



MERRY CRISIS
AND A HAPPY NEW FEAR

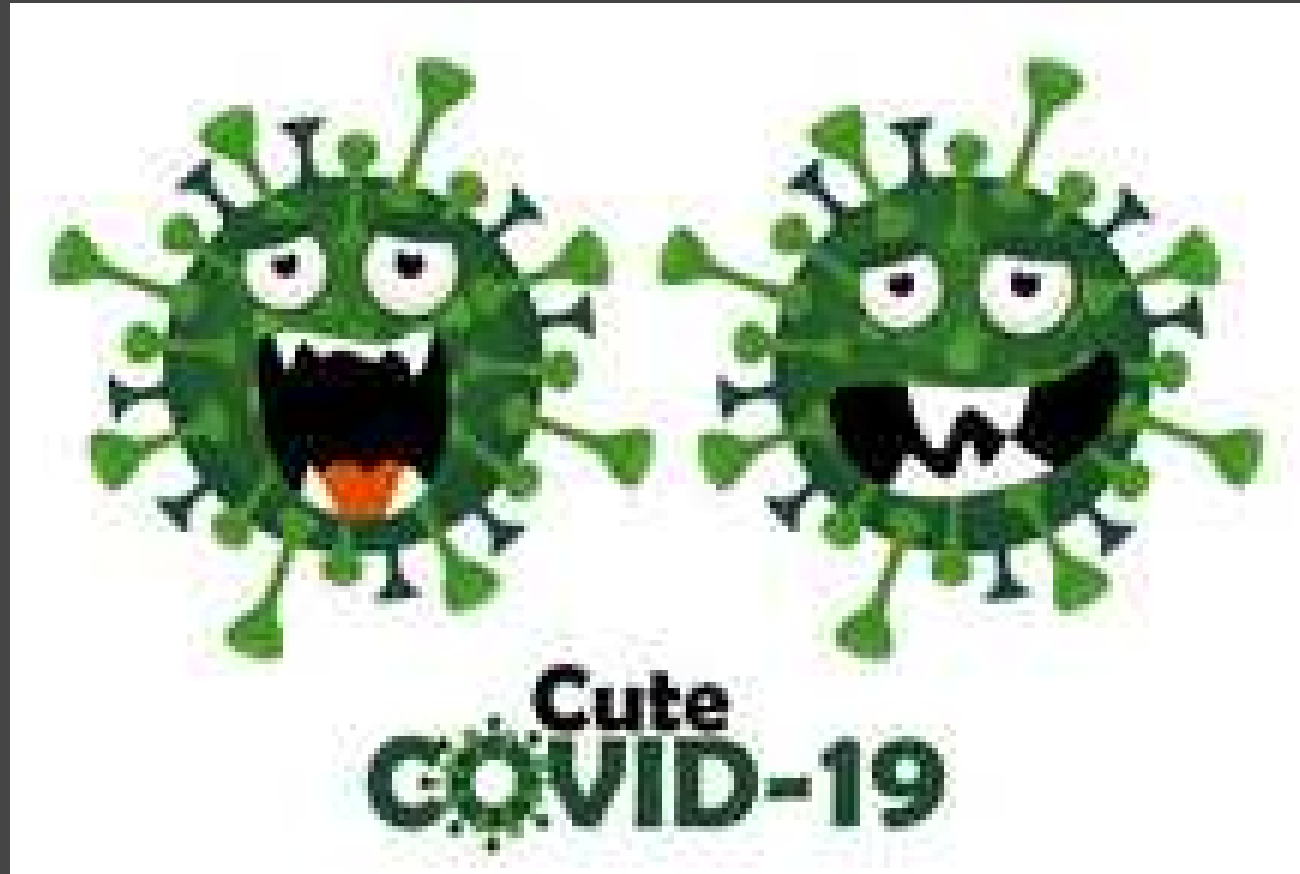
New Year's Fear



Some Things to Fear in 2022

- A meteor hitting the earth
- Nuclear war with Iran
- Middle Eastern war
- Climate Change causing killer hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, and floods
- War with Russia
- War with China over Taiwan
- Christians arrested for their faith
- Being cancelled by Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube
- Getting Covid
- Turn on the news and you will be able to see your fears carefully laid out and displayed and perhaps this very evening you will be unable to sleep thinking about the things that are going to happen in the coming year.

