

Command Chaplain Bible Studies



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[About CAC](#) [CAC Headquarters](#) [Major Subordinate Organizations](#) [Functions](#) [Centers](#) [Schools](#) [Special Activities](#)

[CAC and Ft. Leavenworth](#) > [CAC](#) > [Staff](#) > [Command Chaplain](#) > [Bible Studies](#) > [Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective](#)

General Info

[Contact the Chaplain](#)
[Chaplain Home](#)
[The History](#)
[The Ministry](#)
[Fellowship Opportunities](#)
[Becoming a Bible Study Leader](#)
[Bible Study Resources](#)
[Upcoming Events](#)
[Announcements](#)
[Encouragement](#)
[Photo Gallery](#)
[Links](#)

Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective

Lesson Title

1. [God's Good Soldiers \(Soldiers in the Bible\)](#)
2. [Joshua's Godly Leadership and Consistency](#)
3. [Nehemiah's Godly Prayer, Delegation and Action](#)
4. [Godly Wisdom and Authority \(Soldiers in the New Testament\)](#)
5. [Godly Excellence \(Professional Excellence and the Christian Officer\)](#)
6. [Godly Responses \(How to Handle Success and Failure\)](#)

Two CAS3 staff group leaders, LTC John R. (Bob) Cary and Hal Winton, developed the original CAS3 Sunday School study guide in 1984. They realized that, at the time, there was no chapel program focused on CAS3 students' needs. CAS3 students who attended the chapel's Sunday School program frequently attended after a curriculum started and departed before it finished. Additionally, they knew that God's Word has much to instruct a professional Army officer, both professionally and spiritually.

They recruited permanent party members and Command and General Staff School (CGSS) and School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) students to be instructors in this special Sunday School program to widen the number of officers touched by this unique ministry and to model Christian professionalism for the CAS3 student. Subsequent directors of the CAS3 Ministry Program modified the curriculum from the original nine lessons to eight and now six to reflect changes in the CAS3 schedule. Additionally, the layout of the study guide has matured over the years.

However, Cary's and Winton's vision remains the same: provide a Biblical, inspirational Sunday School program contributing to the spiritual and professional growth of CAS3 students. This study guide is useful for more than just Army officers. The godly principles of leadership, prayer, excellence, and commitment apply to soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

Students of this program are encouraged to reproduce the study guide and use it in their chapel ministries. Dr (LTC, Ret) Winton (subsequently an instructor at the USAF Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL) introduced this curriculum through the base chapel's programs to students in the Squadron Officers School. COL (Ret) Charlie Cox (the Officers' Christian Fellowship field staff representative at Maxwell) continues to use this program with USAF captains.

This study focuses on soldiers because that is the population of CAS3 and, quite simply the other services didn't exist during biblical times. We encourage students to view the use of the term "soldier" to be shorthand for all service members. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless the original authors and the many students who have been blessed by this study and that this study will continue to bless many more all to the glory of Jesus Christ.

A version of this study can be found on the Officer Christian Fellowship (OCF) Homepage.

Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective Lesson 1

God's Good Soldiers (Soldiers in the Bible)

"The spiritual is to the physical as three is to one." Napoleon1.
Introduction.

a. The Bible is God's inspired writing telling of His love, forgiveness, and presence. It is rich with poetry, humor, inspiration, exhortation, and comfort. It is a prayer book, a songbook, and a love story. It tells of how God first loved us and gave His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the perfect sacrifice to redeem His creation. The Bible is also filled with accounts of battles, wars and heroic feats of combat. Professional soldiers, sailors, airmen or marines can and will learn many lessons from the Bible, which gives instruction and encouragement for professional excellence. In the Old Testament, we read about the God of Israel organizing, directing and blessing that nation's army during its many conquests and renewal. In the New Testament, we read of Roman soldiers. We see their cruelty during Christ's crucifixion, and we read of some Roman officers' godly character. While the central theme of the Bible is the gift of salvation, as military professionals we can also learn important lessons about how to be God's spiritual and earthly soldier.

b. To begin our look at what the Bible says about a good soldier, we need a frame of reference. What are the characteristics of a good soldier?

