer. And it became his practice in college on Saturday's, he liked to do two things. He liked to go the college football game in the afternoon. But on Saturday night, he wouldn't go out. He would stay in. Because he wanted to prepare his heart for Sunday worship and the Plymouth Brethren practice of the breaking of bread - their weekly Lord's Supper meeting. It was the highlight of his week.

At Wheaton, he began a personal habit in his junior year that continued until 8 days before he died. A young British preacher, Steven Olford, spoke in the college chapel one day, and that day suggested to Jim that he begin a daily journal, that would improve his private time in his time with the Lord. And, he began to do that. That decision to keep a personal journal - his thoughts, his prayers, the events of the day, what the Lord was teaching him - would be a great spiritual discipline, Olford told him. Well, that decision, 30 years later provided one of the most stirring books in modern church history and modern missions. He never probably thought that it would be published, proving that small, personal choices yield huge dividends later in our own lives and the lives of others.

At the end of his freshman year of college he wrote his parents: "It's been a profitable year drawing close to the Savior, and discovering gems in His Word. How wonderful to know that Christianity is more than a padded church pew or a church cathedral, but that it is a real, living and daily experience that goes from grace to grace." Those formative maturing years were essential for his future usefulness. The tender heart. A clear conscience. A lifestyle of daily repentance. Godly zeal. Real prayerfulness. High standards. Focused spiritual goals that he let no one or nothing deter him from. An active consistent serving of the Lord and others. Jim Elliot became in the U.S. what he was later in Ecuador. Shaped into a solid, grounded man of the Holy Spirit by his mid-twenties. And that's mostly seen in his journals. What stands out? He was always reading. Always reading the Bible deeply, meditating in it. Taking notes. Reading John

Bunyan, the Puritans, Plymouth Brethren writers, Scottish pastors Andrew and Horatius Bonar, and Spurgeon - always reading. And he learned to draw from the deep wells. He learned to draw deeply because he wouldn't hurry himself. This deepened his mind and his heart devotionally. David Brainerd who died at the same age as Jim, his journal had great impact on Jim. And Jim wrote, "Lord, if I were honest, my soul would be more in anguish like Brainerd's. How cold and careless I've become. Let not my soul be cast away from Your nearness." He soon wrote, "I have enjoyed much sweetness in reading Brainerd's life. I spent the last two days with tremendous profit to my soul, entirely in reading 6 to 8 hours each day." Another day, "I just finished Amy Carmichael's 'Gold Cord.' How can I express the effect it has had on me? Oh, what a shame and sham I am! No scars, have you? No scars. No tears? No tears. Oh God of the thorny path, please in Your mercy, privilege me to walk in Your path."

In those college years, in those summers, he feasted on the lives of Jonathan Goforth, Hudson Taylor, J.G. Paton, the missionary to the South Seas island among the cannibals. And his reading led him into such meditation that he began to journal more and more. An example one morning: Romans 15. He's reading. He comes to verse 13, which says, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Jim stopped there and he began to write and pray. "Every hour I need Thee. I claim this verse for these days. My love is faint. My warmth practically gone. Oh, that I were not so empty-handed. Joy and peace can only come through believing God. And that is all can I say to Him tonight. Lord, I believe You. I don't feel love. I don't feel anything, and I don't understand. I now can only believe. So bring my faith to fruition. Produce in me, I pray." And suddenly he writes, "What is this, Lord Jesus, that Thou should make an end of all that I possess and give Yourself to me? So that there is nothing now to call my own, save Thee? Thyself alone, my Treasure. Strange I say that suffering loss, I have gained everything in getting a Friend who bore a cross." He wrote. He meditated.

On 2 Samuel, he meditated one morning and then he wrote this: "Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, declined legitimate ease because his fellow soldiers were in tents in the open fields. David's error. When kings go out to battle, he tarried in Jerusalem. How often..." Jim said, "is this the history of Christian failure. It's time to march, and some Christians are laying on beds of self-interest. At such times, Satan sees to it that a Bathsheba is not far away. David staying at ease in Jerusalem meant Uriah's death in battle. Lord, don't let me be so found reluctant because of selfishness."

His famous words journaled in October of 1949: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose," actually were not his words originally. He journaled them after reading them in the writings of Philip and Matthew Henry, who one of them said it in the 17th or 18th century. But he liked it. He was gleaning, gleaning, gleaning. Soaking it in. Taking it. Passing it on to others.

