

Jessie Gillespy

A Hero of the Faith

“I have been urged many times to write my testimony of the way God has led me through the years. Friends have thought that it would be an inspiration to young missionaries, who in the future will have to carry the torch, as the lives of the older missionaries on the field come to an end.”

*> Jessie Gillespy
missionary to Japan*

All about me

Jessie Gillespy

The Beginning of a Dream

I was born in Tonbridge
Kent, England on
March 14, 1879.

One day I heard a
geography lesson
about children who
knew nothing about
God. Instead they
worshipped metal. It
was then that my
dream was birthed.



I was born in Tonbridge Kent, England on March 14, 1876, the 10th children in a family of 13 children. One day when I was about nine, I heard in a geography lesson that there were children in the world who knew nothing about the God whom we worshipped, but they worshipped gods of wood, stone and metal. My heart was filled with intense pity for these children. I could not get them out of my mind. "Gods like that couldn't answer prayers," I said to myself. While looking out of the window at the stars I made up my mind that I would go to the place under the smallest star so that I could tell the children there that God loves them.

Regular Church Goers....Christians?

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We belonged to the Church of England and went regularly to church on Sunday. At different stages of growth we were taught new prayers, but religion was never discussed. I never heard anyone pray aloud, unless it was read from a written paper.



As a child I was known to have a bad temper . I began to feel that it was mean to say prayers at night and then to be such a naughty girl the next day.

I got up enough courage to ask my sister how I could know if I was a Christian.

I was a stormy hot-tempered child. Gradually I began to feel that it was so mean to say prayers at night and then to be such a naughty girl the next day. At last I summoned up courage to ask my elder sister how one knew they were a Christian.

Am I a Christian?

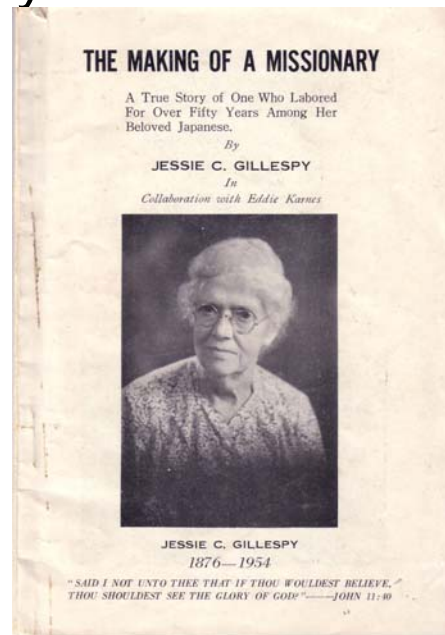
My sister could not believe me. She said, “what do you think you are other than a Christian. You go to church and your parents are Christians. What else would you be?”



She (my sister) looked me up and down in amazement and said, “I think you are the weirdest child that ever lived. How could you be anything else but a Christian? Father and mother are Christians. You were baptized as a baby. We go to church on Sunday. What could you be but a Christian? Are you going to get an idol and put it up and worship it? To this I could give no answer.

Saved by Works

My head mistress at school told me that I would be saved by my works and that I should do lots of good things and I could be saved. So I did all the good things I could do.



When I was about 13 the desire to know how to become a Christian was so intense that I confided in the headmistress of the school. She said to me, "My dear child...do all the good works you can and someday when you get to Heaven you will have your reward". I tried to take her advice. I immediately began to teach in the Sunday School and to make clothes for the poor and to visit the sick. If anyone could have been saved by good works I should have been.

Led by a Friend



I met a nice young girl
who was sleeping in
my room at school.
She asked me to pray
with her.

That night for the first
time in my life I
received Christ as my
personal Saviour.

A lovely Christian girl came from England to stay in the boarding house for a few months. She was about my age. We became good friends. One night for some reason we had to sleep in the same room. She suggested that we should read and pray together. I had never opened my mouth in prayer before anyone before. With great tenderness and love she explained to me that we could only know the love of God through Calvary. "Have you ever understood that you are a sinner and that Jesus died to save you?" she asked. I never had, for though I realized how bad I was, I always blamed other people for the bad things I did. My brothers teased me, so I lost my temper. My mother was too fussy, so I complained. That night for the first time in my 22 years of life, I knelt with her by my bed and received Christ as my own personal Saviour.

God's Call

I then felt God's call on my life to become a missionary.

I began to pray that God would lead me in this task.



Lesson #1: When in doubt, praise God.

One night I was discouraged that I could not get a permit to return to Japan, they considered me to be too old because I was 72.

I tossed and I turned in my bed one night because I was so upset.