New Year, New Fears




- Many people look forward to the New Year. But for others, it is frightening. There is the palpable and very real fear that the future will not be as good as the past.
- The cold breath of fear knows all ages and every walk of life:
 - The wealthy fear the loss of their possessions
 - The destitute fear their inability to find a place to live and food to eat
 - Businessmen fear failure and bankruptcy
 - Everyone is fears inflation
- But the most common fear today is fear of Covid. It pervades every aspect of life. School, business, government. It determines whether or not we gather in our homes with friends. I have seen people in their cars driving alone, wearing a mask. Runners, running alone, wearing a mask.
- A woman on a Delta flight last week had to be restrained and arrested because she was attacking a man who wasn't wearing his mask while he was eating.

Christians Have Been Handicapped By Fear

- Several people have been locked in their homes for most of the last two years. Never venturing out for fear of getting Covid.
- Others go out but avoid all gatherings with believers.





FEAR IS A
PRISON

The Major Motivation Has Been Fear of Sickness and Death

- Fear is a powerful motivator. It can drive us to action or paralyze us into inaction.
- Fear is a form of slavery that limits our actions:

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

Hebrews 2: 14

We are Called to Fear God Rather Than Man

“Be strong and of a good courage,
fear not, nor be afraid of them:
for the Lord thy God, he it is
that doth go with thee;
he will not fail thee,
nor forsake thee.”

—Moses, Deuteronomy 31:6

Source: King James Version (KJV) Bible, Photo: Lion watching over cub. Public domain

QuotesCosmos

- “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

Proverbs 1:7

- “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”

Proverbs 29:25

- “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Matthew 10:28

Fearing God Does Not Guarantee a Long Life

Fighting Ebola in Uganda

- When lab teams confirmed Ebola...they went from hut to hut looking for sick people...Ebola alerts filled the newspapers and state radio...
- The campaign worked, but it also caused mass panic.
- The sick and dying were taken to St. Mary's. A medical group led by Dr. Matthew Lukwiya, a Christian, cared for the Ebola patients in the isolation ward. Offered high positions with great pay in the UK, he opted instead to risk his life daily caring for those that no one else would care for.
- When rebels came to the hospital in 1989 to kidnap some nuns, Dr. Matthew, an evangelical protestant, persuaded them to take him instead. A month later, they released him.
- But Dr. Matthew did not escape Ebola. He caught it from a dying patient and ultimately died the horrible death of Ebola himself.
- Did he waste his life?

NYT article on Dr. Matthew Lukwiya



The Project Goals of A Christian Matt 35:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. ”



We Are
Called to
Sacrificially
Care for
Others

“Whatever you did for
the least of these my
brethren, you did for me...”

“Greater love than this has
no man, but to lay down his
life for his friend.”



Love of Jesus Overcomes Fear.

- From 1929 until her death in 1997, Mother Theresa worked amongst the poor and the sick in the filthy slums of Calcutta. A man walked up to Mother Theresa one day right after he had seen her hugging a leper and said, “Man, I wouldn’t do that for all the money in the world.”
- She answered him, “Neither would I. I’m doing it for the love of Jesus.”



How God Judges Our Value

- “At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done.
- We will be judged by "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in.”

Mother Teresa

But Fear Keeps Us From Service to Jesus

Mask Fights at the supermarket

Vaccine Shaming

Self-Isolation and Quarantine of the Well

Why is Covid different from any other disease?

Many Christians are far more afraid of this disease than of any other.

Fear Does Not Come From God

- For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ***For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid***, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

2 Timothy 1:6-8





Fear is a Great Sin

⁷Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸**But the cowardly (the fearful),** the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Revelation 21:7-9



Courage

Christians are Historically Fearless

- In 165 AD, a plague known as the Antonine Plague, spread from the Huns, to the Germans, and then throughout the Roman Empire, killing a quarter to one-third of the population. A little less than a century later, in 250 AD, the Cyprian Plague hit Rome, and it was believed that at its peak, almost 5,000 people a day were dying from the disease.
- During these and many other times throughout human history, the Church was faced with a decision that we as Christians face every day - How do we love God and love our neighbor in the place, time, and circumstance where we find ourselves?