Some other gleanings, February 1948: "Lord, show me the difference between worship and service, and how to press into Thy hand the fresh juice of living worship. Not the dead meat which is only in my head." "Last night I was entirely too talkative, dogmatic, and even argumentative with Dave (his future brother-in-law at Wheaton). Argumentative about Christians in politics. I'm seeking peace on this subject, Lord. I know I've grieved Your Spirit and my thoughts were not established. Possess my spirit, Lord, today." While reading through Genesis

one month he wrote this, "Lord, whatever barriers there are in my life that keeps the water of life from freely flowing, I ask You to point it out and give me power to cut it off. I would not be like Rachel - beautiful but barren. Give me Leah's eyes, tender eyes, that I might be sensitive to Your light and Your truth." And his father had written him not long before along that line. His father wrote, "Jim, I am jealous of anything or any person who would hinder your progress to everlasting riches and a life completely devoted to that supreme and glorious Man at God's right hand."

Jim became so consistent in gleaning rich gems of truth from the Bible, over and over, some major thoughts, major truths about the gospel - he wrote this: "Psalm 51. 'I was shapen in iniquity. In sin did my mother conceive me.' From the beginning of my life, my contact has been with the unclean. How then can a man become pure? The atonement blood that cleansed my own mother must avail for me. Oh, Lamb of God, what a sacrifice Thou art. Whose blood can avail? Goat's blood cannot cleanse. My own blood cannot avail, for I am unclean. Only Thy blood, O Lord, could be effectual." In his daily reading in Genesis, he said this: "I cannot fail to see Christ in Joseph's life today. He's a young man, 30 years old. A Hebrew servant. 'Without Me you can do nothing,' says our Savior. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'without you shall no man lift a hand or foot in Egypt.' Only our heavenly Joseph can open all the storehouse of God's wealth. All must go to Him for blessing." I've never gotten anything like that from Joseph's life, but he dug. He meditated. He prayed. And he wrote out of his mind and heart what he saw.

John 13 he was reading. You know, at the beginning it says, Jesus realizing that the Father had given all things into His hands - Jim Elliot wrote this: "Jesus, seeing that the Father had given all things into His hands, He then took those dirty feet of His loved men into those hands and washed them."

Always praying intensely, real, honest, passionate requests. He prayed this, "selfishness, Lord, in our love for service to You is inexcusable. I have known this, Lord. I've been guilty, often, I confess. I have at times had jealousy like a jagged tooth that spoils my thoughts when I've seen other young men get more of Christ and more of His power than I possess. Teach me, Lord, to rejoice in other men's growth." Praying for true zeal, he said, "It's a good day for stirring and heart-searching. Oh, may God revive His work in our country. I want to become pleasing to You, Lord. I pray You would make me a minister who's a flame of fire. Oh, that Christ would be to me as He was to Zinzendorf - the master passion of life. My heart pants after Thee, not for results or power. From henceforth, I would not seek an experience or a sign. For I have Christ as my object. Occupied not with tongues of fire, but with the great purpose of the Holy Spirit, to exalt Christ. Father, make me a crisis man. Bring those I come into contact with to a clear decision. Make me not a signpost on the road, but rather a fork in the road. So that men turning one way or the other when facing Christ in my life.

Motives. He said, "I sense tonight that my desire to be great will frustrate God's intent for good to be done through me. Lord, let me pray with an honest, earnest heart. I choose not to be great, but only that You grant me Your goodness."

Now, how would you respond if someone said this to you? A friend of Jim's - a close brother - came to him in college and said, "One of our sisters said to me, 'we know Jim's humble, but we wish he would act like it more.'" So the friend came and told him. He didn't tell him who it was. And how would you respond? Jim's response - her name was Ruth Stams who

later became a missionary to Pakistan. Jim said, "Well, the first phrase - 'we know he is humble,' How can they be so certain of that? I know my proud heart is aware of its self-exaltation, but the last clause - 'we wish he would act like it more.' That speaks to me in powerful tones. Often this self-exertion comes out and is most offensive. This flesh of mine is constantly producing something of itself. All uncleanness. Lord, put an end to my fleshly production. Stop it, Lord. Instead, flow through me, that I'll be clean."