2. Jewish Soldiers.

a. The first use of trained soldiers in the Bible is recorded in Genesis 14:14-16. Why did Abram train men of his own house to fight?
b. Read Num 1:3, Num 1:45-50 & Deu 20:5-8, which describe the Lord's requirements for the Army of Israel.

(1) In Num 1:3 what was the basic requirement to be in the Army?
(2) In Num 1:45-50 and Deut 20:5-8 what exemptions did the Lord authorize?

(3) Why would the Lord give these directions to Moses to organize the Army?

c. Scan Numbers 2. How was the Army of Israel organized?
d. Followership and leadership among David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:8-19)

(1) What were the individual accomplishments of David's mighty men?

Adino: Eleazar:

Shammah:

(2) Why were these men willing to risk their lives to bring David water from the well in Bethlehem?
(3) What did David do with the water? Why? What other action could he have taken?

(4) What does this incident suggest to you about Biblical principles of follower-ship and leadership?

3. The Apostle Paul's Experience with Soldiers. Read Acts 21:32, 23:23, 24:23 & 28:16.

a. What do these passages tell us about how well Paul knew soldiers?

b. Based on Paul's experience with soldiers, what do you think he thought about them?

4. Paul's definition of the Good Soldier (2 Timothy 2:1-6).

a. What is the source of the Christian soldier's strength (vs 1)?
b. What obligations do Christians have to share his/her faith (vs 2)?
c. What does Paul say is the defining quality of the good (vs 3)?
d. What is the Christian soldier's proper relation to his/her heavenly commander (vs 4)?
e. What obligation does this impose (vs 5)?

f. What common thread unites the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer (vs 3 & 5)?

5. Application: How can you apply the truths of this lesson to:

a. Your spiritual life?
b. Your professional life?

c. How do the two fit together? Are they two separate parts of your life?

Notes for Abraham's Pursuit of Northern Kings
Battles of the Kings: Abraham rescued Lot in a daring military action, demonstrating a strong bond to his nephew as well as leadership capacity. Abraham routed the armies of the Kings of the North that had plundered Sodom and Gomorrah. Gen 14
The Taking of Lot: When the kings of the north plundered Sodom and Gomorrah they captured Lot and his family. Abraham then went into battle with the kings. Gen 14
Melchizedek, King of Salem (Jerusalem):

His encounter with Melchizedek, king of Salem, was a different matter. That priest-king met Abraham not with promise of booty, but with a blessing in the name of "God Most High, maker of heaven and earth: (Gen 14:19). The word used for God had been used of other gods also, but Melchizedek used it to refer to the true God, creator of heaven and earth. Abraham paid him tithes and then to the words of "Most High" added the name Yahweh (Gen 14:22, "Lord"). Meeting with the King of Sodom: After his victorious return to Canaan, Abraham met with the king of Sodom. Abraham refused all offers of gifts from the king of Sodom on the basis of a solemn oath that no one should attribute any part of his wealth to the Canaanite king. Abraham's allies (Aner, Eschol, and Mamre) did profit from the booty he had captured. Gen 14*Maps and Notes are from PC Bible Atlas for Windows

[Return to top.](#)

Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective Lesson 2

Joshua's Godly Leadership & Consistency

1. Leadership.

a. How do you define Leadership? b. What are the Qualities/Traits/Characteristics of a good leader?

(1) Character: What must the leader BE? (2) Knowledge: What must the leader KNOW?

(3) Skill: What must the leader be able to DO?

Note: Your definition of leadership and your assessment of what a leader must BE, KNOW, and DO may provide you a framework to evaluate Joshua's leadership.

2. Joshua's Background.

a. Field Commander serving under Moses: Exodus 17:8-13. Aide/minister to Moses: Exodus 24:13 (Note Aaron's and Hur's roles as staff officers supporting their commander, Moses. A good staff helps the commander win!!) b. The dissenting spy: Numbers 13:1-2, 17-33; Numbers 14:6-9

(1) Why were the spies sent to Canaan? (2) What did they report upon their return? (3) Contrast the reports rendered by the majority of the scouting party and the report rendered by Joshua and Caleb? The Ten, Joshua and Caleb.

(4) What does this tell you about Joshua (Numbers 14:6-9)?

c. Joshua receives the mantle of leadership from Jehovah and Moses. Deuteronomy 31:14-15, 23.

