

Meet Amy Carmichael

Place of birth: Millisle, Northern Ireland

Date of birth: December 16, 1867

Family: Eldest of seven children

Countries lived in as a missionary: Japan, India

Amy Wilson Carmichael (1867–1951) was a missionary to Japan and later India, where she opened an orphanage and founded a mission in Dohnavur. She is known for her work in rescuing children who had been dedicated by their families to be temple slaves. She was also known for her passion for telling others of God's love. Amy served in India for fifty-five years and authored many books about the missionary work there.

Amy overcame many difficulties and obstacles during her years of missionary service. Here are just a few:

Obstacle: Mission work in India was hazardous. With each conversion of a high-caste¹ Hindu, a wave of persecution followed. The entire Hindu community would leave no stone unturned to make life difficult for the Christians. They would force some mission schools to close, burn other mission schools, vandalize churches, beat up missionaries, and file endless lawsuits.

Overcome: Amy traveled and preached in native Indian dress, even though this was considered disgraceful by most of the other missionaries at that time, who thought she should dress in the fashions of the West. Dressed in a sari with her skin stained, she could pass as a Hindu, and this played a large role in her success as a missionary.

When on board the ship that would take her to her first mission field—Japan—the captain was converted to Christianity after observing how cheerfully Amy faced the dirt and insects onboard.



Amy's lesson on "becoming one"

The apostle Paul once said, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Corinthians 9:22–23 NIV).

Amy also learned the value of Paul's words. Once in Japan, even before she learned the language, Amy went out to tell others about Jesus. Her interpreter, Misaki-san, suggested Amy wear a kimono, but Amy preferred her Western dress and kept it on. The two visited a sick old woman who seemed interested in the gospel. Just as Amy was about to ask her if she would receive the Lord, the woman caught sight of her fur-lined gloves and asked what they were. The woman didn't accept Christ as her savior.



Driving home, Amy wept bitter tears. Never again would she risk so much for so little, she promised. From then on she wore native clothing when going out to meet people and tell them about Jesus.



Obstacle: Amy suffered neuralgia, a disease of the nerves that made her body weak and achy and often put her in bed for weeks on end.

Overcome: Often, when her sickness would keep her in bed for months at a time, Jesus would impress on her to pray for people in India to learn about the love of Jesus, and her prayers helped more people receive the good news.

Obstacle: Old customs in India caused children to be given to Hindu temples to work as slaves. Some families would also abandon female babies due to poverty and not being able to provide for them. (Male children were considered more valuable than female children, as boys could do some form of manual labor to earn money for their household. Parents

also had to pay a dowry to their daughter's husband's family when they married, which was hard for poor families to pay.)

Overcome: A major part of Amy's work was devoted to rescuing such children who had been dedicated to these temples. One time it seemed certain that Amy would be arrested and sent to an Indian prison on kidnapping charges; she faced a seven-year prison term. But Amy didn't go to prison. A telegram arrived, saying, "Criminal case dismissed." No explanation was ever forthcoming, but those who knew God suspected He had a hand in the decision.

More than a thousand children were rescued from neglect and abuse during Amy's lifetime. To those she rescued, she was known as "Amma," which means "mother" in Tamil. Her work was often dangerous and stressful, yet she never forgot God's promise to protect her and those in her care.



Footnote:

¹ caste: a social class separated from others by distinctions of hereditary rank, profession, or wealth