So, these are just examples that his spiritual reality and the pursuit for it was always engaged. It was always exemplary. He always seemed to be out front of others. He seemed to be in second or third gear when others were still in first. He was not only running more consistently, but he seemed to be running at a faster pace. It was very hard to keep up with him. He was out front - always a visionary. Always an initiator. He said to his brother Burt, who went to Peru for 30 years as a missionary, and Jim had thought of going there first, he wrote to his brother Burt a little note: "I must get into God's book for a little defrosting. May God make us love like the Tishbite. John the Baptist bold."

So, whether in high school or college, he was always out front. He was a leader. An example of this was when President Franklin Roosevelt died in 1945. Jim was a junior in high school. And the principal on short notice thought it would be good to have a school assembly to address the students about our president's death. And so, on short notice, who could give a suitable speech to the entire school? Jim was asked. His coach said later, "I've never heard a better speech all these years."

At Wheaton, he went out for the wrestling team because he thought it would keep him in shape for the future. The result was, he not only made the team, but he became a champion college wrestler. Always excelling; pressing on to improve.

Some of the views on important things. "The pattern of my personal conduct and behavior..." listen to this, young people. "The pattern of my personal conduct and behavior is not based on the activities of those around me. Don't follow the examples of those still in the world, and not necessarily even those in the church. Rather, the Word of God shall be my standard. And as I see it, there are few examples of that kind of living anywhere." That was 1948. (incomplete thought)

On sanctification and the work of the Holy Spirit. He said, "We should remember that while knowledge may make one look big, it's only love that makes him grow into his full stature. Whatever a man may know, he still has a lot to learn, but if he loves God, he is opening his whole life to the Spirit of God." He said, "We do not surrender our entire life in one instant. That which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime. Neither does surrender to God's will always equal fullness of power. Maturity is the accomplishment of years. And I can only surrender to the will of God as I know what that is. So the fullness of the Spirit is not just instantaneous, but ultimately is progressive. If men were truly filled with the Holy Spirit, they would not write books about it, but they would major on the Person the Spirit has come to reveal. Occupation with Christ is God's objective." Later, he said this, "I was moved last night to think how very little we know of trust in the Holy Spirit and Spirit-directed ministry. Oh Lord, restore Your people. Rouse the elect in Portland. It is time for Thee to work. The Holy Spirit is the only source of power for the believer's witness. Even if we know apologetics, if we lack the power of the Spirit, we will be ineffective and even detrimental as witness."

Jim was a pacifist. (Those who do not believe that Christians should support or fight in a war or actively take part in politics.) And even in high school, he was very clear in his belief about it. In high school, he was a member of the public speaking club. In fact, he was the most influential one in it. And one of the assignments by the leader of the club was everyone - it was the presidential election year - and the assignment was to give a political speech about the upcoming election and which candidate you favored and what your views were. So the club president assigned each member a speech and Jim was called on in class, and Jim said, "I have no speech." Well, the president of the class began to worry because Jim was the leader of the whole class. "Jim, you know the rules. I'll have to expel you if you don't give your speech. (Expel you from the club). Now, come on up here. You don't need any preparation. Just give a brief extemporaneous speech on your favorite candidate." Jim, looked right back at him and said, "I have no favorite candidate and I have no speech." Well, in rising from his seat, he said, "But I'll be happy to take three minutes to tell you why." Well, the club president, suddenly remembering Jim's convictions, quickly said, "That won't be necessary, Jim. We understand your reasons. I waive the rule and you're excused from your speech." So, he was acting on principle courageously which equipped him year by year to act on the same principles about the gospel and about the mission field and about missionary principles and what he could or could not do.

His views of the local church were solid. The Plymouth Brethren always called the church meeting "the assembly." We're going to the assembly today. And it was a vital part of his upbringing. And at Wheaton, he quickly found a Brethren assembly in Lombard, Illinois near Wheaton. And in December of that year, he journaled this: "What a ragged and shoddy thing organized Christianity has become in honoring man, places, and crowds. How I long to see the simplicity and powerful beauty of a New Testament fellowship reproduced." He loved real fellowship with the brethren. He said, "the love of Jonathan and David I felt again today for Bill Cathers, my friend, upon reading a letter from him who is en route to China. It makes me throb to read his soul's swagger and what the Spirit is making Bill the way He is. How I long for another like him! But kindred spirits are so few. Lord, give me a David that I can know as David knew Jonathan - sweeter, swifter, stronger."