Corrie Ten Boom

- Corrie, her sister Betsy, and her father hid Jews in World War II Holland.
- After the war began, members of the ten Boom family became involved in resistance efforts. Two nephews worked in resistance cells. Various family members sheltered young men sought by the Nazis for forced labor and assisted Jews in contacting persons willing to hide them. Corrie became directly involved in these efforts when, along with her father and sister Betsie, she decided to hide Jews in the family home in Haarlem, the Netherlands. Using her job as a watchmaker in her father's shop as a cover, Corrie built contacts with resistance workers, who assisted her in procuring ration books and building a hiding place in the family home.
- Six people, among them both Jews and resistance workers, hid in this hiding place when the Gestapo raided the house on February 28, 1944. Those in hiding remained undiscovered. Several days after the raid resistance workers transferred them to other locations. In the meantime, however, the Gestapo had arrested Corrie ten Boom, her father, her brother and two sisters, and other family members. In addition, the Gestapo arrested several resistance workers who had unwittingly entered the house during the raid, as well as many family acquaintances who had been attending a prayer meeting in the living room. Altogether, the Gestapo arrested some 30 people in the ten Boom family home that day. All but three were released: Betsie, her sister Corrie, and their father. Betsie and their father died in prison.



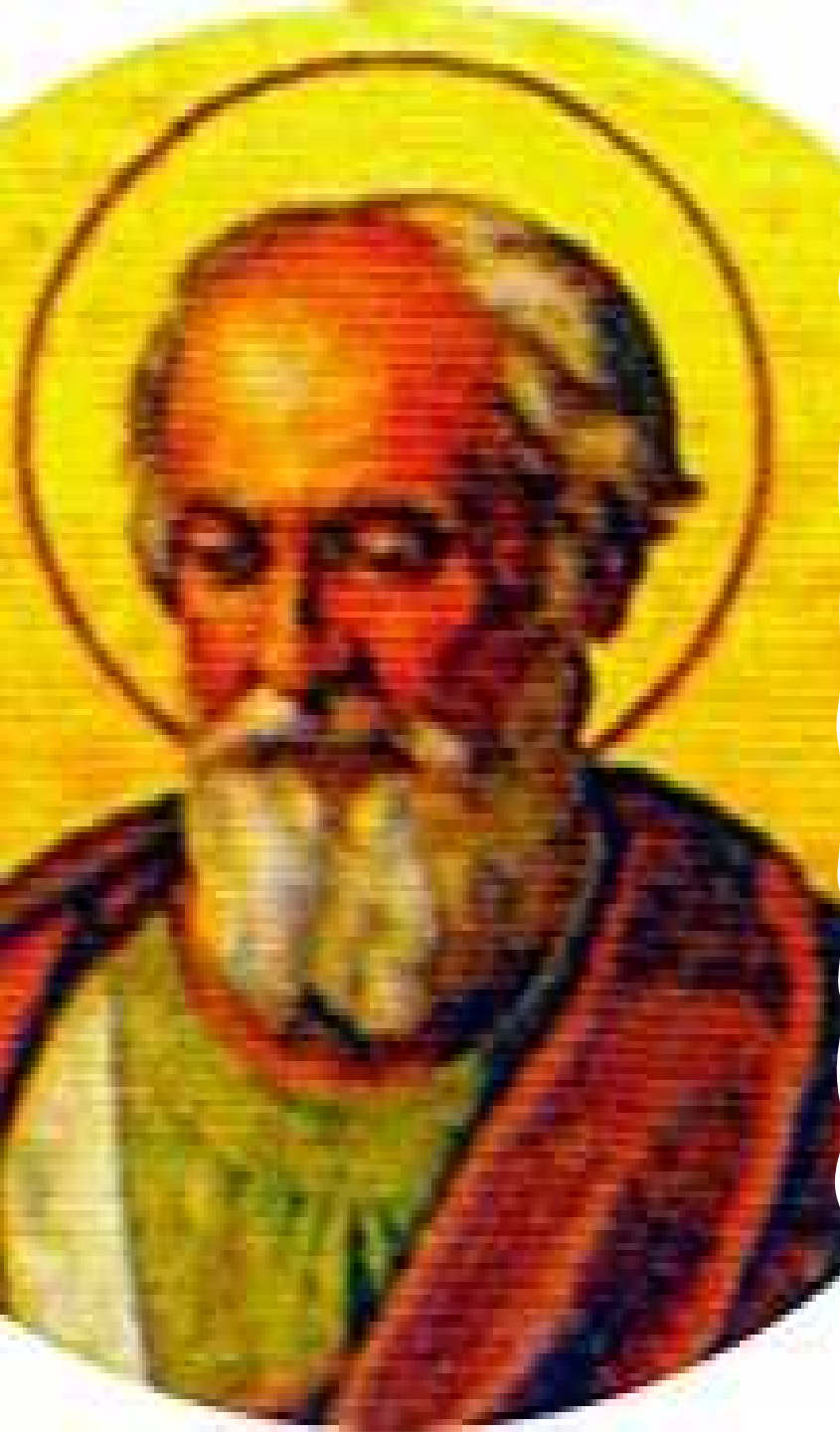
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Christians During the Early Plagues

