

Companion Guide
for

Children's Heroes from Christian History

V O L U M E 2

Prepared by
Christian History Institute

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Companion Guide to Children's Heroes from Christian History, Volume 2

To Parents, Teachers, and Leaders

INTRODUCTION

*from Dr. Ken Curtis,
President of Christian History Institute.*

Welcome to Children's Heroes of Christian History. For years we have wanted to put out a series of programs like these, for we are constantly asked to provide resources to acquaint children with our Christian heritage.

So here is our first attempt in that direction. We assume that these programs were acquired by an adult for use with children in your home, Sunday school class, or perhaps for a grandchild, or just some special young ones you care a lot about.

Your role in using these programs is vitally important. These are not "babysitter" television programs. Your participation and active involvement in the viewing experience is needed. This is for a number of reasons.

First, the stories are not typical children's entertainment. These programs are not fast paced "shoot 'em up and slap 'em down" animation intended to overwhelm the child with non-stop action. Nor is it distraction time, as is the case with so much of children's television, with the intent to just amuse the child so he/she will be more receptive and susceptible to commercial enticements at the breaks.

Much of children's video intends the child to be a passive sponge. No interaction or response is sought or wanted. That is not the case with these programs. We hope more than anything that they will elicit many questions from the children, a desire to learn more about the subjects, and a hunger to pursue the spiritual truths that are set forth.

That is why your adult involvement is so very important. The stories need to be introduced. And you need to be available to discuss the contents after viewing.

These guides with each videocassette provide you with further background on each story, and with discussion starters you may find helpful.

Each individual segment runs from 7 to 10 minutes. For those with shorter attention spans you may want to use just one story per sitting with some brief conversation to introduce the segment and follow up discussion after viewing. Others will find that more than one segment can be used to good advantage at a single sitting.

General Tips to Introduce Series

You will want to let your children know that there are some special things about these stories they are going to learn.

First, they are not like typical stories on the news— here today—gone tomorrow. No, these stories have lasted hundreds and hundreds of years.

Second, they are all true stories--they happened to real people like us.

Third, these are about lives that helped and inspired people. We will see people who brought others to find God.

Forth, just about without exception all of the great people we will meet encountered seemingly impossible difficulties in their lives, yet with God's help they found a way to meet and transcend these problems.

Fifth, these stories show us some of the amazing ways of God. The lives we will discover were all very different and the problems they faced diverse, yet in their experience we see the gracious hand of God guiding them and doing things in them and through them beyond their greatest expectations.

For each program you will find a write up that goes beyond the content we were able to include in the video story. You will find this additional background useful to fill in further details of the stories. Many of the write-ups are from our church bulletin insert series called *Glimpses*. Others have been adapted from our feature on the internet called "What Happened On This Date in Christian History?" (Note you may write us for free samples of *Glimpses*. They are also posted on the internet, as "What Happened On This Date" and you find us at "<http://www.chinstitute.org>".

General Questions That Can Be Used For Just About All of the Segments

- What was the motivation of the central subject?
- How did he find a personal relationship with God?
- What impressed you most about his life?
- If you could meet the subject what would you like to talk about? What questions would you ask?
- What were the most difficult obstacles faced?
- What are the happy moments in the story?
- Where and how can we see God at work in this person's life?
- How were they prepared in early life for the work that later awaited them?
- Why did the person seem to want so much to please God and serve others?
- When in the program would the person have most likely felt like giving up? What caused him/her to press on. What role did faith in God play?
- What difference did the subject's life make in the world?
- Did you learn anything about God or Jesus?
- Can you see any important roles played by parents, spouses, friends, neighbors, pastors? Who were the ones that influenced this person most?

A wonderful side benefit of these stories is the opportunity to teach some world geography. We suggest you have a world map or globe available to pinpoint the location(s) of each story.

WILLIAM CAREY

Ever met anyone whose love is so great that they would pay any price, make any sacrifice, undergo any hardship, to bring the Gospel of Christ to as many people as possible?

William Carey was like that. As a young man in England in the late 1780s, he was obsessed with the conviction that the church must take God's Word to every nation. At this time Protestants were not active in missionary activity. (The Moravians and their pioneering efforts were a major exception.)

Carey kept urging his fellow pastors to set up a missionary agency, but they always seemed to have more urgent problems closer to home. At one meeting an elder pastor reportedly snapped at him: "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me."

