

# The Life of Sheldon Jackson

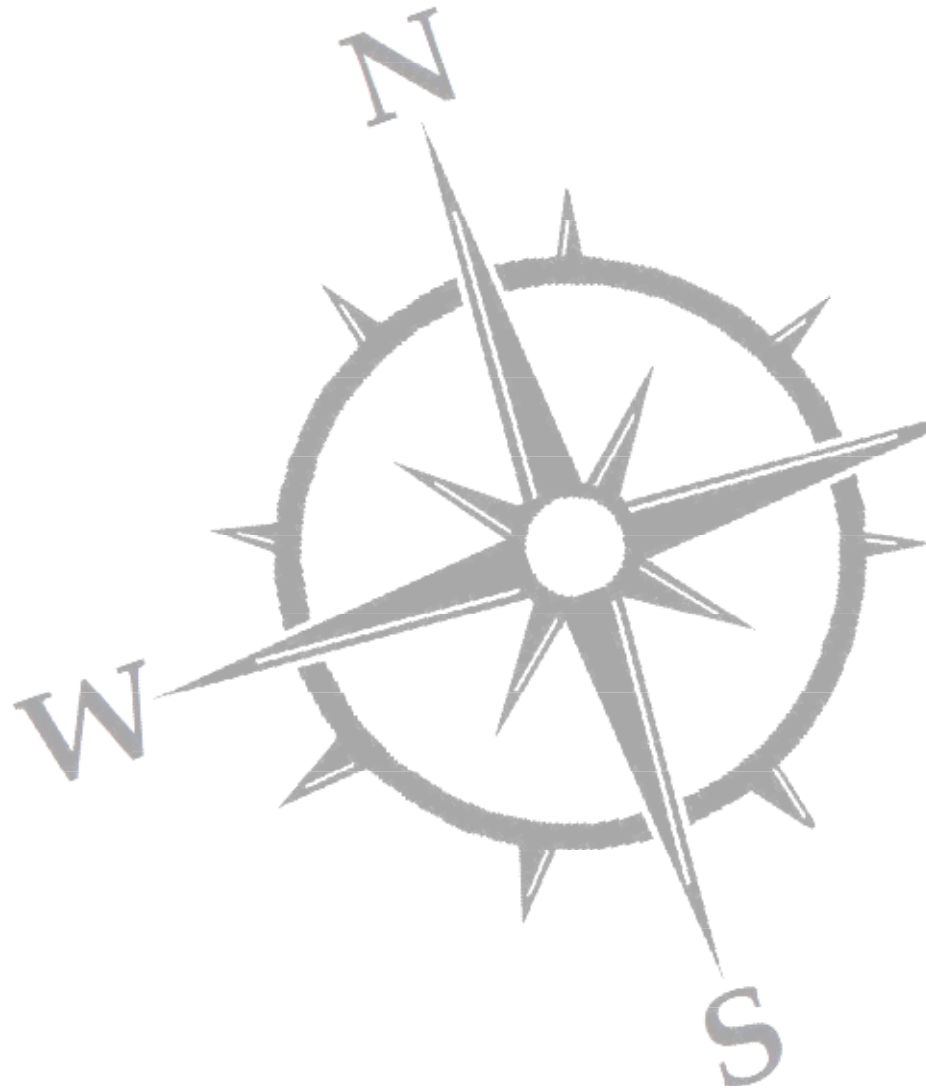
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## Lesson: 1.29 – Determined Missionary Snapshot Series

This lesson reminds us not to quit in the service of the Lord. The Devil often uses opposition to the cause of Christ to discourage us and make us want to stop. Endure to the end for the Lord! The Bible reminds us that Christians are to endure and not give up even when the fight is tough. Sheldon Jackson continued serving the Lord even when things got difficult.

*"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." – Galatians 6:9*







### **Introduction:**

How many of you have ever had to run for a long period of time? Maybe you ran in a race or in a soccer or football game. After we have been running for a long period of time, our bodies get tired, and they tell us to stop running and relax a little bit. Our story today is about a missionary to the western United States and Alaska. There were many things that could have made him want to quit. Will our missionary keep going in the face of Indian attacks, blizzards, boat crashes, and even some reindeer? Let's listen carefully and see what happens in this story about Sheldon Jackson...

### **Missionary Story:**

“CRUNCH!” The loud grating noise woke me from my sleep. I hurried up on the deck of the *Portus B. Ware*. It was the middle of the night and the steamboat sat still somewhere in the Yukon flats. “Try putting her in reverse... we must have hit a sand bar,” I heard the first mate telling other sailors. I was here in Alaska because I had been asked to look at some land along the

Yukon River by the president of the United States. “THUFF, THUFF, THUFF,” I could hear the big paddle wheel trying to pull us free from the sand bar. “Everyone will need to climb into the water to try to lighten the steamboat,” the captain said. We all waded out onto the sandbar in freezing Alaska waters up to about our thighs. The crew also threw barrels and lifeboats into the water trying to make the steamboat lighter. “Brrrrr, this water is freezing,” I said.