- During the Antonine Plague, Christians stepped in to serve those in need at great risk to themselves. When the Cyprian Plague hit Rome most of the population fled in an effort to distance themselves from the disease in self-preservation, Christians stepped out in faith to care for those in distress.
- Instead of fear and despondency, the earliest Christians would stay and tend to the sick and dying, knowing full well that it would likely result in their own deaths. They showed works of unreasonable, sacrificial mercy that simply dumbfounded the pagans. In Rome, the Christians buried not just their own, but pagans who had died without funds for a proper burial. They also supplied food for thousands of people on a daily basis.

Christians In Later Plagues

- During the Plague in Alexandria in the 1300s, when nearly everyone else fled the city to escape the disease, the early Christians risked their lives for one another by simple deeds of washing the sick, offering water and food, and consoling the dying. At the risk of their own lives, they saved an immense number of lives. Their even basic amounts of nursing and care greatly reduced mortality. Simple provisions of food and water allowed the sick that were temporarily too weak to cope for themselves to recover instead of dying miserably.
- Everyone who could was running from the plague. Except for one group. Instead of running from the plague, they ran to it: the Christians who were moved by death defying compassion.



A Historian's View of Christians in the Plague

- Bishop and historian of the early church, Eusebius, recorded that during the plague, “All day long some of them [the Christians] tended to the dying and to their burial, countless numbers with no one to care for them. Others gathered together from all parts of the city, a multitude of those withered from famine and distributed bread to them all.”

Eusebius



How Christians Should Respond to the Plague

- Martin Luther provides some insight. When the Bubonic Plague came back to Germany in 1527, Luther's hometown of Wittenberg was greatly affected. In response, he wrote a letter to his friend and fellow pastor Dr. John Hess. In the letter, entitled "Whether One Should Flee From A Deadly Plague", Luther writes:
- "I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."

Martin Luther



Christians in Times of Sickness and Persecution

In 165 AD, 250 AD, the 1300s and in 1527 people were fleeing from one another, not because that was most loving, but because they desired self-protection and self-preservation. They weren't social distancing out of love and sacrifice, they were doing so out of fear and selfishness.

Luther's encouragement to us as Christians is to consider, as the early church did, what is the most loving response? We learn in these moments to move towards those in need, not away from them. Even if we socially distance, we still consider how to love and care for those in the pandemic of our day, as we learn from the example of Christ-followers who have come before us.

Even Earthly Wisdom Questions Fear

“We have nothing to fear, except
fear itself.”

