

ABBREVIATED LEADER'S GUIDE
TO THE FILM

CANDLE
IN
THE DARK

THE STORY OF WILLIAM CAREY

Abridged from the 64-page curriculum supplement
included in the *Candle in the Dark* Missions Video Curriculum Kit

From Gateway Films/Vision Video
A CHRISTIAN HISTORY INSTITUTE PRODUCTION

NOTE: Permission is hereby given to leader to make copies of any of the material contained herein in connection with the use of *Candle in the Dark* film.

A Note about this Guide

The material on the following pages has been excerpted from a more complete and extensive 64-page curriculum supplement prepared for use with the William Carey film *Candle in the Dark*.

That guide is part of a full curriculum kit that includes:

- The complete 97-minute film
- The film broken down into four segments with introduction and commentary provided by Carey scholars Dr. Timothy George and Dr. Ramesh Richard
- A special movie edition of the Carey biographical book *Faithful Witness*, written by Timothy George
- Original source material from historical documents related to the Carey story

The full guide enables the user to build study segments around scriptural sections related to the themes depicted in the film, the segment commentaries, the book, and the original sources.

Many leaders found there was more study resource there than they use in the time available for their particular setting and asked if we might provide a shortened guide that would be easier to use. Thus in these pages we have taken some of the elements from the larger guide. We have retained the four part division of the film and given here an introduction to each section, a scriptural link, and some key questions for discussion.

The four sections are titled:

1. The Task
2. The Trials
3. The Team
4. The Triumph

Regarding the Difficult Marriage Situation of William and Dorothy

The film honestly and forthrightly treats the very trying and tragic marriage of William and Dorothy Carey based on careful research of the historical records about their relationship. This is an element of the film that many have found difficult and several leaders have asked if we might supply some comments that might be of help in putting this matter in perspective.

First it must be said that we felt it imperative to include this dimension. Indeed it could not be avoided if we were to provide an authentic film about their lives. As will be seen in the film viewing, Dorothy was opposed to her family going to India in the first place. She at first refused to accompany her husband and bring her children there and only relented when her sister Kitty agreed to come along to provide companionship and help. Once on the field the rigors of life in a different culture, the persistent poverty in which the Careys lived, the death of their son Peter, and other factors all combined to accelerate Dorothy's decline into depression and mental illness and her eventual death.

There is no simple explanation that can satisfy. We can affirm from Carey's journals and correspondence that he was deeply distressed over the afflictions of his wife and did all he knew to strengthen and comfort her. While neither William or Dorothy had any formal education it was obvious that Carey's natural gifts enabled him to learn quickly and advance to high levels of scholarship, whereas the evidence suggests that Dorothy never learned to read or write. That may have only aggravated the distress Dorothy felt. Some have observed that Dorothy was discontented with their situation in England before they left for India and may not have found contentment in any circumstances, at least not married to one committed to a life of Christian ministry.

There are no simple answers. All we can point to is the fact that Carey conscientiously agonized over his wife's distress and tried to do all he could to be supportive. He refused the option of having her "put away" and cared for her till the end of her life. But he also did not take her and the family back to England as she would have preferred. He was caught in the bind of being genuinely concerned for the welfare of his family and being firmly convinced that he had been called and sent to India and that God would provide for his family needs there.

For those wishing to study this subject area further, see *Dorothy Carey* by James R. Beck (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992).

1 Part 1: The Task

It may be difficult for us to imagine today, but just a little over two hundred years ago missions were not a vital part of the life of Protestant churches. Protestants had been preoccupied with theological matters and had given little thought to bringing the message of Christ to the pagan masses.

But for Carey the issue was clear. We cannot enjoy the benefits of the Gospel without assuming its responsibilities. The commission of Jesus to the apostles to bring the Word to the entire world was binding on believers in all generations. Carey pressed the case with his fellow Baptist pastors. He was relentless. On one occasion, so the legend goes, an older, more experienced pastor told him, “Sit down young man! When it pleases God to convert the heathen, he will do it without consulting you or me. Besides there first must be another Pentecost.”

Carey was not deterred. He set forth his case in detail in his 87 page *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*. It became the manifesto of the modern missionary movement. Carey signalled a new era in evangelical awareness of the responsibility of every church and believer to care about those in far away places who did not know God. He did more than argue his case. He went — at a horrendous personal cost to himself and his family. Christians of all denominations have been his beneficiaries as well as countless people who have been brought to the light of God’s Word and the blessings of his grace, resulting from the missions that Carey’s example inspired.

FOR DISCUSSION

Isaiah 54:2-3

This was the text for Carey’s so called “Deathless Sermon.” **Discuss what you think he might have drawn from this text for his hearers and then think of how he might apply the text were he to speak to us today.**

Carey was sure of a calling from God. Does every Christian have a calling?

How is a genuine calling discerned and tested?

What is the role of the church in affirming the calling of an individual? When is it right to press for affirmation of a calling when, as in Carey’s case, there was initial indifference from his fellow Christians?

Part 2: The Trials

There were no exuberant missionary letters home to the support base in England in those early years telling of multitudes coming to the Lord. Instead for the Careys there was one discouragement after another. One veteran missionary woman after seeing the film said that with his miserable marriage situation they would have been recalled home from the field, if indeed they would have ever been allowed to go in the first place.

What was going on? Here's a man seeking to be obedient to God's calling but all his efforts seemed fruitless. At the same time the cost he was imposing on his loved ones could only increase his own self doubts.