But then, it seemed like God was saying to me “ why not try praising me?” I laid aside my fears and did just that!

I began to praise the Lord and a few days later my permit arrived from Ottawa. Whats really amazing is that my permit was dated that same evening that I had begun to praise God.

My missionary meetings in Canada from time to time had taken me many miles and now I have hundreds of friends in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. When they heard that I wished to return they sent money without my needing to make an appeal. Before the end of the year I had \$700. with which to pay my passage and to buy the 50 points of food which it was obligatory to take. I had sent in a request to enter Japan, for which General MacArthur’s consent was necessary, but weeks passed by without any reply. One night while I was very discouraged, the devil told me that of course no permit would be given to an old woman of 72. I tossed and turned on my bed for some time when suddenly it seemed as if God said to me, “Why not try praising Me?” I laid aside my fears and was enabled to believe that God had undertaken. In a few days I received the permit, which had been cabled to Ottawa and was dated the same evening that I had begun to praise the Lord.

Lesson #2: The Holy Spirit – it is not what you profess, but what you possess that really matters.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit has brought great joy and satisfaction to my heart.

Now, although the devil tries to use his tactics to get me down, God gives me victory to rise above.



The baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to Acts 2:4, has brought great joy and satisfaction to my heart. It has made the Word of God alive in a new way. My old sermon outlines and messages are now clothed with new power. The Baptism has filled me with a spirit of faith that enables God to work. All through my life I have been pursued by a spirit of doubt that would cause me times of terrible depression. Now, although the devil tries to use his same tactics at times to get me down, God gives me the victory to rise above it.

Yet, let me add a word of warning to my good Pentecostal friends everywhere. It seems that in our Pentecostal circles we are putting too much emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit (they are very necessary) but not enough emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit. By the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit we can be conformed unto the image of Jesus, that His holiness, grace and love may be reproduced in us. It is not so much what we profess as it is what we possess that counts. Also the spirit in which we work for Jesus is important. The proof of the genuineness of the Pentecostal Baptism of the Holy Spirit is, "What do you do for others?"

Lesson #3: God can use you, no matter where you are.



One day a lady approached me and asked me if I spoke Japanese. She said that she needed me to speak to some men who were sick and only spoke Japanese.

I went with the lady and had the joy of leading both of these men to Christ.

One time at the church a young lady came and sat next to me. At the end of the service she asked me if I spoke Japanese. When I said, "Yes," she said, "I thought so. God told me that I would find a lady in a grey coat sitting in the meeting tonight who could talk Japanese. I am working in a hospital. When all the Japanese were evacuated to inland British Columbia there were two men who were too sick to be moved and they were left behind. One of them cannot live long and as far as I know neither of them are Christians. Will you come to visit them?" I went and had the joy of leading both of these men to Christ. From a human point of view the salvation of the first man seemed impossible, but God worked a miracle. He died at the end of six weeks with his hand in mind. It was wonderful to watch every sign of sin and a bad life wiped off his face until he looked like a little child who had fallen asleep in his mother's arms. I arranged a Christian funeral for him since he had no relatives. This encouraged me to believe God would open up a ministry for me among the Japanese who had been evacuated to the slopes of the Rocky Mountains of BC.

- From a human point of view the salvation of the first man seemed impossible, but God worked a miracle. He died only six weeks later with his hand in mine.
- **It was wonderful to watch every sign of sin and a bad life wiped off his face until he looked a little like a child who had fallen asleep in the arms of his mother. I arranged a special christian funeral for him in the mountains of Japan.**

Lessons #4: Never judge someone's heart by their appearance.

I looked different than all of the Japanese people with my silver curly hair so they began to call me "hairy foreigner"!

One day an older lady was trying to hide from me because I didn't look like her. A kindergarten student came flying across the road yelling "teacher, teacher, hold me in your arms!"

I did hold her. After seeing this the elderly lady was completely astonished! I guess she probably realized that even though I look different on the outside my heart is still full of love for others on the inside.



Lessons #4: Never judge someone's heart by their appearance.

When I first went to Yonago, Japan, I continually heard myself called "Miss Amen". Sometimes I was even called "Keitobabajin", which means "hairy foreigner". It wasn't long though before I became know as the "Kindergarten Teacher". One day I was walking through the streets when I met an old country woman carrying a huge bundle of sticks on her back. She was simply terrified when she saw me (because I looked so different than she did, with my silver curly hair – her hair, being Japanese, was jet black and oh so straight!) She crouched down in the entrance of a shop trying to hide from me. At the same moment a little five year old girl, who attended the kindergarten, came flying across the road saying, "Dear teacher, carry me in your arms." Upon seeing this the old woman was absolutely astonished!