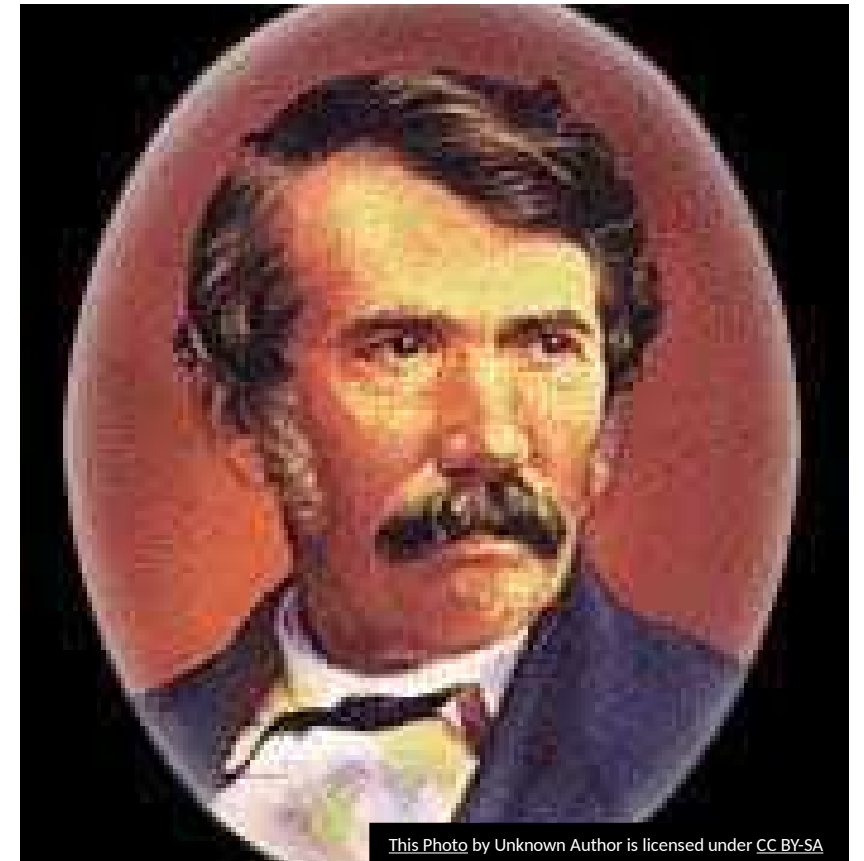
Franklin Delano Roosevelt



David Livingstone

Livingstone hoped to go to China as a missionary, but was to go to the West Indies instead. In 1840, while continuing his medical studies in London, Livingstone met LMS missionary Robert Moffat who recommended Africa, instead. He was excited by Moffat's vision of expanding missionary work northwards, and by abolitionist T. F. Buxton's arguments that the African slave trade could be destroyed by substituting "legitimate trade" and spreading Christianity.^[9] When he questioned if he would do for Africa, Livingstone was deeply influenced by Moffat's affirmation that, instead of going to an old mission, he should go to the vast plains to the north of Bechuanaland, where Moffat had glimpsed "the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been."^[8]