But Carey simply would not let anything stand in the way. The obstacles he faced were many and menacing, any one of which would have given most of us cause to turn back. A few examples:

Carey did not go to school beyond the age of 12 when he became a cobbler's apprentice. He was educationally unqualified. Yet he knew God had given him a great gift for languages, and this must be used to share Christ with other cultures.

When Carey was preparing for ordination in 1785, he was rejected when he gave his first sermon as a candidate. It took two more years for him to be eventually ordained to the ministry.

Carey's missionary concern was ignored until in 1792 he produced one of the most important books in all of church history: *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians*. In it he argued that Christ's "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:19-20 was not just to the apostles but to Christians of all periods. It proved to be kind of the charter of the modern Protestant missionary movement. Carey showed that if Christians want to claim the comforts and promises of the New Testament, they must also accept the commands and instructions given there. Soon after the publication he delivered a famous sermon in which he admonished Christian leaders to "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." His colleagues formed a missionary society and sent Carey as their first missionary to India, along with a Dr. John Thomas.

Carey and his wife Dorothy lost three small children. In India Dorothy progressively lost her sanity and could not cope with the strain of living at a subsistence level. They had three other young children to raise. No one would have blamed them if they had decided to pack it in and sail back home to more familiar and comfortable surroundings, but they stayed on.

Carey spent seven years in India before seeing his first convert. And then there was the problem of the persecution of anyone who became a Christian because it meant breaking caste in India.

At the time there were practices in India that Carey had to oppose as a Christian; children were sacrificed to the gods; widows were burned alive on their husband's funeral pyres.

There was also official opposition to him from the British East India Company which did not want missionaries in India. There was the disastrous fire in 1812 at the mission printing plant that destroyed years of Carey's translation work. There were repeated attacks of malaria and cholera, impoverished living conditions, insufficient funds to eke out even a minimal existence. Carey had to take up secular employment just to survive.

Was it worth it? Beyond a doubt. Carey formed a team of colleagues (the Serampore Trio) whose accomplishments elevated them to first magnitude in all missions history. Carey's team translated the Bible in 34 Asian languages, compiled dictionaries of Sanskrit, Marathi, Panjabi, and Telegu—respected even today as authoritative; started the still influential Serampore College; began churches and established 19 mission stations; formed 100 rural schools encouraging the education of girls; started the Horticultural Society of India; served as a professor at Fort William College, Calcutta; began the weekly publication "The Friend of India," (continued today as "The Statesman"); printed the first Indian newspaper; introduced the concept of the savings bank to assist poor farmers. His fight against the burning of widows ("Sati") helped lead to its ban in 1829. We could go on if space permitted, but you get the idea. Equally important is the vision that Carey raised for missions. His life inspired tens of thousands to give themselves for the spread of the Gospel.

Discussion Starters

- What led William to want to be a missionary?
- What was Williams special gift? What gift do you have that God might use?
- What book by a famous explorer especially influenced William and aroused his imagination about distant lands? Have any books that you have read had a strong impact upon your imagination?
- For the most part, international missions were not emphasized in Protestant churches in William's day. Are missions important in your church? Can you name any missionaries or mission fields that your church supports?
- What was the religion in India? How would people of that religion typically respond to the Gospel that William Carey brought?
- How did William use his special gift with languages to reach out and serve the Indian people?
- What major tragedies did William experience?
- Fire was important in at least two ways in Carey's life. What were they?
- How do we know India still remembers and appreciates Carey?

ROBERT RAIKES

During the last half of the eighteenth century, many communities in England dreaded Sundays. It was the only day the children working in the factories had off, and not surprisingly they let out all their rowdiness and mischief on that day. From 1702-1801, the population of England had doubled; more and more people were moving to the cities and towns to find work in the factories. The traditional social and religious ties of village life were severed. Very often there was no place for the immigrants from the countryside in the churches of the industrialized towns, and a generation or two of children grew up without any religious or moral guidelines.

Robert Raikes, owner and printer of the Gloucester Journal, pondered the fate of the young ruffians disturbing the peace on Sunday. He had visited the prisons of Gloucester and saw how easy it was for the children to slip into crime. Raikes knew the parents of the poor children were "totally abandoned themselves, having no idea of instilling into the minds of their children principles to which they themselves were entire strangers." Some other means of teaching these youngsters must be found, or many more would end up in prisons.