3. Joshua's Marching Orders. Joshua 1:1-9

a. What was Joshua's mission? b. What resources did God give Joshua with which to accomplish his mission? Spiritual and physical. c. What were Joshua's restraints (things he could not do)? d. What were Joshua's constraints (things he must do)?

e. God's Strategy for Mission Accomplishment:
Knowledge + Strength/Courage + Obedience =
SUCCESS

4. Crossing the Jordan. Joshua 3. The conquest of Canaan required the people of Israel to first cross the Jordan River. As many things in our lives have meaning over and above the physical impact so to did crossing the Jordan. God's plan for the Israelites was not clear but they moved out in faith trusting the Lord to lead them to the Promised Land. Often we to must step out in faith believing that what is happening in our life is part of God's plan for us.

a. What were the people required to do before they could cross the Jordan? (Joshua 3:5) b. What led the procession? Why? c. What faith was required on the part of the priests? d. What purpose did God have in getting the people across the Jordan beyond the obvious one of allowing them to start the conquest of the Promised Land?

NOTE: After the children of Israel crossed the Jordan, they did two things specified by the Lord. First, they erected a memorial with 12 stones, one for each tribe, taken from the Jordan River bed. This memorial served as testimony to the Lord's miraculous work in getting the people across the Jordan. It was to be a place for teaching God's faithfulness to subsequent generations. Second, Joshua and his leaders circumcised all males. This circumcision signified the covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham. It removed God's reproach for Israel's lack of faith while traveling in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb were the only men still alive who had left Egypt 40 years earlier. Think about this. With a river to their back and enemy to their front, Joshua and the army of Israel deliberately chose to please God while becoming "combat ineffective due to medical fitness."

5. The Battle of Jericho (Joshua 5:13 - 6:27). Summary: Jericho was a key battle for the Israelites because the city of Jericho sat at the entrance to the pass that controlled access into the interior of Palestine. It could not be bypassed without leaving the army of Israel subject to attack from the rear. Joshua got his "attack order" from the captain of the host of the Lord. The divine Captain told Joshua to march the children of Israel around Jericho in absolute silence once a day for six days; then to march them around the city seven times on the seventh day. At the end of the seventh march on the seventh day, they were to blow the rams' horns, raise a large shout, and assault the city as the walls fell

flat. The ark of the Lord was to be positioned in the midst of the procession. The wall fell, not from sound vibration but because God told the people it would fall, and they believed and obeyed

- a. Why did the wall fall? Heb 11:30.
- b. Why total destruction (Joshua 6:21)?

6. Battle of Ai (Joshua chapters 7 & 8).

- a. Compare how Joshua prepared himself and the nation of Israel for the Battle of Jericho and the Battle of Ai?
- b. What happened on the first attempt to take Ai (7:2-4)? Why?
- c. How did Joshua respond (7:6-9)? Why was Joshua so discouraged?
- d. What did God tell Joshua to do (7:10-15)?
- e. How did Joshua locate the problem?
- f. What led Achan to sin (7:21)? Compare with 1 John 2:16.
- g. Compare Achan's sin and Joshua's inconsistency. How did each contribute to Israel's failed first attempt?
- h. How did the second attack on Ai differ from the first (Joshua 8:1-2, 12, 15, 21)?
- i. Compare and contrast the tactics at Jericho with the tactics used in the second attack on Ai. What military principles do you deduce? What spiritual principles are evident?

7. The Northern Campaign (Joshua 11).

- a. What was the situation in the northern part of Palestine (11:4-5)?
- b. How did Joshua respond (11:6-7)?
- c. Why did God instruct Joshua to destroy the enemy's horses and chariots?
- d. What lessons can be learned from this campaign?

8. Campaigns summarized (Joshua 12). Scholars estimate the campaigns lasted 5-7 years and resulted in the destruction of 31 kingdoms.

9. Caleb's inheritance (Joshua 14:6-15).

- a. What was the basis for Caleb's request to conquer Hebron?
- b. Why did Joshua grant Caleb's request?
- c. How do you think Caleb would do on the "over 85" aerobic fitness test? How well would he do on the "over 85" spiritual fitness test?
- d. What lessons can be drawn from Caleb's faithfulness and reward for your life?