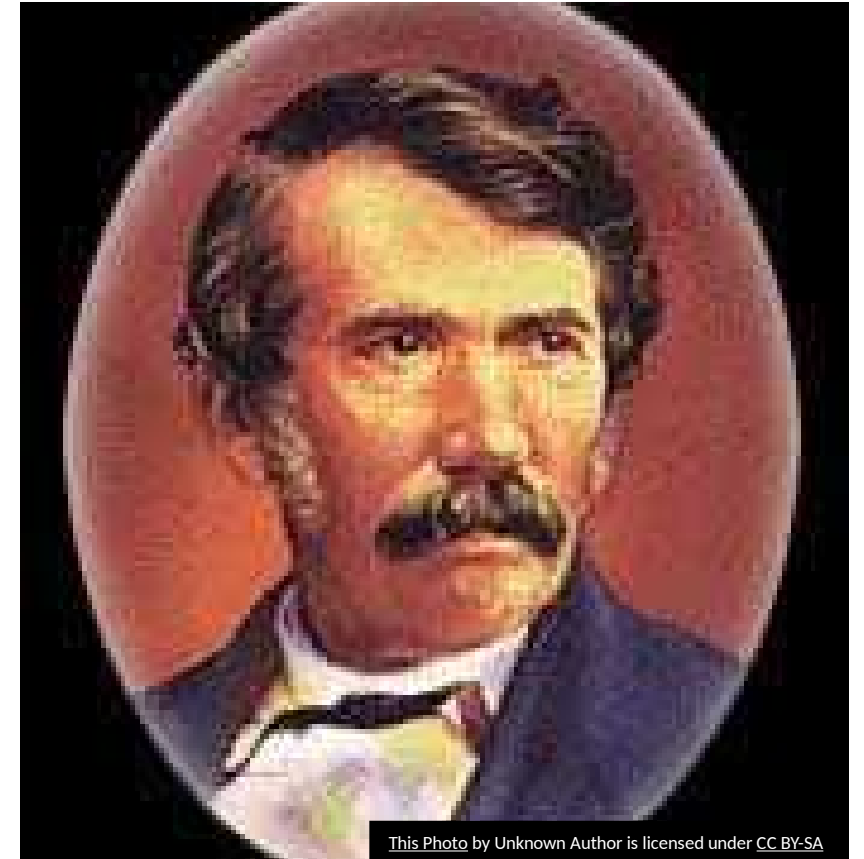
Livingstone set off on 8 December 1840, passenger on a sailing brig. During the long voyage he studied Dutch and Tsana Language, and the captain gave him extensive training in navigation.^[13]



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Livingstone Had Much to Fear

- Livingstone was an abolitionist
- Natives sought to kill him, because they thought he was a slave trader.
- Muslims sought to kill him, because he ended their slave trade wherever he went.
- Livingstone completely lost contact with the outside world for six years and was ill for most of the last four years of his life. Only one of his 44 letter dispatches made it to Zanzibar. One surviving letter to Horace Waller was made available to the public in 2010 by its owner Peter Beard. It reads: "I am terribly knocked up but this is for your own eye only... Doubtful if I live to see you again..."



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A close-up portrait of Jim Elliot, a young man with short, wavy brown hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a white t-shirt. The background is out of focus, showing some greenery.

Jim and Elisabeth Elliot

- Missionaries to the Auca Indians in Ecuador
- Jim was martyred alongside four other missionaries, Jan 8, 1956
- After her husband's death, Elisabeth went to go live among the tribe that killed her husband with her three-year-old daughter, Valarie and share the truth of the gospel with them.
- “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”
- “If we are the sheep of His pasture, remember that sheep are headed for the altar.”

Jim Elliot



Fear of God Leads to Awakening

The five steps to an
awakening

The Spiritual
Awakeners, Keith J.
Hardman

Steps to Awakening

- “First, revival is usually preceded by a time of spiritual depression, apathy, and gross sin, in which the great majority of nominal Christians are hardly different in any substantive way from the members of secular society, and the churches are moribund”



Steps to Awakening

- “Second, an individual or a small group of God’s people becomes conscious of its sins and backslidden condition, and vows to forsake all that is displeasing to God. People recall past outpourings of God grace and power, and long for them to be manifest again. People all over the world begin independently praying for such revivals.”

Steps to Awakening

- Third, as occasional Christians begin to year for a manifestation of God's power, one or more leaders arise with prophetic insights into the causes and remedies of the problems. A new revelation of the holy and pure character of the Lord is given. This standard of holiness exposes the degeneracy of the age and stimulates a striving after holiness by God's people.

Steps to Awakening

- “Fourth, the awakening of Christians occurs. An understanding and an appropriation of the higher spiritual life is made possible for many. The evangelism of the unsaved may or may not be concurrent with this renewal of Christians. In the great revival of the Reformation, the bringing of salvation to those outside the church was not a paramount issue, whereas the dissemination of scripture doctrine was...”

Steps to Awakening

- “Fifth, the awakening may be God’s preparation to strengthen His people for future challenges or trials. Throughout church history, renewal has often been antecedent to persecution and severe tests, as yet unseen, that were to come and winnow God’s people.”