Well, he did have some wrong views; some immature views. One was marriage and the ministry and how they would mesh; how it went together. When Jim and Elisabeth Elliot both knew they loved each other and wanted to be married, Jim expressed his thoughts. "I cannot express the yearning in my heart. Oh, what a jumble, cross-current passion I am in. May Christ only satisfy my thirst. But the possibility of seeing Betty, again, brings wishful thoughts. How I hate myself for such weakness! Is not Christ enough, Jim (he said to himself)? What need you more? A woman in His place? No, God forbid! I shall have Thee, Lord Jesus." And all along his Bible had been saying to him, it's not good for man to be alone. I'll prepare a helpmeet for him. Someone could have said to Jim, "you knucklehead." It's not Christ or her. It's Christ and her. Because God had been revealing to both of them that she was prepared by the Lord for Jim and him for her, to complement and complete one another. Elisabeth was always ready to marry him. He was always holding back because of the mission field. Singleness - that's the best missionary's life. He said finally, after they were both in Ecuador and the team heard of a certain tribe of Indians that were opening to them, that a single man couldn't go in because of the

setting. They need a couple. There was no couple available to go. Jim suddenly said to Elisabeth, "So how soon will you marry me?" Some wrong views get corrected in all of us. Well, she finally got him and he may have gotten the better part of the deal when you see the life of Elisabeth Elliot. He was growing and changing. But more about their marriage in a moment.

So, what I've said are the ingredients that shaped and made him the man he was. A life of separation and pursuit of God; of holiness; a true churchman; who viewed the centrality of the local church properly; and being a vital member and being sent out of the church; consistent, deep Bible reading; always reading great books - the best authors; a self-denying real prayer life; cultivating a lifestyle of repentance and humility, and real fellowship with godly brethren who exhorted and encouraged one another daily. And keeping a journal that matured him in his faith. That was the making of the man.

### **The Marriage**

Secondly, the marriage. Jim and Betty Elliot (or Elisabeth). She was always called Betty by family and close friends. The marriage - he first met Elisabeth at Wheaton. Both were students. She was a year ahead of him. And then David Howard, her brother, invited him home at Christmas to their home, and he was there for more time around Betty. They studied Greek together being in the same course at Wheaton. And he wrote his parents about her. And a real love developed and a mutual devotion between them independently of each other to God's purpose as friends. She was his equal spiritually, intellectually. And he really saw her as being further along than him in a lot of ways. Her godliness, her maturity, her refinement, her separation stirred him, intimidated him, drew him with cords of love. They were meant for each other. She saw it early and he did not. And it's a wonder that she was so patient. But she was. Well, they realized it. Finally, they took a walk one evening discussing God's path for them. They had one date, if you want to call it that. It was to a missionary meeting in Chicago. They had studied a lot. They had a lot of conversation. But neither outwardly acknowledged anything about their feelings for the other beyond friendship.

But that evening, they took a walk and when they looked at each other, they both knew it and acknowledged it and said it - that they loved each other. That night, Jim marked in his hymn book the date and beside it these words: "If Thou should call me to resign what most I prize, it ne'er was mine. I only yield Thee what was Thine. Thy will be done." But she didn't impress Jim's family, for some reason. Too quiet, they said. Too distant. She's kind of awkward. She didn't seem to fit in the lively Elliot home. But Jim knew, and he stood alone, but he was also afraid. What about my calling? The mission field? How can both be right? It was a big struggle for him. He said, besides, I hate American weddings. Now with radical John the Baptist tones he thunders in his journal about weddings. Now see if you think he was just running from his own wedding.

What he said, "Twentieth century weddings are the vainest, most meaningless things. There is no evidence of reality in them. The wedding party dresses for a show and the flesh is given first place. The songs are absurd if anyone pays attention to the words, but no one does. They simply listen to how it's sung. Candles are useless, expensive trifles. Ushers help no one, but they appear very official. And the ceremony is the most meaningless hodgepodge of obsolete grammar and phraseology I've ever seen. And the stupid question of asking who gives



the bride to be married? Everyone already knows it's her father uncle, or some sweating pawn at the altar." He said, "I'm sure the minor prophets would have found subject for correction in this affair." And then he closes the paragraph, "I must read this to myself on my wedding day if I have one." Betty said later, "I do not think he remembered to read it. If he had, he would have smiled at his imbalanced zeal, for he had matured over the years." But maturity had not given either of them a heart for an outward show. Neither of them wanted a conventional big wedding. She showed up in Ecuador shortly after him as a single woman. When they decided to get married they didn't return back to the states. It was a civil ceremony of 10 minutes at the justice of the peace in the capital city of Quito. I'm sure it wasn't called the justice of the peace, but same office. They were married in a ten minute ceremony with two couples with them. After a two week honeymoon in Panama and Costa Rica, back to the jungles to live for five months in a 16 foot tent.

