

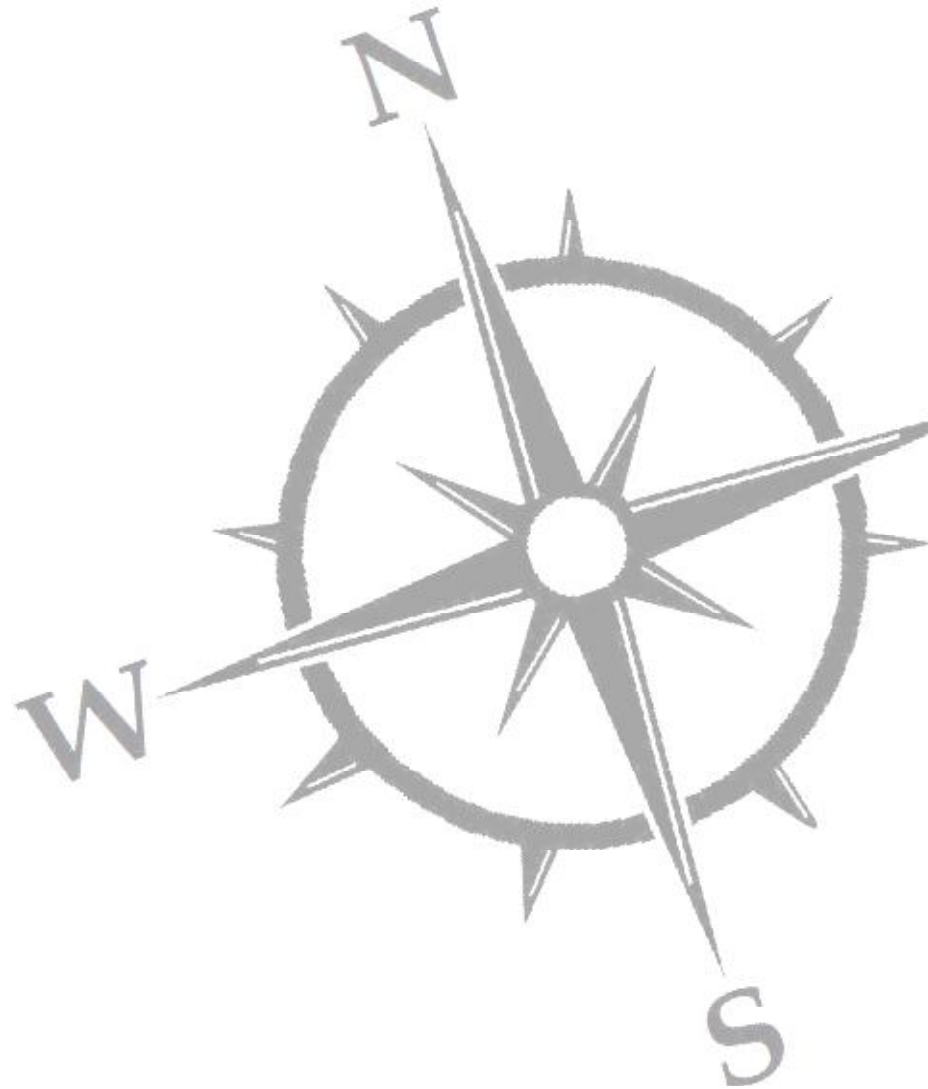
The Life of Mary Slessor

(1848-1915)

Lesson: 1.24 – Boldness Missionary Snapshot Series

This story encourages us not to be afraid of the world. The world will put pressure on us to conform to their way of living, but a Christian must have the courage to stand for what is right. Having Jesus in our heart is like wrapping us up in the biggest and strongest armor in the world. Nothing can harm us! Mary Slessor was about to face some very scary things. She would have to trust in the Lord to protect her and keep her safe.

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.” - Proverbs 28:1







Introduction:

Have you ever seen a lion tamer or a tiger tamer in a circus, or perhaps a picture of one? These trainers and tamers step into a cage surrounded by ferocious beasts that could tear them apart at any minute. One interesting thing that they do is go into the cage without any kind of armor or protection. Our story today is about a missionary to fierce tribes in the African jungles. This missionary risked her life to go and tell these people about Jesus' love. There were many times that she could have been killed or seriously hurt. Would God keep her safe and protect her? Let's listen carefully and see what happens in this story about Mary Slessor...