10. Joshua's charge to his people; "Keep on keeping on."

- a. First address: Joshua 23.
 - (1) Who fought for Israel (23:3)?
 - (2) Based on this, what were the people to do (23:6-7)?
 - (3) What was the MOST important thing for

them to do (23:8)?

b. Second address: Joshua 24.

(1) Joshua reminds them of what good thing that the Lord had done for Israel (24:2-13)?(2) What were the Israelites to do with their old gods (24:14)?

(3) How did Joshua personalize his allegiance and make it known (24:15)?

11. Joshua's Legacy. A key task, if not the transcendent task, of leadership is to communicate values to one's followers. This fosters mission accomplishment and enduring commitment to these values. Perhaps the ultimate measure of a leader is his/her legacy as seen in the lives of his/her followers. Four techniques of inculcating values are example, exhortation, reward, and punishment. Cite instances in which Joshua used each of these techniques to pass on his values to his people.

a. Example.b. Exhortation.c. Reward.

d. Punishment.

12. Evaluate Joshua as a leader and as a follower in both spiritual and military aspects. Use the categories below to conduct your evaluation.

a. Leader.b. Follower.c. Character (Be aspect).d. Knowledge (Know aspect).e. Skill (Do aspects).

Application. What lessons from Joshua's life can be applied to your walk with the Lord and your professional responsibilities?

[Return to top.](#)

Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective Lesson 3

Nehemiah's Godly Prayer, Delegation & Action

1. Situation. What did Nehemiah learn from Hanani concerning the condition of Jerusalem (Neh 1:3)?**2. Reaction.** What did Nehemiah do when he heard this news (1:4-11)?**3. Nehemiah's Prayer.** Examine Nehemiah's prayer in detail. What does this examination tell you about the elements of effective prayer?**4. The Staff Officer Response.** What was Nehemiah's initial reaction when Artaxerxes began to question him (Neh 2:1-16)?**5. "Commo Check."** What did Nehemiah do before responding to Artaxerxes' questions (2:4)?**6. Good Staff Work.** What was Nehemiah's specific request of Artaxerxes? What was Nehemiah's demeanor before the king? What does this indicate about his effectiveness as a staff officer (2:5-8)?**7. Taking Charge.** What were Nehemiah's initial actions upon arrival at Jerusalem? What was their significance (2:9-16)?**8. Call to Action.** How did the people of Jerusalem respond to

Nehemiah's call (2:17-19)?9. Responding to Opposition. How did Nehemiah respond to the scorn directed against him (2:20)? **NOTE:** This is a key verse in the book of Nehemiah because it shows the essential relationship between God's faithfulness and man's duty.10. How to Organize. Read Nehemiah 3:1-7 and scan the rest of the chapter. How were the people of Jerusalem organized for their work of rebuilding the wall? What principles of sound organization are evident here?11. Opposition to God's Task.

a. What were the Samaritan and Ammonite initial reactions to the Jews' work on the walls (4:1-3)? What does this tell you about the use of ridicule as an arrow in Satan's quiver?b. How did Nehemiah respond to this (4:4-5)?c. How did the people respond (4:6)?d. What were the next Samaritan and Ammonite actions against the building of the wall (4:7-8)?

e. What effect did these actions have on the wall builders? What other factor influenced them (4:10-12)? What additional threat did the wall builders now face? What is the significance of the fact that the project was half finished at this point?

12. Leadership Challenge. What specific steps did Nehemiah take to deal with the outside threat and the low morale of his workers (4:13-23)? What principles of leadership and organization and what tactics are evident in Nehemiah's action? What were the results?13. Faithfulness. How did Nehemiah's enemies attempt to defeat him when they saw that the wall was almost built? How did Nehemiah respond (6:1-10)?

a. First attempt and response (6:1-4).b. Second attempt and response (6:5-9).c. Third attempt and response (6:10-14).

d. What were the common elements in each attempt to influence Nehemiah? What were the common elements in each of Nehemiah's responses?

14. Results. What were the results of Nehemiah's faithfulness (6:15-16)? Who got the credit? What does that tell you about Nehemiah?15. Relationships: Much of Nehemiah's success can be attributed to his ability to establish and maintain proper relations with others and to keep these relations in the proper balance with one another. Comment on the following:

a. Nehemiah's relationship with the people of Jerusalem.b. Nehemiah's relationship with Artaxerxes.

c. Nehemiah's relationship with the Lord.