The cold water reminded me of when I first became a missionary to the Choctaw Indians of Minnesota. I remember I was asked to hold an evening service in a village about 14 miles from my home. My wife and I had traveled about halfway there when a December snow began to fall and continued until we reached the village. By the time the service was over, we looked outside and realized we were facing a “Minnesota Blizzard.” We spent the night in the village, but by the next morning, the snow reached up to the top of the doors and windows. We had to return home and so we began our journey. The snow came almost up to the shoulders of the horse and fell down through the open sides of our sleigh. At one point, I tried to jump out and walk in front of the horse, but only lasted a few minutes in the snow that was up to my chest. Around nightfall, we reached a snow drift and the sleigh got stuck. The horse refused to pull it anymore. I unhooked the horse and set out to find shelter. I found a very small hut about a mile away with Norwegian man and his five children living there. The hut was too small and I'd have to tie our horse outside and it

would freeze to death overnight. I decided to continue on. I came to the home of a German family who at first refused us, but then seeing us shivering and realizing we were about to freeze to death, they allowed us to stay with them. The horse was placed in the shed attached to their house.

“Everyone stay together,” the Captain asked from the deck bringing me back to the icy waters of the Yukon. I knew that if any of us accidentally stepped off of the sand bar, we'd be swept downstream with the current. Finally the Captain invited us back on board. “We are stuck, we must wait for another steamboat to come and pull us out,” he said nervously. In the morning, some of the crew went to look for more wood for the steam engine. On the way back, their life boat tipped over from the weight of all the wood. The crew barely survived. That evening, I saw some canoes with some Tananan Indians paddle up to the steamboat. They wanted to trade furs for some food. “For food?” I thought. Then it dawned on me how few animals I had seen on my trip. “Usually the water's edges are filled with caribou, moose, and bears,” I thought. Suddenly, it all made sense. Someone had recently found gold while mining in Alaska and people were beginning to flood into the area with their hearts set on finding some gold. “This flood of new gold miners must be taking a lot of these Indian's and Inuit's food supply,” I thought.

The Indians had always had a special place in my heart. After leaving Minnesota for health reasons, I had been assigned to a huge territory in the west including parts of





Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and Arizona. I worked with many settlers and Indians starting a number of schools and teaching the people the gospel. I remembered one trip, when I was trying to bring a group of Indian children to one of our schools. We left Tuscan on a train and had to travel through a small town called Mesilla. Although I did not know it, a recent Indian attack on some Mexican miners and herders in Mesilla, had turned the people's dislike of the Indians into a hatred of them. When word got out that a group of Indian children were on their way east on a train, a large group of Mexican men rode just outside of town to ambush and kill everyone. When we arrived in Mesilla very late that evening, a missionary friend of mine told me about the trap. He hurried us into some wagons and told us we could go to the north and go around the trap if we left right away. The trip was very difficult and the roads were very rough, but we managed to reach Santa Fe the next day and get on a train bound for San Marcial. Sadly, another Indian attack occurred in San Marcial, just before our train pulled into the station. If anyone

found out we had a whole car of Indian children, we would surely all be attacked and killed. Again I prayed and then I spoke with the train conductor. He agreed that once everyone got off at the station, he would quietly back our train car into the marshaling yard. It was a blazing hot afternoon, but we had to keep all the doors locked and the shades drawn to attract as little attention as possible. Finally, three terrifying hours later, we felt the train car jolt as it was connected to the train that would take us to our school. We all could relax and thank the Lord for escaping a very deadly situation.

"I need you to rescue us again," I prayed several days later from the deck of the *Portus B. Ware*. It had now been 19 days since we had run onto the sand barge. We were out of food and panic had begun to set in amongst the passengers. Our only life boat had tipped over and washed away. Just when we were about to lose hope, someone on deck shouted, "look there!" Another steamboat came chugging around the bend. It wasn't long until we were pulled free from the sand bar and had arrived at Fort Yukon.