Missionary Story:

BOOM! BOOM! The noise of the village drum echoed through the village of Ekenge. "This is not a usual festival," I said to myself as I stepped out of my hut. Off in the distance, I could see that most of the village was gathered around the palaver hut where the special councils were held. As I

got closer, the drums grew louder and louder and the smoke from the torches burned in my nose. I saw many villagers jumping and yelling. Suddenly, one piercing scream could be heard above everything else. A feeling of dread came over me. "I hope this is not another one of their cruel punishments," I thought as I pushed my way through the crowd to the front.

There on the ground lay a young woman with her hands and feet tied to large stakes in the ground. Beside her was a large pot of boiling oil. A large warrior dressed in a leopard's skin danced around the pot. In his hand, he held a large ladle. I knew right away what was going to happen. This warrior was planning to pour burning hot oil on the woman to gain Abassi's blessing. The African villagers believed in an all-powerful, all-knowing creator like I did. The difference was, that the people believed Abassi wanted them to do cruel things and to be ruled by magic and superstition, where I knew that God was an all-knowing and all-powerful God, but also good and kind.

Many tribes I had come across here in Africa, had many similar superstitious beliefs. I remembered just recently when Chief Edem's son was moving a large log of wood and it slipped knocking him unconscious and hurting him very badly. The villagers brought him to me, but it was not long until he passed away. The villagers there believed that all accidents were caused by witchcraft. So they gathered twelve villagers whose homes were nearest where the accident happened and chained them to posts around the body of the Chief's son.

Fifty guards stood watch over these prisoners as the witch doctor attempted to figure out who had caused this accident. The witch doctor tried to figure this out by crushing up some beans along with gunpowder and water. The beans were a deadly poison, but the people believed that if a person was innocent, they would not be harmed. Just as the first prisoner was unchained and about to take a drink I sprang to action, I could not allow an innocent person to die. I ran up to the woman, grabbed her hand, and took her to my hut. The Chief had said that my hut was never to be entered...it was a place of safety. One by one, I rescued the 12 prisoners before any could drink the poison.

"This young woman needs to be rescued too," I thought as I ran out and stood between the warrior and the woman. Suddenly, the drummers stopped, the people's yelling and talking ceased and everything was deathly quiet. The large warrior got a confused look on his face. Then he let out a warrior's scream, raised the ladle, and began jumping and moving towards me in a threatening manner.

In an instant, my mind flashed back to the narrow streets of Dundee, Scotland. I was up early, knocking on doors of the poor houses bringing the children to Sunday school at Wishart Church. The kids were skipping and laughing behind me as we rounded the last corner. "We don't want you here," growled the biggest boy from a small group of bullies who were standing in the road. "You best get out of here," he continued. The children scattered, but I stood





right where I was. Even though I was twenty years old, this boy and his gang were much bigger than I was. “I will not go,” I said, “I am going to teach Sunday school today. Why don’t all of you come along with us?” The bully’s eyes glared at me. “Oh, you’ll leave alright,” he said pulling a small rope from his pocket with a sharp metal weight tied to one end.

When I still didn’t budge, he began to swing the weight around his head like a lasso. Still, I did not move. I heard several of the children gasp as the weight came closer and closer to hitting my head. I even saw one of the gang close his eyes and look away, but I stood firm in the middle of the road. The weight came closer and closer and finally, it even grazed my forehead, but I refused to flinch. The bully was surprised by my courage and stopped swinging the weight. “Boys...we should let this one be on her way,” he said stepping off to the side so that I could pass. I once again gathered the children and we made our way down the steps to the basement Sunday school room. As I turned to close the door, I nearly hit the

bullies who had decided to come to Sunday school with us after all.

“This is just another bully,” I thought to myself, “I must not back down...I must not show any fear.” The warrior was moving closer and closer. I prayed silently for courage as I watched him swing the ladle like a weapon while the hot oil dripped off of it. Besides the shuffling of his feet and the war cries he was making, everything was silent. Finally, the moment arrived when he and I stood face to face and toe to toe. I could feel his breath against my cheeks as he stared down at me. I stared back up at him determined that this woman should go free. He raised the ladle over his head and then with a sigh of disgust turned and threw it to the ground. All the villagers stood frozen. What had just happened?

I turned to the young woman on the ground. I reached down and untied her hands and feet and helped her to come back to my hut. I later learned that this young woman’s only crime was offering some food to another hungry man in the village who was not her husband.

Several months later, I received a package from Scotland. As I opened the package, I found a framed picture of a handsome man with a pretty wife and several small children. “Who is that, Mama?” asked Janie, who was my little adopted African girl that I had rescued when she was just a baby. “Well, let me tell you, sweet Janie,” I began, “...this boy and his gang tried to stop me from bringing kids to Sunday school one morning...”

“There’s something on the back!”

