

Cross-Cultural Perspectives from the Director



Death Just Wouldn't Matter!

Another General Conference Foreign Mission's service has come and gone. This year our theme was "More." We asked men and women to give more of themselves; not merely their money. We need more sacrifice and passion for the mission so we can reach more people! Like most foreign mission's services at General Conference I walked away touched, stirred, challenged, and hopefully changed. I know that you missionaries have sacrificed so much, yet share the same response when attending such meetings. What is the reward of your great sacrifice?

Brother Billy Cole preached a message at School of Missions one year, "The Reward of Sacrifice" and it has made it into his book *Teachings by Billy Cole*. His text was 1 Samuel 6: 7 – 14. Two cows were tied to a cart, to carry the Ark of the Covenant. Their calves were kept at home. The two cows lowed as they went on their way. That was their initial sacrifice. Reaching their destination, the cart was destroyed, and the cows paid the ultimate sacrifice—their lives as a burnt offering. I remember Brother Cole saying, "The reward for sacrifice is another, bigger sacrifice!" We are always called upon for MORE!

This month I want to share the writing of one of our precious missionary kids, Melinda Poitras, the new editor of our *CultureShock* missionary kid magazine.

The book is *American Literature*. It rests in the second drawer of my desk. It has been laughed at; highlighted; written in; and on one or more occasions, thrown across the room. I discovered Ben Hur and Moby Dick in this book. The Fireside Poets; the Knickerbocker writers; and the painters of the Hudson River School dwell in its pages. Rip Van Winkle sleeps there. Emily Dickinson lives her reclusive life there and even Negro Spirituals resound from its chapters. There are lives in this book and there are deaths in this book. It is one such death that leaves me sobbing into my notebook, frantically searching for tissues like the idiot I often am. The selection is "Shadow of the Almighty." The author is Elizabeth Elliot. The characters are real. The story is earth shaking in its simple truth.

Jim Elliot, and his wife Elizabeth were missionaries in Ecuador. They were called to minister to the Auca Indians. ("That's nice," you might say. "So what?" you might ask.) Here's the thing. The Aucas were a bit...antisocial with the exception of one thing. They did play a game with all white men and Indians alike. We'll call it... "You Come and We'll Kill You!" (The Aucas generally won this game, by the way.) Jim Elliot had, of course, heard of this game but it didn't bother him that much. See, God made the players and he knew that God could change the game—if He wanted.

Jim and some other missionary friends hopped into Nate Saint's plane and began making 'deliveries' to the Aucas every week. They would fly above their camp shouting phrases like "Trade you a lance for a machete" and "We like you!" in the Aucan language and dropping gifts to the ground. This went on for awhile until they decided that it was time to dive in and test the waters of their faith. Jim knew he might never come back but he was "willing to die if that's what God wants." He sent his wife a message after arrival telling her of the beach and closing with the information that they were leaving at that moment to go straight to the Aucan village. He did meet an Aucan after all. Jim Elliot fulfilled his life's goal and took an Aucan by the hand.

"Two days later, on Sunday, January 8, 1956, the men for whom Jim Elliot had prayed for six years killed him and his four companions."

The power in that sentence is heart wrenching. The faith in that story is beautiful. I've heard this Jim Elliot quote all my life: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." And as I read it now, I realize it is not his death that is making me cry. It is the knowledge that if I could live like that, really live like that; death wouldn't matter!

Death just wouldn't matter!

Thanks, Melinda for your excellent article. And, thanks missionaries for giving more and living in such a way that death just wouldn't matter.

“Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”
(Galatians 6:9).