



WORLD CHANGERS

All heroes are shadows of Christ. —John Piper

I have found that very little has encouraged my heart to go on more than the lives of the men and women who have walked the same paths we are walking today and have proven to be faithful to Christ's call to the end. They have completed their courses with joy and their stories remain a vivid example in history for those of us who long to make it safely home.

It is my hope that these stories of men and women who changed their world for Christ will encourage you to stand strong in faith even when following Jesus hurts.

GEORGE MATHESON (1842–1906)

Blind Scottish Preacher.
Wrote "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go."

"Matheson was blind, but with the eyes of his heart he could see farther than most of us."
—Warren W. Wiersbe



Born in Glasgow, the eldest of eight children, George Matheson had poor eyesight from birth. This did not keep him from enrolling in the University of Glasgow at age nineteen to study theology, with the hopes of becoming a preacher.

It was during his time at the university that George completely lost his eyesight. It is reported that George had been engaged to be married, but upon hearing that her fiancé was going blind, the young lady broke off the engagement, telling George, "Why, I couldn't be married to a blind man."

Nonetheless George would go on to a life in ministry, pastoring a church in Innellan, Scotland. His sister cared for him until the day she got married. His sister's marriage was a difficult blow for George, as he had become so dependent on her for his work. George wrote the famous hymn "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go" on the evening of her wedding. Here's what George had to say about that night in a quote from his journal:

My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan on the evening of June 6, 1882. I was at that time alone. It was the day of my sister's marriage and the rest of my family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something had happened to me which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high. I have never been able to gain once more the same fervor in verse.

Out of suffering comes much fruit. Out of loneliness comes great communion with Christ. George Matheson is an example of a life stripped for God's great glory. Today many of us continue to sing this hymn reminding us that we can have joy and peace in the midst of our sufferings.

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O light that foll'west all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

ELISABETH ELLIOT (1926–2015)

Missionary to Ecuador.
Author and speaker.

"There is nothing worth living for,
unless it is worth dying for."



There is no better example of the stripped life than the life of Elisabeth Elliot. Born in Belgium to missionary parents, Elisabeth grew up in the U.S. and attended Wheaton College for her university studies.

It was at Wheaton College that Elisabeth met and fell in love with Jim Elliot. Theirs is a well-known love story, documented in detail in Elisabeth's book *Passion and Purity*. Though the couple was strongly and passionately in love, they went their separate ways with Jim feeling the Lord had called him to be a missionary to Ecuador and that he should stay unmarried. Their love story seemed to be cut short.

God had other plans for this couple though. Shortly after surrendering their love to the Lord, God in His grace brought Jim and Elisabeth back together. Life seemed brighter. Elisabeth was serving the Lord with the man she was deeply in love with. What could go wrong now?

One hopeful morning, Jim and four of his missionary friends headed to an unreached village of the Auca tribe. They had felt called by God to deliver the gospel to the Auca tribe. They had prayed for open doors to share the gospel. They had longed to see the Aucas come to know Jesus. They had confidence that God would work. Little did they know that that morning five missionary families would lose their husbands and fathers in what seemed like senseless murder by members of the Auca tribe. Jim and Elisabeth's daughter, Valerie, was just ten months old when Jim was killed.

One would think that a widowed mother and her ten-month-old baby would leave Ecuador and head back to the safety of home. But Elisabeth Elliot was never one to do the obvious. Utterly surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ, Elisabeth stayed in Ecuador, bringing the gospel to the very people who had killed her husband on that hopeful morning.

Elisabeth remained in Ecuador until 1963. The Auca Indians gave Elisabeth the tribal name Gikari, Huao for "woodpecker," perhaps because she was willing to go where few had gone and to persist where few would have persisted. Many came to know the Lord through her surrender to God's call.

In 1969 Elisabeth married again, this time to Addison Leitch, a professor of theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. It seemed as if life had settled down for Elisabeth, but her stripping process was not quite over. In 1973 Leitch died of cancer.