I immediately traveled back to Washington with some very important news. "They are all going to starve to death this winter!" I told members of Congress. Alaska had been flooded with miners who are only worried about striking it rich. I knew that when winter arrived, all of those miners and most of the Indian tribes in the area would starve to death because most of the caribou and other wildlife had been killed already or had fled to other areas. "What can we possibly do?" a congressman asked me. "I

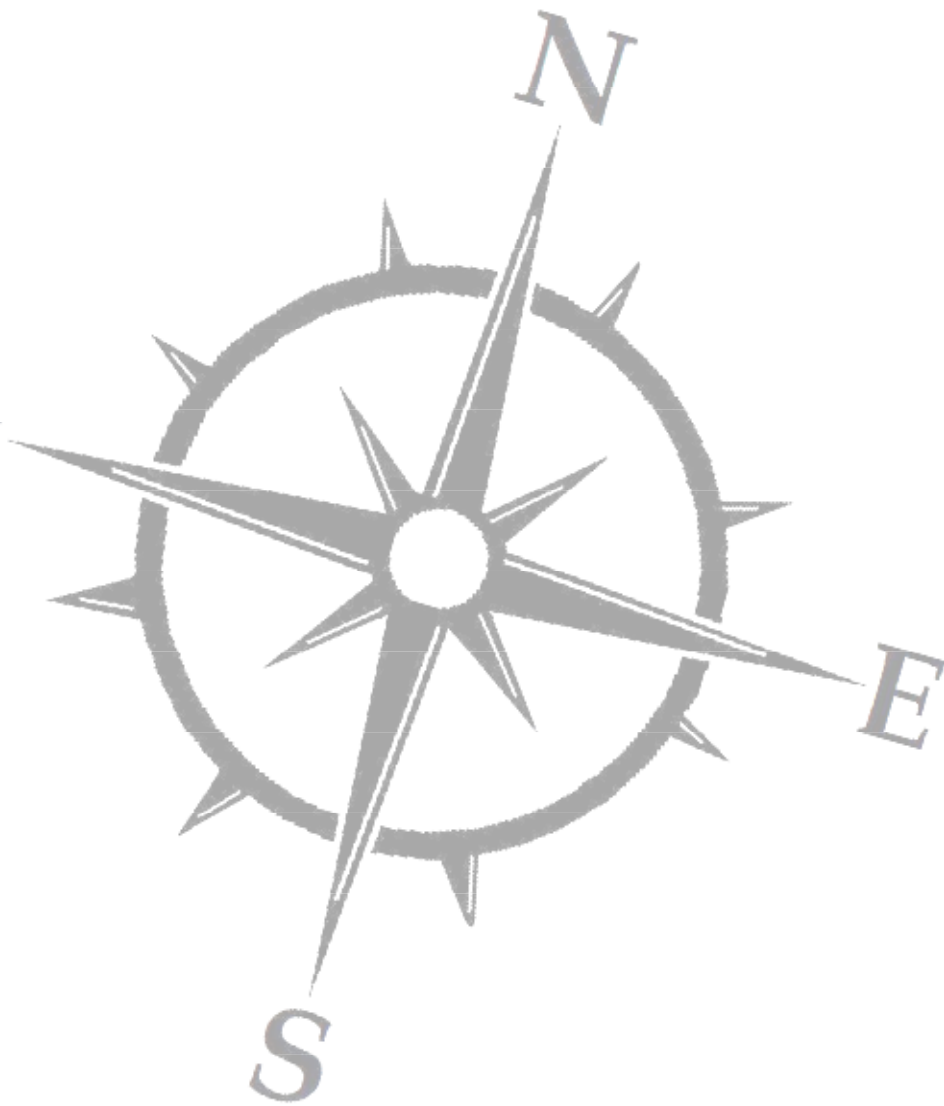
have spent many years taking the gospel all around Alaska," I said, "and I have kind of an unusual idea that just might save all of those people!"

### **Application:**

You know, boys and girls, Galatians 6:9 tells us the importance of not quitting as we serve the Lord. God has promised to reward those who faithfully serve Him. Sheldon Jackson's unusual plan was to buy a giant herd of reindeer from Norway and take them by ship and by train up to Alaska. His plan took a great deal of effort, but it worked and it kept many people from starving.

Sheldon Jackson opened the west to the gospel. He worked in Oklahoma, Minnesota, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, and Arizona. Then in 1877, he visited Alaska and saw the desperate need for the gospel and education for the Indians and Inuit people of the arctic. Sheldon traveled over one million miles in his lifetime. He began over 100 schools and churches throughout the west and Alaska. He imported over 1,300 reindeer to help the Indians and inuit of Alaska. Whether he was with Indians in the wild west, stuck on a boat in Alaska, battling a snowstorms in Minnesota, or pleading with the government for help for the Alaskians, his goal was always the same: to glorify Jesus Christ and to spread the gospel throughout the whole land.

*(For additional information, discussion questions and materials on this lesson please refer to **lesson 1.29 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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