

Companion Guide
for
Children's Heroes
from
Christian History

V O L U M E 3

Prepared by
Christian History Institute

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Companion Guide to Children's Heroes from Christian History, Volume 3

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.

JOHN PATON

At the Eastern edge of the Coral Sea, between Fiji and Australia lies a chain of about eighty volcanic islands. The first European to discover this archipelago was Pedro Fernandez de Queiros, a Portuguese. Many other Europeans followed. The Spaniards built a short-lived settlement on the largest island, Espiritu Santo. The great French navigator Louis Antoine de Bougainville visited the chain in 1768, and Britain's most famous South Sea explorer, Captain James Cook, charted the archipelago in 1774. It was Cook who named the islands the New Hebrides. Upon achieving independence from Europe, the New Hebrides took the name Vanuatu.

The people whom Europeans discovered in the New Hebrides were fierce cannibals. On Erromanga they bludgeoned to death the missionary John Williams, "the Apostle of the South Seas." Many other missionaries were to die in the islands.

In 1858, one of the best known missionaries of all time, John G. Paton, came to Tanna. He wrote a biography of his adventures and they are among the most famous of any exploits in the history of missions. On Tanna dwelt the most ferocious tribe of all New Hebrides. The night that John Paton and his wife, sent by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, landed on Tanna, half a dozen warriors killed in a skirmish were carved up and eaten at a spring near the missionary couple. John was unable to make tea next morning because blood colored the water. The following night death wails punctuated the darkness.

In a few months Mrs. Paton was carried off by a fever shortly after giving birth to a son. John dug her grave with his own hands and laid her in it. Distracted with grief, he was helped to go on by the providential visit of two Church of England missionaries who offered him consolation.

Time after time Paton's life was threatened. Every time the Lord interposed. Sometimes a noise at night woke him in the nick of time to save his life. Once his dogs leapt on natives who would have assaulted him. Other times his empty revolver rescued him. Paton had vowed never to shoot a human, even in self defense, but the natives did not know this.

Although Paton escaped every threat, co-workers who joined him from Scotland were not so fortunate. On a New Year's eve, Mr. Johnston almost fell to the attack of a savage. The nervous shock of his near escape prostrated him and he died within a month. John Paton and Mrs. Johnston buried him. Not long afterward, the Gordons, missionaries on a neighboring island were also butchered in cold blood. What made this worse was that the murder had been instigated by European traders who resented the forceful outspokenness of the missionaries against their vices. These traders tried to persuade the Tannese to kill Paton, too. The arrival of a British warship frightened the natives and saved Paton's life.

The frightened savages even returned his stolen housewares to him. For when the Tannese weren't threatening Paton, they stole from him. Nothing was safe from their covetous hands.

Paton was urged by the commander of the war ship to leave the island. His great love for the people would not allow him to go.

In spite of continual terrors, and almost daily threats on his life, Paton pressed on to win souls. He presented the gospel to any Tannese who would open his ears to the message of Christ. He printed parts of the Bible in the Tannese language on a little press.

The threats never ceased. Once Paton turned to an assailant and assured him God was pres-

ent and would punish him if he struck. The man trembled and fled. Another time, a pursuing force was stopped just 900 feet away as if by God's command while Paton and converts from another island prayed.

Eventually Paton had to leave Tanna. While visiting fellow missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Mathieson, on the opposite side of the island, he was again attacked. A hurricane and rain drove off the attackers, but not before the church had been burned. The next day Blue Bell, a trading ship arrived. Exhausted by their need to keep constant vigilance, the three departed for a more peaceable island where they could hope for rest. The Mathiesons, worn out from their harrowing experiences soon died.

Paton labored on to ultimate success. He saw the entire population of Aniwa converted. His own son, Frank, returned to Tanna and led the natives there to faith in Christ.

Discussion Starters

- What role did the parents of John Paton play in his ministry?
- What were some of the tragedies John endured? How did they affect him?
- What important role did children play in helping his work?
- What are the New Hebrides called today?
- Why wouldn't ship crews go on the island?
- John went to minister to what some would call a "primitive people?" How is their culture different from ours? Had you heard about cannibalism before? Are there things in our society that "primitive peoples" might think make us look "primitive?" (For example, crime rate, child abuse, etc)
- What changes did the Gospel bring to the South Sea islanders?