Elisabeth married a third time to Lars Gren, a hospital chaplain. Elisabeth is well known for her many writings that have influenced hundreds of thousands of young men and women everywhere, proving again that the life that God strips is the life He intends to use for His glory and honor.

HORATIO SPAFFORD (1828–1888)

Chicago Lawyer.

Hymn writer famous for "It Is Well with My Soul."



I suppose life was smooth for Horatio Spafford and his family at first. They were well known in Chicago in the 1860s, and they loved the Lord. Horatio was a close friend of D. L. Moody, the famous Chicago preacher.

No one would have predicted the troubles that Horatio would suffer. In 1870, Spafford's only son died of scarlet fever at the age of four. A year later came another great blow. Horatio had invested heavily in real estate on the shores of Lake Michigan. In 1870 the Great Chicago Fire wiped out every one of Horatio's holdings. The family was shaken. It seemed like a good time for Horatio to take his wife and four daughters on a holiday to England. Horatio thought it was providential timing, as D. L. Moody would be speaking on an evangelistic campaign in Britain at that time, and so Horatio made plans to join him in serving the Lord.

Though he had planned on traveling with his family, some unforeseen business held him up, and he was forced to delay. Anxious to get his family the rest they needed, he persuaded his wife, Anna, to go on ahead without him.

It was only nine days later that Horatio received a telegram from his wife in Wales. It read: Saved alone. The ship Anna and the girls were on had collided with another English vessel, causing the greatest tragedy for the Spaffords yet. The ship sank in twelve minutes, claiming 226 lives including Horatio's four girls.

Horatio quickly boarded the next ship out of New York to join his bereaved wife. It is told that during that voyage, the captain of the ship called Horatio to the bridge, pointing him to the site of the tragedy that had claimed his four daughters. Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of one of the greatest hymns of all times: "It Is Well with My Soul."

It seems unfathomable to maintain unwavering faith in the face of such disasters, but Horatio Spafford understood a secret that few really grasp in this life—that life with Jesus Christ is safety, and that no matter the pain here on this earth, heaven is coming soon, and peace is in the person of Christ.

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well,
with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

JOHN BUNYAN (1628–1688)

Preacher.

Author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.



John Bunyan was born in England to a poor, working-class family. His father was a tinker, and John learned the same trade. Though he did not have much formal schooling, he did spend a brief time in boarding school where he learned to read and write.

One day, John Bunyan overheard several poor women conversing about the work of Christ in their hearts. He tried to join in the conversation but had no idea what they were saying. John wrote the following about that day:

Their talk . . . was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature. They talked how God had visited their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil.

It was a turning point for John. Those same women would introduce him to their pastor, John Gifford. It was under his preaching that John at last came to Christ. John would later preach at that same church where Gifford had pastored. He became known for boldly preaching God's Word anywhere he went.

The church at large was divided during that time. The Anglican royalists attacked the nonconformist Baptist preachers and soon made it illegal to preach in non-approved places. In 1660 John Bunyan was arrested for preaching God's Word in a field near a farmhouse. He was asked to apologize to the magistrates and refrain from preaching, much like Peter and John in Acts 4. John refused. He was placed in prison for twelve years.

While most of us would consider prison an unjust result for preaching God's Word, John turned his prison into an extremely prolific time for writing. It was in prison that John wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, *Confessions of Faith*, and *A Defense of the Doctrine of Justification, by Faith in Jesus Christ*. John began writing *The Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison as well.

Little could John have predicted that this little book would become what is often said to be the greatest bestseller of all time, next to the Bible. By the time of Bunyan's death in 1688, eleven editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* had been published with over 100,000 copies in print. Today this book has been translated into over two hundred languages and has changed countless lives—all from the stripped down walls of a prison cell. It is a reminder that though serving the Lord may result in the removal of earthly comforts from the lives of Christ's followers, nothing can ever touch the soul of the heart captured by the love of God.