16. Professional and Spiritual Growth. How would you evaluate Nehemiah's growth as a leader from when he learned of the condition of Jerusalem until he finished the work of rebuilding the wall? Comment on the challenges he faced in each of the following situations and the qualities were required to deal with them:

a. Obtaining Artaxerxes' approval for the project.b. Encouraging the people of Jerusalem to commit themselves to the work.c. Dealing with the initial

attacks of ridicule.d. Dealing with a serious external threat and internal discouragement.

e. Dealing with deceit, slander and treachery.

17. Application. How would you sum up the reasons for Nehemiah's success? How could your answer to that question assist you in the accomplishment of a mission that God has for you?

[Return to top.](#)

Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective Lesson 4

Godly Wisdom and Authority (Soldiers in the New Testament)

1. Roman Centurion Asks for a Miracle (Luke 7:1-10 and Matthew 8:5-13)

a. What do these two accounts tell us about the character of the Roman centurion serving in Capernaum?
b. What is the significance of the fact that the centurion said, "I also am a man under authority?"
c. How did Christ respond to his request? Why?

d. What are the military and spiritual lessons that we should draw from this encounter?

2. Roman Soldiers Crucify Jesus (Matthew 27:27-37).

a. What did the Roman soldiers do to Jesus when Pilate delivered Jesus to them for scourging and crucifixion?
b. What does this tell you about how they viewed Jesus?
c. How does this contrast with how the Capernaum centurion viewed Jesus?
d. Why was there a difference?

e. What practical implications does your answer have for being a soldier today?

3. The Centurion at the Foot of the Cross (Matthew 27:51-54, Luke 23:44-47).

a. What happened when Jesus gave up His spirit that indicated His was not a normal crucifixion?
b. How did the Roman centurion react to this?
c. Does this statement indicate a true belief in Christ (1 John 4:15)?

d. If so, what does this tell us about God's power to convert sinners?

4. Cornelius, The Centurion of Caesarea (Acts 10:1-48).

a. From the description of Cornelius in verses 1-8, what is revealed of his character? b. How was God working in Peter's heart at the same time He touched Cornelius (10:9-22)? c. Why did Cornelius gather his whole family together for Peter's visit (10:19-33)?

(1) What does this tell us about the importance of family as the center of our spiritual experience?

(2) Is there special application of this for the military?

d. What did Peter preach to Cornelius and his family (10:34-43)? e. What happened as a result (10:44-48)? f. What is the significance of God's choosing a soldier to be the first Gentile to hear the Gospel, believe in Christ, receive the Holy Spirit, and be baptized?

g. What can we learn from Cornelius' experience?

5. Application. Based on your examination of the above four instances of soldiers in the New Testament, what have you learned about how God deals with soldiers and what He expects from them? 6. Other Soldiers in the New Testament.

a. Acts 21:32-40 Soldiers rescue Paul outside the temple in Jerusalem. b. Acts 22:24-30 Paul placed into bonds by Roman soldiers. c. Acts 23:23-24 Roman soldiers escort Paul to Caesarea. d. Acts 24:23 Paul placed in protective custody. e. Acts 27 Roman soldiers escort Paul to Rome.

f. Acts 28:16 Paul kept by a Roman soldier.

[Return to top.](#)

Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective Lesson 5 Godly Excellence (Professional Excellence and the Christian Officer) NOTE: As you work through this lesson, draw on the material and lessons of the previous six lessons and your own experience.

1. Definition. How do you define "Excellence?" What do you think are the essential characteristics of something that is excellent?

2. Spiritual Excellence. Military professional aspire for professional excellence. As Christian, we should aspire for spiritual excellence as well. Daniel, an Old Testament prophet, provides an example of excellence in both areas. Read Daniel 1: 1-20; 5:5-1, 17-30; and 6:1-28. What do these passages teach concerning:

a. The Source of Excellence? b. The Practice of Excellence? c. The Rewards of Excellence?

d. The Perils of Excellence?

3. Godly Excellence. What does the Bible teach concerning Christ as the ultimate example of excellence (Hebrews 1:3-4, 8:1-6)? 4.