ERIC LIDDELL

Arms flailing, head flung back, a study in awkwardness, the small Scot scissored along the outside track of the Colombes race course. The Olympic spectators shouted encouragement to the field of runners. With a time of 22.2 seconds the Scot passed the halfway mark. If he maintained this pace, he would set a record. But could he sustain the effort? Probably he would run out of steam and “die” at the finish. Unlike most who attempt the 400 meters race, he had raced flat out from the starting gun.

As his flashing feet ate up the final 200 yards, the Scot’s pace never slackened. He remained in an all-out sprint. It was increasingly evident that no one could catch him. His nearest rival was five meters back. Head back, chest heaving, legs pumping, Eric Liddell broke the tape in a world record 47.6 seconds. Before this, his best time had been 48.2 seconds.

The place was Paris. The date was July 10th, 1924. The man and the moment have been immortalized in the movie “Chariots of Fire.”

The day before, Liddell had run well in the 200 meters—but only well enough to take the bronze. No one expected him to capture the gold in the longer 400 meters. He was not primarily a distance runner. His best race was the 100 meters; but since qualifying heats for the shorter race were held on Sunday, he had withdrawn. In his mind, it was wrong to run on the day set apart to honor God.

Eric Liddell was born in China where his Scottish parents were missionaries. At five years of age, he returned to Scotland where he was raised in the faith of his father. He took it as a matter of course that he would return to China as a missionary. Meanwhile, he grew up enjoying athletics. He was competitive in rugby and represented Scotland in seven international matches. Some hoped he would become a professional player. With his high ideals, that option was out of the question. But the Scottish tradition of track and field, epitomized by the Scottish Highland Games, captured his imagination.

As he won races, Eric gained recognition. His fame grew after he took a spill in 1923 early in a 440 yard dash. Behind by a score of yards, he overtook the leaders and won. His name began to be mentioned with awe. He capitalized on his renown to extend the kingdom of God. To the crowds who appeared wherever he went, he preached the gospel of Christ. He gained Great Britain’s record for the 100 meter dash. Hopes were pinned on him for the upcoming Olympics.

At the time of the Olympics, Eric was a divinity student at the University of Edinburgh. When he refused to participate in Sunday Olympic events, he was widely criticized. Religious leaders called him a fanatic. Since his religious stand meant he also could not run in the relays, he was called selfish. Britishers who counted on him to bring home medals muttered that he was unpatriotic.

His two Olympic victories stood complaints on the head. When teammate Harold Abrahams won the 100 meters, anger about the 100 meters vanished, too. In every respect, it seemed that the Lord had vindicated Eric for his stand. He was the national hero of Presbyterian Scotland. A month later Eric was carried on the shoulders of his fellow students from the University through Edinburgh to St. Giles Chapel where he received his divinity degree.

Although his personal athletic competition was at an end, athletics remained part of his life when he proceeded to China a year later. In Tientsin he taught athletics at the Anglo-Chinese College. In addition, he evangelized among rural Chinese.

The Flying Scot never turned his eyes from the most important race of all. When the Japanese invaded China in World War II, he remained faithful to his Chinese flock, carrying on his duties. He had married a missionary nurse named Florence. Because she was pregnant, he sent her, with their two daughters, to Canada for safety.

The Japanese captured Eric and placed him in a concentration camp. There, in internment, he died of a brain tumor on February 21st, 1945. He was only forty-three. Like Paul he had finished the race. His life was poured out. He had won not only the passing gold of Olympic fame, but the eternal garland which Christ has stored up for those who overcome. All Scotland mourned for him.

Eric Liddell was one of many noble-minded missionaries who evangelized China. Today the Chinese church is said by some scholars to be the fastest growing in the world. Only God knows how much his efforts contributed to the cumulative total which brought the Chinese church to its present vigor. But we know he gave his life in the effort.