FANNY CROSBY (1820–1915)

Blind hymn writer.

Wrote "Blessed Assurance" and over 8,000 hymns.
"This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior, all the day long."



Fanny Crosby was born in New York in 1820 and became blind at six weeks of age because of a mistake by a physician during a period of illness. Despite her physical limitations, Fanny's life was a very productive one.

Fanny's father died while she was still young, and her mother sought domestic work to help support the family, leaving Fanny in the care of her grandmother Eunice. It was Eunice who

set about to educate Fanny and helped her memorize great portions of the Bible. Fanny soon met the God of the Bible and when discouraged, she would turn to the Lord in prayer and ask for help, refusing to let her handicap limit her.

She wrote her very first poem as a child expressing her perspective so well:

O what a happy soul am I!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world,
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy,
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot and I won't!

At age fourteen, Fanny began attending a school for the blind that would become a haven. She would later teach in that school and meet many great men and women of that era including several presidents. She met Alexander Van Alstyne, a fellow instructor at the school, and married him at age thirty-eight. They had a baby who died shortly after birth.

Fanny Crosby wrote some of the greatest hymns of all time: "A Shelter in the Time of Storm," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," "Blessed Assurance," "I Am Thine, O Lord," "Jesus Is Calling," "Praise Him, Praise Him," "Redeemed," "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "Take the World but Give Me Jesus," and "To God Be the Glory," just to name a few.

Her life is an example of a woman who was undaunted by her physical limitations and who God used to change the world. While most of us would consider blindness a hindrance to doing great works for the Lord, Fanny always held to this belief:

Mother, if I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind . . . for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Savior.

JONI EARECKSON TADA (1949–)

Author, speaker, and artist.

Founder of Joni and Friends.



Joni grew up in an idyllic Christian home. She was the youngest of four girls and greatly enjoyed sports and the outdoors. In 1967 after her graduation from high school, Joni went swimming with some friends in Chesapeake Bay. On that fateful day she dove into the water and broke her neck. She became a quadriplegic.

The next few months were extremely difficult for Joni as she struggled with depression and despair. Before the accident she had felt that she wasn't living the life she should be, so she had prayed that God would change her. After months of staring at the ceiling and wallowing in her depression, Joni began to wonder if this was indeed God's answer to her prayer.

Under the influence of friends and with the prayers of many, Joni surrendered her disability to the Lord and began immersing herself in God's Word.

Little did Joni know what lay ahead for her in the years to come. Joni has been a influential author of our time, with nearly fifty books to her credit. She is an artist and speaker and founder of Joni and Friends, an organization that advocates for the handicapped. Her name is well known throughout the world as a lover of Jesus Christ. She has a daily radio ministry reaching millions of people with the good news of the gospel.

She is known to have signed all of her paintings with "Joni Eareckson, PTL" (Praise the Lord). Joni also loves to sing praise songs and has several recordings of her music.

In 1982 she married Ken Tada and they still live in Southern California today. As if being quadriplegic is not challenging enough, Joni has been diagnosed with cancer two times, and, by the grace of God, is now cancer-free.

Joni's testimony is particularly personal to me. I was ten years old when I saw the movie Joni in Beirut, Lebanon. It was the first time I recall having a deep longing to follow the same God that Joni worships. It was the first time I understood that God can take a broken life and heal it for His glory. My life hasn't been the same since.

That God would allow harm to His children seems preposterous, yet Joni's life is a vivid example of how God uses our pain and suffering for His glory. He triumphs over your difficult circumstances and shows Himself mighty in the life that trustfully surrenders to His will.

HUDSON TAYLOR (1832–1905)

Founder of China Inland Mission.