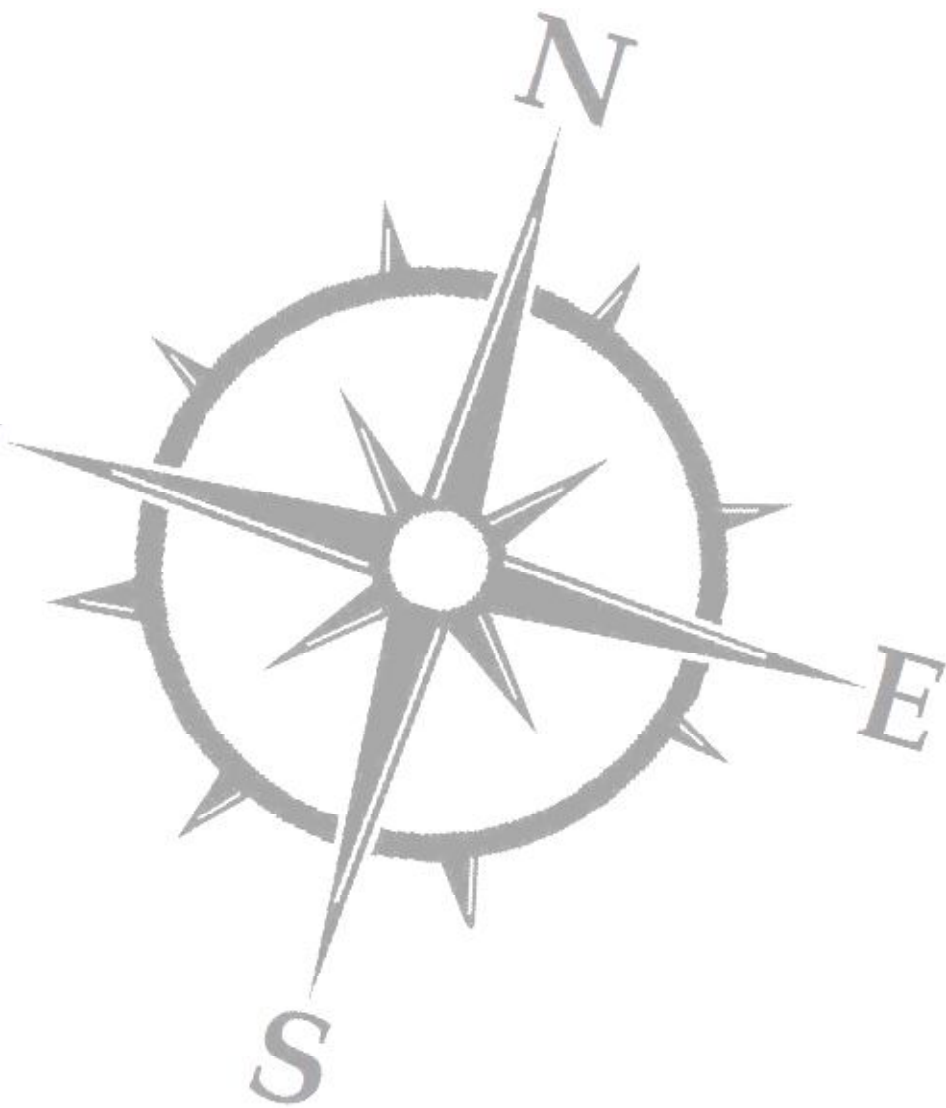
Janie said pointing to the picture frame as I finished my story. Indeed there was. It was a note that read: “To Mary Slessor, in grateful remembrance of a day when a bit of courage turned my life completely around.”

Application:

You know, boys and girls, Psalm 27:1 tells us that we have nothing to fear when God is with us. There is no one more powerful than our God. The safest place that we can be is right where God wants us to be. God protected Mary Slessor as she worked with many dangerous tribes in Africa. God kept Mary safe from the many animals, warriors, witch doctors, and situations that could have easily taken her life. Mary trusted God to protect her.

Mary Slessor was later known as the Queen of Calabar. For nearly 40 years, she worked in Calabar, Africa rescuing hundreds of twin babies who were left to die in the forests. She stood against warriors and witch doctors. She stopped wars and helped do away with many evil practices that the people had. She treated the sick and taught people to live peacefully with each other. As her coffin was brought to be buried, people lined the roads to get one last look at their “Ma”... this tiny woman who made a giant difference in the hearts and lives of the people of Africa.

*(For additional information, discussion questions, and materials on this lesson please refer to **lesson 1.25 on page 90 in your England Expedition** - Leader's Guide.)*



References

For further reading or to obtain more information on this portion of the life of this missionary, please consult the following sources from which we obtained information from:

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