Discussion Starters

- Couldn't Eric bring glory to God by winning a race, even if it was on a Sunday? So why was competing on Sunday a problem for Eric? How would most athletes who are Christians feel about such a question today? What is your outlook on this?
- Why was the prince upset? What did the "honor of England" have to do with it?
- Do you know of any athletes today who try to glorify God through their sports?
- How did Eric's sports career prepare him for missionary work?
- Do you think Eric felt that his mission was a failure when he was captured and put in a prison camp? What did he do that showed he still knew he had a ministry that God had given him?
- Have you heard anything about World War II from people in your family? Did you have a grandfather or great grandfather who was in that war?
- What was for Eric the most important thing in the world? Was it winning? Fame? What is important to you?

LUDWIG NOMMENSEN

“O land on the shores of the lake, I hear the bells sound out everywhere across you, I see your inhabitants coming in crowds to your churches and your schools. Where now stands only uncultivated hills, I see fair gardens and flourishing woods, and countless well-ordered villages of Christians. I see Batak teachers and pastors standing at the desk and in the pulpit...”

The year was 1876. The place was inaccessible Lake Toba on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. The speaker was Ludwig Nommensen.

Nommensen was born a world away, on another island, Norstrand, in the Danish territory Schleswig-Holstein. While recuperating from a childhood accident, he vowed to become a missionary. A man of simple faith, immense resolve, and lofty vision, he fulfilled his vow. After completing his studies at the seminary of the Rhenish Mission Society at Barmen, he was sent to Sumatra, arriving in 1862.

The year before, the Rhenish Mission had established a foothold on the island. In 1859 their missionaries on Borneo were driven out by a popular uprising. Looking about for a new place to work, they settled on Sumatra. Sumatra was inhabited by a Proto-Malayan race called the Bataks. At that time these people were pagans although they had imported civilized skills, such as writing, from India. Even Islam had had little impact on the Batak, and Indonesia's Dutch rulers had little influence over them. Just thirty years before, the Bataks had killed and eaten Samuel Munson and Henry Lyman, the first two missionaries to attempt to bring them the gospel.

Nommensen worked among the Bataks. Because they were a clan-oriented society, no individual held personal property and it was difficult to win converts from among them. As soon as a man became a Christian and would no longer participate in the spirit worship of the clan, he was cut off from its communal property. Most had to move to distant regions and begin afresh, creating Christian villages. Work progressed very slowly at first. In 1866 there were only 52 Batak Christians.

Nommensen would lend the Sumatra work new impetus. Not content to hug the coast, he determined to penetrate the interior of the island. His colleagues disagreed. Dutch officials opposed him. Natives threatened him with death. He could be hindered but not stopped.

Winning friends, demonstrating great courage, employing his medical skill to advantage for the Lord, Nommensen broke the barriers. He won the protection of the powerful chief Radja Pontas Lumbantobing, and used it as a shield to visit the most remote regions of the island and created a church based on the “adat,” the Batak clan structure. Nommensen was convinced that Batak Christians must convert other Bataks. Radjas and elders were appointed to leadership roles and treated as full equals of the missionaries. The people were expected to support their own ministers. Few German missionaries were imported. The adats opened schools and churches.

The Bible was translated into the Batak language (the New Testament by 1878, the complete scripture by 1894) and the church grew steadily but slowly. Twenty years after Nommensen arrived in Sumatra, there were about 7,500 Christians. Yet it seemed that the most heroic efforts would bring in only a relative handful of converts.

Suddenly that changed. Around 1880, years of arduous toil paid off. A few chiefs were converted. As in feudal Europe where whole nations became Christian when a king or chieftain embraced the faith, so was it in Sumatra. Those under the authority of the chief embraced the faith. The mission had to scramble to find ways to instruct the multitude of new but untaught Christians.

The successful formula was to leave as much as possible in native hands. The Dutch government provided funds to support the local teachers who also taught the people their catechism. By Nommensen's death in 1918 the island's churches had 180,000 baptized members. Over 30,000 pupils were enrolled in 510 schools. Hundreds of indigenous teachers and elders labored among their own people and there were 34 ordained Batak pastors. Nommensen remained an ephorus (bishop) until his death.