Since the children of the poor worked in the factories all week, they could not go to schools and hence had no education. Raikes decided to establish schools for these children to attend on Sundays. He hired four women in the neighborhood to teach the children to read. With the help of Reverend Thomas Stock, Raikes was soon able to enroll one hundred children, from six years old to twelve or fourteen, in these Sunday Schools.

Some of the poor children were at first reluctant to come to the schools because their clothes were so ragged, but Raikes assured them all they needed was a clean face and combed hair. The children had their reading lessons from ten to two, with a one hour break for lunch. They then were taken to church, after which they were instructed in the catechism until five-thirty. Small rewards were given to those who had mastered their lesson or whose behavior had shown a noted improvement.

The character of many of the youngsters was transformed by their Sunday school attendance. Their swearing, rudeness, and unruliness on Sunday were replaced by a sense of duty and a desire to improve their minds. One of the manufacturers of hemp and flax who employed many of the children, a Mr. Church commented on the transformation of the children: "the change could not have been more extraordinary in my opinion, had they been transformed from the shape of wolves and tigers to that of men."

More measurably, the crime rate dropped sharply in Raikes' city and county after the establishment of the schools. At the Easter Quarter Sessions of 1786, the magistrates passed a unanimous vote of thanks for the benefits of Sunday Schools to the morals of the young. In 1792, not one criminal defendant appeared before the judge; ten years earlier there would have been anywhere between ten and one hundred cases.

Raikes saw the Sunday schools as simply a response to Jesus' instruction to "Feed my lambs." The poor children must be sought out and helped. "No one can form an idea of what benefits he is capable (of bringing) to the community by . . . visiting the dwellings of the poor." Thus, for Raikes, serving the Lord by ministering to poor children, would have important effects on society at large: "If the glory of God be promoted in any, even the smallest degree, society must reap some benefit. If the good seed be sown in the mind at an early period of

human life though it shows itself not again for many years, it may please God, at some future period, to cause it to spring up, and to bring forth a plentiful harvest.”

There had been Charity Schools and Sunday Schools before Robert Raikes, but it was Raikes who publicized the schools and gathered public support for them. By 1785, a Sunday School Society had been formed in London to distribute Bibles and spelling books. Being a publisher by trade, Raikes was able to publish, import, and distribute the primers, readers, spelling books, catechisms, and copies of Scriptures so important to the movement.

Raikes once commented that: “The world marches forth on the feet of little children.” Public schools have now taken over much of the role that Sunday Schools pioneered. But who can doubt that there is today a desperately important educational task for the church with children, whether through the Sunday School, or some other format. To change the world reach the children! Are your congregation and Sunday School reaching the poor and needy children of your area?

Discussion Starters

- Did you think there were always Sunday Schools, going all the way back to the time of Jesus?
- If the Christian church has been here almost 2,000 years, then Sunday School has been an important part of church life for only the most recent 10 percent of our history. How do you think Christian Education was carried on before the beginnings of Sunday School?
- Were you surprised to learn that in Mr. Raikes time there were many children who did not go to school?
- Did Mr. Raikes begin Sunday School because these children were eager to learn?
- Why do you think Sunday Schools spread so rapidly?
- Have you ever heard other kids say that "Sunday School is boring?" Do you think knowing how Sunday Schools came about in the first place might change that kind of opinion?
- Do you know of any situations where children have to work under grueling conditions today similar to what was going on in Mr. Raikes time?
- Would children from Mr. Raikes day, if they could see children today, think you had it hard?

HANS EGEDE

On the West coast of Greenland, in the tundra zone about one hundred and fifty miles south of the Arctic Circle, a new colony was abuilding. Europeans had established their presence in Greenland as early as 980 under Eric the Red. His Vikings became Christians. However, they despised the natives and were cruel to them. Severe winters, bad relations with the Eskimos, and the problems of maintaining trade across great distances of treacherous water weakened the colony. In the 1300s the Eskimos wiped it out. This was not known in Scandinavia, for ties had long been broken. Now, in 1721, the Danes were reestablishing their presence. The leader of the expedition was not a Dane, however. He was a tough-skinned Norwegian. More to the point, he was a Christian missionary.