Carey had an unshakable belief in God's goodness and providence. But what was he to make of all that was happening to him and his family? Most of us would have given up and gone home. What kept him there? Was it stubbornness or faith? His letters and journal reflect a yo-yo existence. He was beaten down in discouragement. He would refresh himself in God. The seemingly senseless and interminable trials, he considered, would be used by God to provide a foundation for a good work. He could not deny his calling. It came down to a simple matter of obedience to God. He was an ambassador sent to bring the Word to India. That alone could drive out the superstition and darkness that possessed his adopted homeland. He had seen too much to turn back now. Women sacrificed their firstborns in the Ganges to appease the gods. Men impaled themselves on hooks. Widows were burned alive on their deceased husband's funeral pyres. He could not turn his back when he knew there was a Word from God that could free their souls.

FOR DISCUSSION

James 1:2-3

How do we speak meaningfully of God in reference to the sufferings endured by the servants of Christ? Does God simply allow awful things to happen and then give his comfort and strength to get us through it all? Or does God more directly bring us into trials for his own reasons and "for our own good?" Or is it impossible to generalize in such matters? **How can James speak of our trials as something in which to rejoice? What is there to rejoice about?**

What shaping influence did his many problems have on Carey?

If you were in Carey's shoes, would you have taken your family back to England?

Carey suffered severe doubts and bouts of depression. What were the doubts? How did he cope?

What gave him the courage to go on?

To what degree should we look for signs of success as confirming God's calling and an indication of God's blessing. Does God's calling sometimes mean that we have to labor on even when there are no tangible signs of success and blessing?

Part 3: The Team

Carey's original partner and colleague Dr. Thomas had proven to be unreliable and irresponsible. Carey had to survive on his own in a strange land for the first years. When reinforcements arrived from England, circumstances dictated that the Carey family relocate once again and find protection in the Danish settlement of Serampore. They organized their life around a covenant of mutual commitment and submission.

The names of Marshman and Ward are little known now whereas Carey has become a legend. But his exploits can be understood only in the context of the synergy of that small band that lived together, shared their resources, recognized their mutual gifts, met every week to air and resolve any disputes, and submitted their individual aspirations to the ministry of the team.

They lived out the New Testament image of the church as an interrelated body with the various members functioning in concert and together becoming far greater than the sum of their parts.

And they were bold to claim in their Compact that *no private family ever enjoyed a greater portion of happiness, even in the most prosperous gale of worldly prosperity than we have done since we resolved to have all things in common, and that no one should pursue his business for his own exclusive advantage.*

FOR DISCUSSION

I Corinthians 1:10-16; 3:5-9; 12:4-13

The book of I Corinthians was written to address problems in the young church at that notorious Greek seaport city. Division among the believers was one of the crisis issues Paul spoke to. Reflect upon the referenced passages to discuss: **What does Paul teach about teamwork, interdependence, mutual respect, and oneness in the body of Christ? Was the idea of “celebrity Christians” a problem in Paul’s day? What do we have to learn about his treatment of that subject for the present day?**

What prospects did the arrival of new recruits mean for Carey? What specific differences did you notice in him after they came?

What important role did Thomas get to play in the ministry by his brief reappearance? Did your outlook on the doctor change?

What did baptism mean for Krishna Pal? What dangers did it arouse? Why?

What was the significance of Carey’s asking Krishna to share a meal with them?

How did you respond to Hannah? Discuss the role of Hannah on the team, her relationship to William, Dorothy, the mission, the local people, and children in Serampore.

Do you think we would have ever heard of William Carey if he had not gathered around himself a mutually supportive community of faith and outreach?

Was their experience unique to their time and place, or do they have something to teach us about how to carry on ministry and missions in any age?

Part 4: The Triumph

In using the word ‘triumph’ for this section, we do not wish for a moment to convey any idea of ‘triumphalism.’ Devastating setbacks afflicted the Serampore community right up through their golden years. Yet the fruits were undeniable. The blessing they brought to Bengal is remembered and revered by the Indian people to this day.

But the benefits of their work reached far beyond their immediate mission, inspiring other Christians and denominations, shaping the future of evangelical missions, leaving a missionary vision for the world from which the church has not retreated. Carey had travelled half way around the world to settle in India. For the last thirty years of his life he never travelled more than twenty miles from his home base, but from there he left a legacy for the world that most of the great statesmen of all history might envy.

FOR DISCUSSION

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

Paul speaks of God who “always leads us in triumph.” A brief look at his ministry as recorded in the book of Acts and in his epistles gives us pause to ask what Paul means by triumph. No one can suspect his life of being an easy ride to victory. So much of his time was spent in turmoil, under persecution, often in jail, and then a final period under arrest in Rome before he was beheaded. Nevertheless Paul could rejoice that the Gospel prospered, even as he faced one test after another. Similarly for Carey, his trials really never ceased, not even during the brightest days of the Serampore mission. **What are the yardsticks for success for the servant of God? How does this differ from the usual worldly standards?**

What issues today do we face that might call for the kind of cooperation and joint effort exhibited by Carey and Roy?

What principles do we see in Carey’s example that would suggest how to do this?

What do you make of the fact that Carey saw great value in Indian culture and literature that could and should be recaptured and would not be in conflict with an acceptance of the Gospel? Where might we face parallel challenges in various missionary settings today?

How do we reply to the frequent criticism that Christianity comes in as a foreign element and does damage to native cultures?

How did you respond to Carey’s accepting secular employment from his former opponent? His quick remarriage?

How did Carey change and grow over the years in understanding his own gifts and calling, why he was called to go to India, how the long term interests of the Gospel might best be served?

Can you imagine what strategies Carey might urge if he were alive today?

For further information on
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and *Candle in the Dark*,
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