Missionary skills were still needed with missionaries filling many roles for which the locals were ill equipped. For example, they surveyed roads and provided medical services. Beginning in 1930 the missionaries began withdrawing, the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (Protestant Christian Church of Batak) having been formed. The Batak church did not gain complete independence from Western control until World War II. Today about one third of the three million Bataks belong to the Huria Kristen Batak. It is the largest Lutheran church in Asia. Christians occupy many influential places on the island's government.

One third of the island's population is Islamic and the other third cling to spirit worship. Male priests, assisted by female mediums, attempt to entice and coerce the spirits of ancestors, plants, animals and even stones into fulfilling human desires.

Nommensen's determination and confidence in God were instrumental in freeing many Batak from these old practices and creating a church of great size and virility. The Lake Toba region of Sumatra, of which Nommensen had uttered his prophecy, did indeed become Christian as he foresaw. He lived to see his predictions for the Batak fulfilled.

Discussion Starters

- What sad thing happened to Ludwig as a youth?
- What good thing happened as result?
- How was Ludwig received by the Bataks? Were they happy that he came to serve and help them? Why did they help him in building a house? How do you explain their treatment of Ludwig?
- How did Ludwig in turn respond to the treatment he received from the Bataks?
- Do you think Ludwig felt like giving up and going back home? Why did he stay on?
- How were things so drastically different when Ludwig died compared to when he first arrived? What specific changes did Ludwig live to see in the lives of the Batak people? What is the explanation for this turnaround?

PASTOR DAMIEN

"I am ready to be buried alive with those poor wretches." The man who spoke was Damien. The wretches he spoke of were the miserable lepers of Molokai Island. The curse of the Hawaiian archipelago, so blessed in other ways, was leprosy. Lepers were sent to a separate peninsula of Molokai. The disease, which caused damaged extremities to rot off the body, was so feared that the Hawaiian government had made it illegal for anyone landing on the peninsula to return to the other islands. Damien knew if he went he would not be allowed to return. On May 4, 1873 he made an irrevocable decision. He would confront the gates of Hell.

Conditions on the Island were bestial. Young girls in whom leprosy had just been discovered were attacked by demon-faced men in final decay. Lepers threw other lepers out of huts to die. The island's huts were foul with disease and despair. Most of the poor lepers reeked of decaying flesh.

Damien turned white as a sheet when he arrived on the beach. Yet he prayed to be able to see Christ in the ghastly forms before him. Given one last chance to leave, he refused. He had volunteered for Hell and he intended to overcome it.

The son of a Flemish farmer, Damien had entered the priesthood with great ardor. His very presence in Hawaii was the result of incessant pleas. Once there he proved himself a determined evangelist. Nothing he had done heretofore could compare with the efforts he now made.

Although water was plentiful in the mountains, there was little in the settlement. Damien organized daily bucket brigades. Later he constructed a flume which diverted a stream of water to their doorsteps. He developed farms. The apathetic lepers had neglected even this rudimentary effort. He burned the worst houses and scoured out the rest. Saw and ax in hand, he built new houses. He laid out a cemetery. From now on, those who died would be properly buried. He prepared a dump and cleaned up the village and its environs. He shut down the production of alcohol.

And he evangelized. His cheerful conversation led dozens to Christ. The same men who before stole from dying lepers or dumped in ditches those who were too weak to care for themselves, now came to Damien for baptism.

Jealous authorities who had done little for the lepers, now refused to allow Damien even to board ship for absolution. They spread scandalous stories about him. Damien labored on. Twenty years after he came to the island, he discovered that his feet were leprous. Four years later he was dead. His quiet heroism won worldwide renown. It brought new donations for the island and a staff of nurses and other helpers. By his gruesome living death he challenged the gates of Hell.

Discussion Starters

- Why did Damien go to Molokai?
- What made it hard for him at first to get used to living there?
- Why did none of the residents of the Molokai community ever return to their homelands?
- What discovery did Damien make while washing his feet? What was his reaction to this discovery and how do you explain it? How would most people react to such a discovery?
- When Damien died, his friends played happy music. Did this surprise you? Was this a disrespectful way to treat a friend who died? Why didn't they play sad music as we would normally expect at a funeral? Would Damien have been glad they chose the happy music instead?