Lessons #5: We don't always understand at the time why God may choose to take a young child home to Heaven, but...

During my time in Yonago, Japan, something happened that made a lasting impression upon my life. A little girl had been attending our kindergarten for about six months. She was taken ill with the measles and developed inflammation of the lungs.



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On her little wooden coffin was a new silk dress, with her little red wooden shoes, and various other things that she had used at the kindergarten. After the Buddhist prayers were finished, a fire of straw was lit on the threshold of the house. As the small coffin was carried out the brokenhearted mother burst into the most terrible wailing I had ever heard. I turned to the kindergarten teacher, and said, "What is the matter?" They said that the child's mother felt that she had died at the wrong time of the year and that when the coffin crossed the threshold of the house her little girl would wander in the dark, persecuted by evil spirits. (Explain to your students that these thoughts are part of the superstitious culture and beliefs in that part of the world). Not far from that town is a cave called the "Children's Cave", where mothers come from all over Japan trying to pile up stones one on top of the other. For every stone they can place in this way they believe that their child will have one day of happiness and release from persecution in the unseen world.

A little later I heard the other side to this story. While the little child was ill, she begged them to call her kindergarten teacher (so I could pray for her), but her grandmother refused to allow this to be done. Then she begged that someone would pray to her dear Heavenly Father, but non one knew how to pray. Finally, she sang, "Jesus Loves Me This I Know (a song I had taught her in our classes, which we sang over and over again). When she came to the words, "Heaven's gate to open wide", she threw up her arms and with a radiant face cried out, "Dear Lord Jesus", and fell back dead. The Good Shepherd, Jesus Himself, had come to take the little girl home to Heaven. Later, her sisters and brothers all had opportunity to come to our kindergarten and they too learned about the Saviour. (Explain to your students that God may choose to take one person to be with Him in Heaven, knowing that through their death, others will come to know Him as Lord and Saviour of their lives. We don't always understand at the time exactly how God works, but we must always trust that He knows what is best, and works all things for good, to those who love Him.) A little later I heard the other side to this story. While the little child was ill, she begged them to call her kindergarten teacher (so I could pray for her), but her grandmother refused to allow this to be done. Then she begged that someone would pray to her dear Heavenly Father, but non one knew how to pray. Finally, she sang, "Jesus Loves Me This I Know (a song I had taught her in our classes, which we sang over and over again). When she came to the words, "Heaven's gate to open wide", she threw up her arms and with a radiant face cried out, "Dear Lord Jesus", and fell back dead. The Good Shepherd, Jesus Himself, had come to take the little girl home to Heaven. Later, her sisters and brothers all had opportunity to come to our kindergarten and they too learned about the Saviour. (Explain to your students that God may choose to take one person to be with Him in Heaven, knowing that through their death, others will come to know Him as Lord and Saviour of their lives. We don't always understand at the time exactly how God works, but we must always trust that He knows what is best, and works all things for good, to those who love Him.)

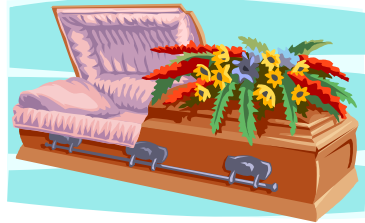
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Lesson #6: You never know the lives that may be touched through your witness

Last year the pastor from the place where I worked before the war was visiting me. Talking together, I asked him where he was born. When he told me it was at Kure I said, "I worked there for two years before the first war."

His face lit up, and he asked, "did you work at a Mission Hall on Middle Street?"



Last year the pastor from the place where I worked before the war was visiting me. Talking together, I asked him where he was born. When he told me it was at Kure I said, "I worked there for two years before the first war." His face lit up, and he asked "did you work at a Mission Hall on Middle Street? When I was a little boy of five, I was invited into a children's meeting, and at the close a young and beautiful foreigner, as I thought then, gave me a pretty Sunday School card and told me to be sure to come again. We lived so far away that I never did go again, but that card became my greatest treasure. When I heard anyone talking against Christianity I would take it out and look at it, and say to myself, the lady who gave it to me had a kind smiling face. Christians cannot be bad people. My father failed in business and we moved away from Kure, but when I was 16 I began to go to church and was clearly saved. You must have been that missionary and now I am working where you worked for ten years. When I ask any young inquirers where they first heard the Gospel, they nearly always say they went to your Sunday School or open air meetings for children. So the seed sown so long ago is springing up and bearing fruit, even now.

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Jessie Gillespy lived a life of
purpose for God.
There is so much that we can
learn from her life.
Take hold of the chances God
gives you to make a difference In
your world.