

The following article is a copy of a research paper I recently wrote about Jim Elliot, who is a very good example of a missionary.

Jim Elliot

By Matthew Day

On a Sunday in 1956, five missionaries were speared to death including Jim Elliot. Some say that their lives were wasted on the Aucas and that they didn't finish their mission. But, their deaths did impact their mission and Jim Elliot did not die in vain.

Before I can explain how the missionaries' deaths impacted the Aucas, I must tell you a little bit about the Auca tribe. The Aucas, who called themselves Huaorani (The Martyrs), served a false god that they called "Wanka," but they had no concept of heaven or hell (Struben).

The Aucas were very violent and their favorite weapon was the spear (Struben). David Howard Jr. said, "The homicide rate even within the tribe was more than 60%" (Howard). In 1919, they killed fifteen Indian families at camp (Elliot, 99). On another occasion the Aucas attacked Arajuno leaving no survivors (Struben). The Aucas were a very violent people with very little hope.

Although Jim first heard about the Aucas on June, 1950, he did not try to reach them until later (Nosotro). However, Jim Elliot did begin missions with other tribes in Ecuador on February 27, 1952 (Johnson). Elisabeth was working on the other side of Ecuador at the same time (Although it wasn't until 1953, that she married Jim in Ecuador) (Nosotro).

After deciding to attempt to reach the Aucas, Jim and four other missionaries made their base at Arajuno, an abandoned Shell oil base with an airstrip that they could use (Elliot, 124). The missionaries decided to keep their mission a secret so that outsiders could not interfere (Elliot, 128). Nate Saint, their pilot, began searching for the Aucas on September 19, 1955 (Elliot, 129). On September 29, Nate Saint, Jim Elliot and their Indian guide spotted Auca houses on the ground, fifteen minutes by plane from Arajuno (Elliot, 131-132). They began dropping gifts to the Aucas on October 6, 1955 (Elliot, 135). They continued to do this every Thursday (The Martyrs). After their first three flights, they began speaking words of friendship to the Aucas over their loudspeaker (The Martyrs).

Eventually, the Aucas began giving their own gifts back through the plane gift line (The Martyrs). The time to meet the Aucas face to face was drawing near.

The missionaries made camp at a beach four miles from the Auca tribe (The Martyrs). The missionaries made a decision to carry guns, but only to use them to scare the Aucas if they attacked (The Martyrs). Nate Saint used the airplane and loudspeaker to invite the Aucas to their camp (Johnson). Three Aucas, a man, a woman, and a teen-aged girl, visited them on Friday, January 6, 1956 (Johnson) (The Martyrs).

Two days later another group of Aucas visited. The Missionaries told their wives that they would radio them at 4:30p.m. that day (Elliot, 194). Marj Saint watched the radio but received no message from the missionaries (Elliot, 195), for on Sunday, January 8, 1956, the Aucas killed the five missionaries with spears (The Martyrs).

However, their wives continued their mission work in Ecuador while waiting for another chance to reach the Aucas (Howard). In November of 1957, they got their chance. Two Auca women found the missionaries' wives and eventually invited them to come back to their tribe (Howard). The brave missionaries taught the Aucas about God and translated the New Testament into their language (Howard).

When asked why they killed the missionaries, the Aucas said that they said that they were afraid of a trap (Howard).

During the attack, the missionaries shot their guns into the air, but made sure not to harm any Aucas (Howard). For two years, the Aucas wondered why the missionaries did not use their guns against them (Howard). But they immediately realized that the missionaries were truly friendly and that they had made a mistake (Howard).

Jim Elliot's death proved to the Aucas that there is some love in this world. It was because of this that the two Auca women sought out the missionaries wives. They wanted to know the answer behind the mystery of the love shown by the missionaries. Not only did the missionaries death's have a direct effect on the Aucas, but they encouraged others to begin praying for this violent people (Elliot, 253). Elisabeth Elliot said in her book *Through the Gates of Splendor*, "To the world at large this was a sad waste of five young lives. But God had his plan and purpose in all things. There were those whose lives were changed by what happened on Palm Beach" (252-253).

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The Children's Newsletter
September 2006