18th century Protestantism was slow in developing a concern for missionary outreach. The little nation of Denmark was among those countries which felt the urgency of spreading the gospel. Hans Egede, a Norwegian pastor, longed to reach the descendants of the earlier settlement on Greenland. He was not intending to go himself. For one thing, his wife was completely against the idea; for another, family obligations tied him down. Nonetheless, for many years Egede pleaded in behalf of Greenland. King Frederick IV, ruler of Norway and Denmark, was moved. Having come under the sway of Pietism, he strongly supported missions. Despite serious political opposition, he threw his support behind the project, founding a mission school in 1714.

Meanwhile Hans Egede's circumstances changed. His pastorate became the center of bitter contention. His wife longed for a change of location. Even Greenland, whose name until now she had refused to hear mentioned, now seemed desirable. She fell on her knees and yielded to God. Years were to pass before the work could commence but husband and wife were now united in spirit. Finally, eleven years after he first heard the call of Greenland, his family obligations eased. Despite a deep sense of inadequacy, he threw himself forward for the job. An expedition, half mission, half trade-venture, prepared to sail with him at its head.

On May 3, 1721 the Egedes, including their two young sons, sailed into the inhospitable North Sea. It was July 3rd before they reached their destination. They had quickly become trapped in ice. One night a fearsome storm battered their ship, the *Hope*, threatening to crush it between blocks of ice. The sailors murmured. Fog lay thick on the sea. But the storm saved them. Next morning they found the ice broken and they were able to proceed.

Egede found no Viking descendants on Greenland, although he did find ruins of their sturdy churches. In August he founded a colony and named it Godthåb—Good Hope. Known as Nuuk today, it is capital of the nation. From this base he preached to the Eskimos, but despaired of success, for superstition ran deep in them and they could not be weaned from the words of their angakut (soothsayers). The problems of teaching Christianity were compounded by Egede's difficulties mastering the Eskimo language. It seemed to have few words with which to express abstract ideas. Despite this, he attempted to produce a translation of the New Testament. He found that the Eskimos responded best to parables. Nonetheless, the islanders stole from the foreigners and tried to cast spells on them. The need to collect trade goods greatly hampered Egede. The king had sent other men to do the work, but they showed little initiative. Supplies ran low. Ships were lost at sea. One of the traders slapped a native.

The enraged Eskimos planned revenge, intending to wipe out the little colony. Egede posted guard. These wearisome circumstances made him consider giving up the work and returning home. His wife persuaded him to stay.

Egede dearly loved the Eskimos, but did not always know how to express this. That changed in 1733 when smallpox swept the island. Hans and his wife poured themselves heart and soul into caring for the dying Greenlanders. "You have been kinder to us than we have been to one another," exclaimed one. Egede's wife exhausted herself tending the sick and died a short time later. Hans returned to Denmark in 1736.

His sons Paul and Niels, raised among the Eskimos, continued the missionary effort. Both had mastered the language. Paul completed the Bible translation, and witnessed a revival. His father rejoiced to see him reap where he had sown. Hans Egede's faithfulness had made that testimony possible. Today all Greenland is at least nominally Christian.

Discussion Starters

- What was Hans Egede's native land and what position did he hold when he first thought seriously of going to Greenland as a missionary?
- Egede was a heroic missionary pioneer. Protestant missions took time to develop. The great Moravian missionary movement did not begin until the 1730's, and William Carey's historic missionary manifesto would be some 60 years even after that. So what did Egede have to learn as a pioneer missionary?
- Do you think God had reasons for keeping Hans waiting before he went to Greenland?
- Describe the reception Hans and his wife received in Greenland and how they responded to it.
- There was little interest on the part of the Greenlanders to hear the Gospel story, so what did the Egede's do to reach them at other levels?
- Inasmuch as the natives showed little interest in following Jesus during the Egede's mission stay in Greenland, how would you describe their mission? Was it a failure, just an ill advised venture?
- Today there is practically no call for missionaries to be sent to Greenland. Why is that? How does that set the mission of the Egedes in a much larger light?

SUNDAR SINGH

Bitter over the death of his mother Sundar Singh blamed God. The fourteen year old boy became vicious toward his Christian teachers. He threw filth on them, mocked their scriptures, and interrupted classes. Then he made the ultimate gesture of scorn. He bought a Bible from the Christians. Outside his house he built a fire and page by page tore up the scripture and burnt it.

“Although I believed that I had done a very good deed by burning the Bible, I felt unhappy.” Within three days Sundar Singh could bear his misery no longer. Late one night in December 1903, he rose from bed and prayed that God reveal himself to him if he really existed. Otherwise— “I planned to throw myself in front of the train which passed by our house.”