Ladies, you ready for the mission field? The point is singles who are waiting on God's person in marriage should not try to figure out and control how God will give you a partner. He is leading you. He was leading Jim and Betty. And He caused the time to be right in the experience. So the making of the man and the marriage.

### **The Mission**

Thirdly, the mission. Current mission statistics staggered and haunted Jim. 1,700 languages have not one word of the Bible. 90% of mission volunteers never make it to any foreign country. 64% of the world's population have never heard of Christ. 5,000 people die every hour. The total of India equals North America, South America, and Africa combined. In India, there's one missionary for every 71,000 people. One Christian worker for every 500 people in the U.S. Missions were Jim's target since high school He began to think of India, Muslim countries, and Peru where Burt was going. But by his senior year, he was burdened for South America.

So, after he graduated from college, he went off to the University of Oklahoma and did their linguistics program for 3 months to study linguistics for language translation. And it was while he was there that he became clear that he was sure he was to go to Ecuador. He had been to the 1948 Urbana missions conference in Illinois before that and he prayed specifically. "This came to me as I prayed regarding this conference. What the Lord has purposed for this conference will be accomplished but what is His purpose? Lord, show me Your intent for me." Well, after Oklahoma, and that summer, he was clear that he was to go to Ecuador. He took a first practical step. He hitchhiked to Mexico with a buddy. Children, don't try that today. But in 1950, it was more popular. He and Ron Harris hitchhiked there to be with the Harris family who were missionaries there. And Jim journaled, "Mexico has stolen my heart. We've been here two weeks, and I've been invited to stay as long as I desire. Right now, I wish it were for life." Writing from Mexico, he said, "The Lord has been good to me in bringing me here to see the field and hear the language. Missionaries are simply a bunch of nobodies trying to exalt Somebody." He was there for six weeks. As he hitchhiked back to the states, he had no doubt where he was to go. As Betty Elliot later wrote, "His face was set toward those who had never heard." His brother Burt was already in Peru, and would be there for 30 years. Ecuador became the focus. And after his home church assembly along with other sister Brethren churches commissioned him to

go; after a time at home, he and his close friend Pete Fleming departed by ship for Ecuador in February of 1952.

Betty Elliot arrived two months later than Jim and Pete - still single. The work began. A team of five couples developed together. And the men were there only three to four years. Jim Elliot was in Ecuador three years and 11 months. So the work in those years consisted of the following: teaching the Quechua Indians with language charts to read their own language. Translating the Bible in Quechua. Building a mission station and their own houses at Shell Mara - the operations base for Mission Aviation Fellowship. Jim and Betty lived there after they lived in their honeymoon tent for five months. Holding services finally and preaching the Quechua language, building a small airstrip, and surveying villages by air to see where tribes were; Jim and the brothers were only there a few short years. On sailing away that day in February of 1952, Jim said, "We left the outer harbor dock from San Pedro, California at 2:06 today. Mom and dad stood together watching on the pier. As we slipped away, Psalm 60:12 came to mind and I called it back to them. "Through God, we shall do valiantly." They wept some. I do not understand how God has made me. I didn't feel like crying. Only sheer joy and thanksgiving fills me. The sheer joy of being in the will of God is my general experience now. The Lord is in our going now, and if life were to end at this point, I could say with Simeon, 'Lord, let Your servant depart in peace.'"

The first five months were language studies in Quito, the capital city, with a Dr. Tidmarsh, a veteran missionary who was leaving the country because of his wife's health. So along with Jim and Betty Elliot, Nate and Marjorie Saint, Roger and Barbara Youderian, Pete and Olive Fleming, and Ed and MaryLou McCully - a team of ten. Five families. Not one individual like David Brainerd. That says something about the importance of biblical missions. Jim Elliot had a proper view of the local church and being under authority to be sent out. They were a team. They had to live as one another's church; one another's body. And so did the wives. All of these are in their twenties - young twenties, middle-aged twenties, older twenties. Twenty-year olds.