"He must move men through God—by prayer."
—philosophy of Hudson Taylor



No man has exemplified greater faith through prayer than the man Hudson Taylor. His very salvation was a result of the prayers of his mother. At seventeen, Hudson went to his father's library in search of a book. He came across a gospel tract and picked it up thinking to read the story at the beginning of it. At that same moment, his mother felt a strong leading to pray for her son. "Thus," said Hudson, "while my dear mother was praising God on her knees in her chamber, I was praising Him in the old warehouse to which I had gone alone to read at my leisure this little book."

It wasn't long after his salvation that Hudson felt God's call to China. It was a powerful and personal call that would change the course of his life and grow him into one of the greatest men of faith in our modern history.

In preparation for life in China, Hudson Taylor moved to one of the poorest areas in England to study medicine. It was during these years that Taylor began testing God with His promises. In giving, he sacrificed his last dime trusting the Lord to provide for his need. He would pray that his forgetful boss would remember to pay him, rather than ask for his salary when the time for payment had passed. To Hudson Taylor, it was simple: If he couldn't trust the Lord to meet his needs in England, how could he expect Him to provide for him in China?

By the time Hudson set sail for China, his prayers were expectant and his faith mature. He would need strong faith as the work in China would not be easy. Apart from the challenges of being a missionary in a foreign land, Hudson Taylor lost his wife and several of his children while in China. He himself suffered physical ailments that at one point forced his return to England. But Hudson Taylor was undeterred. Having been called to China, Hudson would endure to the end.

Hudson Taylor staked everything on the words of Jesus: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do" (John 14:13 kjv). He believed, as Jesus taught, that the heavenly Father is not embarrassed by any shortage of supplies and that, if we ask in childlike trust, our every need will be supplied. "Depend on it," he contended, "God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supplies."

Hudson Taylor spent fifty-one years in China and founded the China Inland Mission in 1865. The CIM remains in existence today and continues to touch souls for God's kingdom.

JOHN AND BETTY STAM

JOHN: 1907–1934, BETTY: 1906–1934

Missionaries to China.

Martyred for their faith.



They had given up everything to move to China with their three-month-old daughter with one goal in mind: to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the lost.

On the morning of their arrest, John and Betty were warned that the communists were headed to their small village. It didn't seem to be too big a threat at first, but within hours, it became evident that John and Betty's safety was in danger. By the end of that day, John and Betty were arrested by the communists and taken into custody with their daughter. That night John wrote a letter to his missionary organization asking for help, but the letter was never delivered. The letter was later found bundled in Betty's clothes. In it John paraphrased from Philippians 1:20, "May Christ be glorified, whether by life or death." His words would be prophetic.

The morning after their arrest, the couple was forced to walk twelve miles to the next location. When the group stopped for the night, Betty hid her daughter, Helen, inside a sleeping bag. The next morning, John and Betty were taken to their deaths. Many lined the streets to watch. One Chinese shopkeeper tried to persuade the communists not to kill the Stams. When he wouldn't step back despite the soldiers' orders, the man's home was invaded. In his house, a Chinese copy of the Holy Bible and a hymnbook were found. He too would be killed with the Stams that day for his faith.

After marching for a bit longer, John was ordered to kneel, and he was beheaded while Betty watched. Betty and the shopkeeper were killed moments later.

Baby Helen was found two days later by a Chinese pastor. She was taken by him and cared for. She was then safely delivered to her grandparents, also missionaries in China.

Though Satan's goal was to destroy the work of Christ, the martyrdom of John and Betty Stam would inspire many to become missionaries for the gospel. One may wonder where God was on the day of John and Betty's arrest. One may wonder why God didn't deliver them from their violent deaths. But John and Betty Stam understood that life here on earth was temporary and that eternity is forever.

Stripped here on earth, but forever reigning with Christ in glory.
May the name of the Lord Jesus Christ be forever praised both now and in eternity.

Still Standing: Following Jesus Even When It Hurts releases Sept. 3, 2024 (Moody Publishers). Learn more & order at livingwithpower.org/stillstanding or your favorite retailer.