For seven hours Sundar Singh prayed. “O God, if there is a God, reveal thyself to me tonight.” The next train was due at five o’clock in the morning. The hours passed.

Suddenly the room filled with a glow. A man appeared before him. Sundar Singh heard a voice say, “How long will you deny me? I died for you; I have given my life for you.” He saw the man’s hands, pierced by nails. This could only be Christ. In that moment of recognition, the boy who had burnt the Bible became a man who would endure anything for the Christ taught in that book. He knew Christ as the Savior of the world and fell to his knees with a wonderful sense of peace.

To meet Christ was only the beginning for Sundar Singh. He was a Sikh. Sikhs had endured terrible persecutions in their early history. As a consequence they were fiercely loyal to their faith and to each other. Conversion to Christianity was considered treachery. Now every effort was made to woo or coerce Sundar Singh back to his ancestral faith.

Sundar’s father alternately pleaded with tears and raged with fury. Finally Sundar Singh realized he must break with his people. He cut off the hair he had worn long like every Sikh man. Then he heard the words of outcasting spoken over him. “We reject you forever...I declare you are no more worthy to be called our son...We shall forget you as if you had never been born. You will leave this house with nothing but the clothes you wear on your back...”

Hours later he experienced wrenching pain in his gut. His family had poisoned his last meal. He staggered to a mission hospital. The missionary-medic was able to save the young man’s life.

Sundar now had a decision to make. Conventional Indian churches were willing to grant him a pulpit, but their rules were foreign to his spirit. Indeed, he felt that a key reason the gospel was not accepted in India was because it came in a garb foreign to Indians. He decided to don the yellow robe of India’s holy men.

So, in his robe, Sundar Singh took to the road, preaching the gospel of Christ. Sometimes he was blessed, sometimes cursed. He visited his own village and many of the gang members listened to him with curiosity and interest. A few became Christians.

The mountains of Tibet called to him. Buddhist monks exerted tremendous power over that nation. Sundar Singh determined to enter the forbidden land with the gospel of Christ. Before his death he would travel into Tibet about twenty times.

In 1912 in the Tibetan village of Lazar, he was beaten and thrown to die in a pit filled with rotting bodies. His arm was broken; the pit was sealed above him, and only the Grand Lama had the key. The stench was unbearable. Three nights later, Sundar heard the grate open. A

shadowy figure lowered a rope and pulled him out. Next morning he boldly showed himself again, preaching in the streets. The Grand Lama seized him. Furious questions followed. Who had helped him? Who had stolen the key? He pulled the key ring from under his robe. The key was still on it. Terrified he freed Sundar Singh, expelling him from town.

Another time, Sundar was left bound to die in the forest of Nepal. Secret Christians came to his rescue. Another time, when he sang of Christ in prison, he was bound in stocks and hurled into the jungle to die. Again secret Christians came at night and released him. Those who knew him said he was more like Christ than any other they had known. He himself said, "A Christian is one who has fallen in love with Christ." He also reminded his listeners that when we have left this world we will not have a second chance of bearing the cross for Christ.

His father became a Christian. To make amends for his former actions, he paid Sundar Singh's passage to the West to preach. Shocked by Western materialism, Sundar Singh paraphrased Christ's words: "Come unto me all ye that are heavily laden with gold and I will give you rest."

Sundar was glad to return even to Tibet after his experience in the West. Worn down, he no longer possessed the strength of former years. For months he was very sick. In 1929, before he had fully recovered, he climbed again to Tibet. He never returned.

Discussion Starters

- On one occasion while traveling in the Himalayas, Sundar Singh climbed down a cliff during a blizzard to help a man who had fallen. A Tibetan companion refused to help, saying he would save his own life. Sundar Singh saved the fallen man. The Tibetan was found dead in the snow a little further on. What does this suggest to you about the kind of man Sundar was?
- Why did Sundar burn a Bible as a youth?
- What changed his outlook?
- Why did his family reject him?
- Why was a man lying on a bed of nails? How did his understanding of God differ from Sundar's?
- When Sundar visited Europe and America he was disappointed in some Christians. Why? Do you think he would feel differently if he visited today?
- Do missionaries today face circumstances that are quite similar or vastly different in the countries Sundar tried to reach?