The mission target once they were all in Ecuador became the most savage tribe in the country. The Auca Indians. Operation Auca began February 1952. The Auca's were the most savage group of killers in all the eastern jungles of Ecuador. The word "Auca" was given to this group of Indians by the Quechua Indians, and it means "savage." Auca. Savage. The savage Auca's. Unreached by white men. Except when business explorers in previous decades hunting rubber or minerals came exploring their territory, abusing the Auca's, killing them to advance their own business ventures. This caused any openness or curiosity about the outside world to be destroyed. They were totally closed off from anyone but themselves. Now, time doesn't allow the story here. It's in the journals; it's in the books. Especially "Through Gates of Splendor." But those ten missionaries - those five couples - courageous, focused, sacrificial, loving and big-hearted, said, "In Thy name, we go." It was the Auca's they targeted and began their prayers and the planned approach to be the first ever white men to become friends with the Auca's. They made a first friendly contact. Five white men with three naked Auca Indians. So the mission was clear and was in gear.

## **The Martyrdom**

Then, the martyrdom. It was five men. Not just Jim Elliot. As a young man through his twenties, Jim was always for some reason speaking, writing, and praying about death. It's coming. I want to be ready. He was facing and thinking about it. Prior to arriving in Ecuador, we see his mind and his perspective in his own words. Age 20; 9 years before his death. "If I would spare my life blood and resist pouring it out as a sacrifice, Father, take my life - even my blood if You will and consume it. I would not save it, for it is not mine to save. Have it, Lord. Have it all. Pour out my life as an offering for the world." A year later - age 21. "Lord, light the idle sticks of my life. Let me burn up for Thee. Consume my life, O God, for it is Yours. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like Yours, Lord Jesus." Age 21, "Father, if You will let me go to South America to labor for You and to die, I pray You will let me go soon. Nevertheless, not my will." Next year, age 22. "I must not think it strange if God takes in youth, those I would have kept on earth till they were older." "God is peopling eternity, and I must not restrict Him to older men and women." He said, "I saw in reading David Brainerd's life, was much encouraged to think of a life of godliness in the light of an early death." "Had thoughts of eternity today. It will be a great eye-opener and a great mouth-shutter, and it will confirm the martyr's blood. How few, how short the hours my heart beats. Then on into the real world where the unseen is important." He described a coffin as a swallowing up of life. He said, "for this I am most anxious."

Now, he had closely read the autobiography of John G. Paton, missionary to the cannibals in the South Seas in the 19th century. He, like Paton, was opposed and criticized by others about going to the remote unreached tribes and the dangers. Friends and church leaders told Paton and Jim they should stay at home. They could do much good at home. Influence your church here. When John Paton was decided and firm, one of his own church members said, "The cannibals! You'll be eaten by cannibals!" The memory of John Williams who had gone from Scotland only 19 years earlier had been eaten by cannibals. But to this Paton responded, "Mr. Dixon, you are advanced in years now, and you will be soon in the grave, there to be eaten by worms. So it will make no difference to me whether I'm eaten by cannibals or worms. In the great day, my resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of Jesus." This was Jim Elliot's perspective on death and eternity.

So, they focus on the Auca's. They had friendly fly-by's, dropping gifts. They landed on the beach. They built little houses 35 feet up in the trees. And they waited. They would go and they would come and they would wait and come back. And they finally had friendly contact. First, a young woman and then a few others. And they then began to plan a fresh fuller contact and they left their wives for the last time and were gone five days. On the fifth day, the men were surprised on the beach by killers that they had hoped would be friendly. They left for the beach five days before dying. And Elisabeth Elliot tells it best.

## **The Meaning for Us**

Finally, the meaning for us here. What does this mean to us? His legacy to us? What shall we say of this man's life and his example to us? We can't go back 68 years to hear him preach or pray or to talk to him. We have the record. We have the legacy. What's our takeaway? What's applicable to you and I this week? This spring in 2018? What are the lessons and the

message for us? A few things. First of all, we must have realistic and not romantic views of our spiritual heroes. Those who have inspired us, have fed us and taught us, have ministered the most to us for the greatest help and blessing, are never perfect Christians. They're flawed; they have blind spots. They have prejudices. They have needs. They have struggles. They have sins. They're wrong in some areas. They can fail you. They will, at times, disappoint you. And they don't have all the answers. So, like Jim Elliot in his day, he viewed his spiritual leaders with realism. He didn't idolize them. We shouldn't idolize them or romanticize them or praise them wrongly. Scripture says whose faith follow. And so, we should have a realistic view of those in history and of those we follow today.

