



# INTRODUCTION

EVERYONE loves a good story. Heart-touching tales that produce a lump in the throat or a blissful sigh are especially popular. Such stories have been collected into books, even whole series of books, and have proven to be best-sellers.

For decades I have been an avid reader of Christian biography. As I read the lives of great men and women of faith I find them replete with fascinating and beneficial stories. Not fictional stories; rather, actual events from the experiences of those believers. Some of those stories touch the heart — or the funny bone. Many touch the soul at a deep level by inspiring, instructing, encouraging, comforting or convicting.

This book is a collection of such stories taken from the lives of ten outstanding Christian couples or individuals who ministered in the last three centuries: John Wesley; George Whitefield; George Müller; William and Catherine Booth; Hudson Taylor; Charles Spurgeon; Dwight Moody; Amy Carmichael; Corrie ten Boom; Billy and Ruth Graham. Their eventful, fruitful ministries brimmed over with interesting and instructive incidents, only a fraction of which could be included in the present work.



For nearly a quarter century of pastoral ministry I have related anecdotes from the lives of these and many other renowned Christian servants in my sermons and other teaching opportunities. Their personal examples provide a treasure trove of illustrative material relating to a wide variety of life-related themes. I have also shared these incidents, for both pleasure and spiritual profit, with family members and friends in countless informal conversations.

Kids as well as adults take an interest in these stories. I fondly remember an occasion when my three children were very young when I offered to tell them a story before bedtime prayer. That was a periodic feature of our nighttime family devotions, and they knew the type of tale I often shared.

So they spontaneously started chanting, competition-like, the names of two individuals about whom they had heard a number of stories. 'Moody! Moody!' shouted two. 'Hudson! Hudson!' countered the third with equal enthusiasm. The years have flown by, our kids are grown and gone from home, but they still enjoy these stories.

Just in case any of the primary characters in this book are not familiar to some readers, a thumbnail sketch of their ministry careers follows:

John Wesley (1703–1791), a minister in the Church of England, is better known as the founder of Methodism. He and George Whitefield were the most prominent evangelists in the revival that swept eighteenth-century England.

George Whitefield (1714–1770), an Anglican priest, was the initial leader of the Evangelical Revival in Britain and the first evangelist of that day to employ open-air preaching in spreading the Gospel. He was the human instrument most used of God to bring the First Great Awakening to America in the mid 1700s.

George Müller (1805–1898), a German by birth, pastored two Brethren congregations in Bristol, England. He is best known for the large faith-based orphan ministry he developed in that city.

William Booth (1829–1912) first served as a Methodist itinerant evangelist in England. He and his wife, Catherine (1829–1890), founded the Salvation Army, which emphasized ministry to the spiritual and material needs of the lower classes of society.



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Hudson Taylor (1832–1905) served for five decades as a missionary to China. He was the founding director of the China Inland Mission, which was especially intent on taking the gospel to the vast, previously neglected interior portion of the country.

Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) was the most prominent preacher in all of Britain, even the world, in his generation. A Baptist, he pastored an ever-growing congregation in London that finally built the massive Metropolitan Tabernacle to accommodate his enormous audiences. He also established a pastors college and an orphan ministry.

Dwight Moody (1837–1899), a layman with little formal education, was first active in children's Sunday school ministry and directed the Young Men's Christian Association in Chicago. He eventually became the world's best-known evangelist of his day, carrying out extensive campaigns on both sides of the Atlantic. He founded three schools including Moody Bible Institute.

Amy Carmichael (1867–1951) grew up in Ireland and, as a young woman, served as a missionary for two years in Japan. She then was led of the Lord to India where she ministered for fifty-six years. For many years she was the primary leader of the Dohnavur Fellowship, which specialized in ministering to children, many of whom had been rescued from lives of temple prostitution.

Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983) spent her first fifty years in Haarlem, Holland, where she lived with her parents and helped her father with his watchmaking business. Several of the ten Booms were arrested and imprisoned for sheltering Jews from the Nazis during World War Two. When Corrie was released from a German concentration camp, she returned to Holland where she established a recovery ministry to victims of the war. She devoted the final three decades of her life to itinerant evangelistic ministry around the globe.

Billy Graham (1918–present) was the most celebrated and highly-respected evangelist in the world throughout the second half of the twentieth century. His wife, Ruth (1920–2007), while not in the public eye nearly so much as her husband, nevertheless was highly acclaimed and appreciated for her teaching and writing ministries.

Because of the high degree of prominence these individuals gained in their respective ministries, some people have idolized them. But these eminent Christian servants, while being blessed by God



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with marked abilities and successes, also had definite weaknesses and shortcomings. They would have been among the first to acknowledge their personal inadequacies and the last to have people extolling them. They habitually gave God the glory for any good He worked in and through them.

Therefore the stories in the pages to follow are related not to exalt the human instruments, but to glorify the Lord who equipped, empowered and gave great success to these individuals, despite their faults and inadequacies. The narratives are also intended to encourage and instruct contemporary believers in different facets of the Christian life. Through the examples that are shared and the spiritual good that is produced in the lives of people as a result, may God alone be glorified.