God's Desire. What does the Bible teach concerning God's desire for excellence in our lives (Philippians 2: 13-16, Colossians 3:22-24)?
5. Resourcing for Excellence. Who provides the power for excellence in the Christian life?

a. Romans 5:10-11 b. Philippians 1:9-11 c. Philippians 4:13

d. Romans 8:11-15

6. Rewards of Excellence. How does the Lord reward those who are faithful to Him in the pursuit of excellence?

a. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. b. Matthew 25:19-21

c. Contrast with Matthew 25:24-30

7. Practical Application.

a. What opportunities are there for you to pursue excellence in your present or forthcoming assignments? Professionally and spiritually. b. What specific steps can you take to prepare yourself to achieve excellence? Professionally and spiritually.

NOTE: In his pamphlet *Professional Excellence and the Christian Officer*, Lieutenant General William K. Harrison discusses professional and spiritual excellence. Additional copies are available from Officers' Christian Fellowship.

[Return to top.](#)

Soldiering: A Biblical Perspective Lesson 6

Godly Responses (How to Handle Success and Failure)

1. Successes and Failure. The Bible provides guidance to the military professional on how to deal with success and failure. Success can be defined simply as the attainment of a goal, while failure can be defined as not attaining a goal. Areas in which we frequently set goals for ourselves can be professional contribution (**NOTE:** this is much different than professional attainment), family relationships, financial management, time allocation, physical development, and spiritual maturity. In each of these areas, it is vital that we seek the Lord's will when setting our objectives. Remember -- "What you want out of life is probably what you are going to get!" If there are two perspectives on goal-setting, worldly and spiritual, and there are two possible outcomes in each, success and failure, then the matrix below outlines the four possible outcomes. **Worldly Spiritual Result Examples**

a. Success Success Victory

b. Success Failure Defeat c. Failure Failure Defeat

d. Failure Success Victory

What are the implications of the success and failure matrix as expressed in the result column? 2. Joseph's handling of Success and Failure (Genesis chapters 37-45).

a. What was Joseph's position in his father's house (Gen 37:2-3)? b. How did his brothers react to Joseph's position (Gen 37:4)? c. Did Joseph initially help the situation (Gen 37:5-7, 9-11)? d. How did Joseph react to his captivity in Egypt (Gen 39:1-4)? e. What did he do when enticed by Potiphar's wife? What happened as a result (Gen 39:7-20)? f. How did Joseph react to his unjust imprisonment (Gen 39:21-23)? g. The butler promised to remember Joseph when he (the butler) was restored. How did Joseph react when forgotten by the butler (Gen 40)? h. How did God intervene in Joseph's behalf (Gen 41:9-13)? i. To whom did Joseph give credit for interpreting Pharaoh's dream (Gen 41:16)? j. How did Pharaoh reward Joseph (Gen 41:37-44)?

k. When Joseph ultimately revealed himself to his brothers who came to Egypt for grain, what attitude did he display toward them? Who does he see as responsible for sending him to Egypt? How has this realization influenced the performance of his duties (Gen 45:1-15)?

3. Application.

a. Joseph's faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord set an example of spiritual constancy despite alternating ups and downs in his worldly or professional situation.

(1) What principles can you derive from Joseph's actions in the good times?

(2) What principles can you derive from Joseph's actions in the not so good times?

b. What specific things can you do to put the above principles into action?

4. Basic Truths. What do the following scripture verses teach concerning what constitutes success and failure and how to deal with them?

a. Mark 8:36b. Romans 8:18

c. Romans 8:28

5. Notable Quotes on Success.


a. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson: "Duty is man's, results are God's." Jackson died after the Battle of Chancellorsville from a wound in the left arm; he was shot by a Confederate sentry when returning to his

own lines from a forward reconnaissance. When Lee learned that Jackson's arm had been amputated, he said, "General Jackson has lost his left arm, I my right."

b. **Jim Elliot (Missionary to the Auca Indians in Columbia):** "A man is no fool who gives up what he cannot hope to keep to obtain that which he cannot possibly lose." Jim was killed by the Aucas while attempting to establish his ministry. His wife, Elizabeth Elliot, successfully carried on his work, living with the Aucas and winning many to Christ.

[Return to top](#)

Last Reviewed: July 13, 2006

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