Secondly, a lesson we should learn from this is this: A consistent and faithful life. A consistent and faithful life without martyrdom is as heroic as a martyr's death. Think about it. Five men on that beach surprised suddenly. A spear attacks and it takes 2 minutes, maybe, to die. And it's over. Does that somehow take superhuman power more than living daily for Christ for 70 years and running well to the end? Both are heroic. We know about David Brainerd only because Jonathan Edwards published his private diary. But do you know anything about John Brainerd? David's younger brother. No journal. No hero. But he went and replaced David among the Indians and stayed 30 years. Same caliber of man. Same godliness. He just never wrote about it. Do you know anything about Burt Elliot, Jim's brother? Jim's there less than four years. Burt's in Peru 30 years. Of the four, Jim Elliot, Burt Elliot, John Brainerd, who's more the hero? We would know nothing about the famous Brainerd or the famous Elliot if four books had not been written. No books - no heroism. But it's heroic to faithfully live for Christ where you are, keep serving, obeying God's will for you, year in and year out, doing what God's called you to do. Dying for Christ suddenly is not more glorious than living for Him for 50 years. Living long term in faithful service is what we're called to do. God determines the names and the numbers of the martyrs. And He determines who is not one. So, the McCheyne's, the William Borden's, the Keith Green's, the Jim Elliot's are few in number who die early. They are so few. The majority of Christians get the privilege and heroism of living 30, 40, 50, 70 years walking with God. The George Muller's... he was 90. Leonard Ravenhill - he was 87. Keith McCloud - late 70's. Bill McCloud - 80. Bob Jennings - in his sixties. Conrad Murrell - 89. It's the little things done in persevering faithfulness that are worthy of praise and notice.

A Belfast detective in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the days of the bombings of the IRA and the protestant conflict, a Belfast detective read Jim Elliot's life. And he said I was afraid every day to go into that battle zone. I had fear every day. Fear for my family. But I read Jim Elliot's life, and it transformed me. He said if Jim Elliot can go in there with courage for Christ, so can I. That's a takeaway. Faithfulness to Christ in the small things is as great of heroism as dying a martyr's death.

Thirdly, what does this mean for us? More than ever, arise and go. Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. What are you pursuing? You young men, are you as focused in any degree as Jim Elliot was? Are you wandering? Are you just aimless? Or what are you focusing on? What is God's purpose for your life in light of kingdom purposes? Are you settling in? You young couples, middle-aged couples, are we settling in? Are you settling in for a good old U.S.A. lifestyle of ease, fun, and comfort? Have you ever been willing to go? And have you truly surrendered only wanting God's will? If not, you need to start all over again on your

kingdom-first seeking and deal with this. You think about places right now. Lebanon. We have brethren there right now, for the most part - as far as long term - laboring alone. Couples are needed. Mature, godly, self-denying single men are needed there right now. Mexico. Tim and Diego are going soon to Ecuador. Many places God is opening doors and working.

So where do you fit in the scheme of God's purpose of serving Him? If not you, who? If not now, when? If not you, why? What are you holding on to? What can or what will you give your life to that's more glorious or eternal than what Jim Elliot lived for? For the five young wives in their twenties, MarLou McCully, Olive Fleming, Barbara Youderian, Rachel Saint, and Betty Elliot - the longing of their numb and mute hearts after their husbands died was echoed by words found in Jim's diary written before he died in Ecuador. He wrote, "I walked out to the hill just now. It is exalting and delicious to stand embraced by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at my coat. And the heavens calling for my heart to gaze in glory and give oneself to God again. What more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness! The pleasure! The sheer excitement of knowing God on earth! I care not if I never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love and please Him. Perhaps, in mercy, He may give me a host of children that I may lead them to explore His delicacies. But if not, if I may but see Him and smile into His eyes, oh, then... then, nothing will matter. Only Him." O church, arise. Let's sing it together. O church, arise.