



Amy Carmichael 1867-1951

Amy Wilson Carmichael was born in the small village of Millisle, County Down, Ireland to David Carmichael, a miller, and his wife Catherine. Her parents were devout Presbyterians and she was the oldest of seven siblings. Amy's father moved the family to Belfast when she was 16, but died two years later. In Belfast, Carmichael founded the Welcome Evangelical Church.

As a youth Amy thought she was a Christian, but an evangelist showed her she needed a personal commitment. She gave her heart to Christ. Service to Him became the center and passion of her life.

In her young life in Belfast, Amy started classes and prayer groups for Belfast ragamuffins. She also began a Sunday work with the "shawlies." These were factory girls so poor that they could not afford hats to wear to church and wore shawls instead. Respectable people didn't want anything to do with them. Amy saw that they needed Christ just the same as their supposed "betters." Eventually, so many "shawlies" attended Amy's classes that she had to find a building large enough to hold three hundred or more.

The Carmichaels lost all their money through financial reverses and a change became necessary: Mrs. Carmichael decided to move to England and work for Uncle Jacob. Amy and another sister joined her. Uncle Jacob asked Amy to teach his mill workers about Christ. Amy threw herself into the work, living near the mill in an apartment infested with cockroaches and bed bugs. However, she was constantly sick with neuralgia, a disease of the nerves that made her whole body weak and achy and often put her in bed for weeks on end. It was clear she must give up the work.

For years, Amy wanted to be a missionary. Now this desire grew so strong it hurt. She prayed about it and wrote down the reasons she thought it couldn't possibly be God's intention. One of the first things on the list was her sickness. But in her prayers she seemed to hear the Lord speak as if He were standing in her room, Saying, "Go."

"Surely, Lord, you don't mean it," she said. Again the voice said, "Go."

After a year, having difficulty finding where the Lord would lead, Amy set off for Japan in the company of three missionary ladies. She had sent ahead a

letter offering her assistance to missionaries there. Friends thought she was foolish when she announced she was going to be a missionary. They predicted that she would soon be back in England for keeps. But Amy was sure God had called her to go overseas. All of her life, she had been learning to listen to God.

Once in Japan, even before she learned the language, Amy went out to witness. Her interpreter, Misaki San, suggested that Amy wear a kimono, which she did after experiencing a disappointing attempt to witness in her Western dress.

On another occasion, Amy and Misaki San were asked to send the spirit of the fox out of a violent and murderous man. Village priests had tried their formulas and tortures without success. Trusting that the Lord could drive demons away, the two girls prayed and went boldly into the man's room. As soon as they mentioned the name of Jesus, the man went into an uncontrollable rage. If he had not been tied, he would have leaped upon them. The two girls were thrust from the room. Perplexed, they soon recovered their confidence. They assured the man's wife that they would pray until the spirit left and asked her to send a message when it was gone. Within an hour they had word. The next day, the man himself summoned them, and over the next few days they explained the way of Christ to him and he became a Christian.

Amy experienced a series of alternately times seeing the Lord's work in conversions and then having long serious bouts with neuralgia. Finally, her neuralgia became so bad that doctor told her she must leave Japan for a more suitable climate.

After some struggle and confusion, Amy was lead to India. "You can give without loving. But you cannot love without giving." That is what Amy used to say and she lived it; lived it so deeply it could get her into lots of trouble. One time it seemed sure Amy Carmichael would be arrested and thrust inside an Indian prison on kidnapping charges.

And technically Amy was a kidnapper. Many times over in fact! In 1901, Amy sheltered her first temple runaway. Temple children were young girls dedicated to the gods and forced into prostitution to earn money for the priests. Over the years, Amy had rescued many children, often at the cost of extreme exhaustion and personal danger.

Even Christians were against Amy when she stepped into the struggle to end the wicked service required of the little girls. They thought she exaggerated the situation. Indeed, the truth of what went on behind the scenes was so hard to get at, that Amy found she must pretend to be an Indian and visit the temples herself.

One of her rescues was five-year-old Kohila. Kohila's guardians wanted her back. Amy refused to return the little child to certain abuse. Instead, she made

plans to cause the girl to "disappear" to a safe place. Amy was too well known to spirit Kohila away herself. So she arranged for someone else to do it. The plot was discovered. Charges were brought against her. Thus Amy faced a seven year prison term. However, Amy did not go to prison. A telegram arrived on February 7, 1914, saying, "Criminal case dismissed." No explanation was ever forthcoming, but those who know Amy's Lord suspect He had a hand in the decision.

Amy's experiences were proof that the Lord truly is in charge of our lives. In 1932, a fall severely injured her, and she remained bedridden for much of her final two decades. Even when she became permanently bedridden, God had plans for her. She wrote 16 additional books and revised others she has previously published. Amy died in India in 1951 at the age of 83. Her life was one of deep spiritual witness to Christ.