

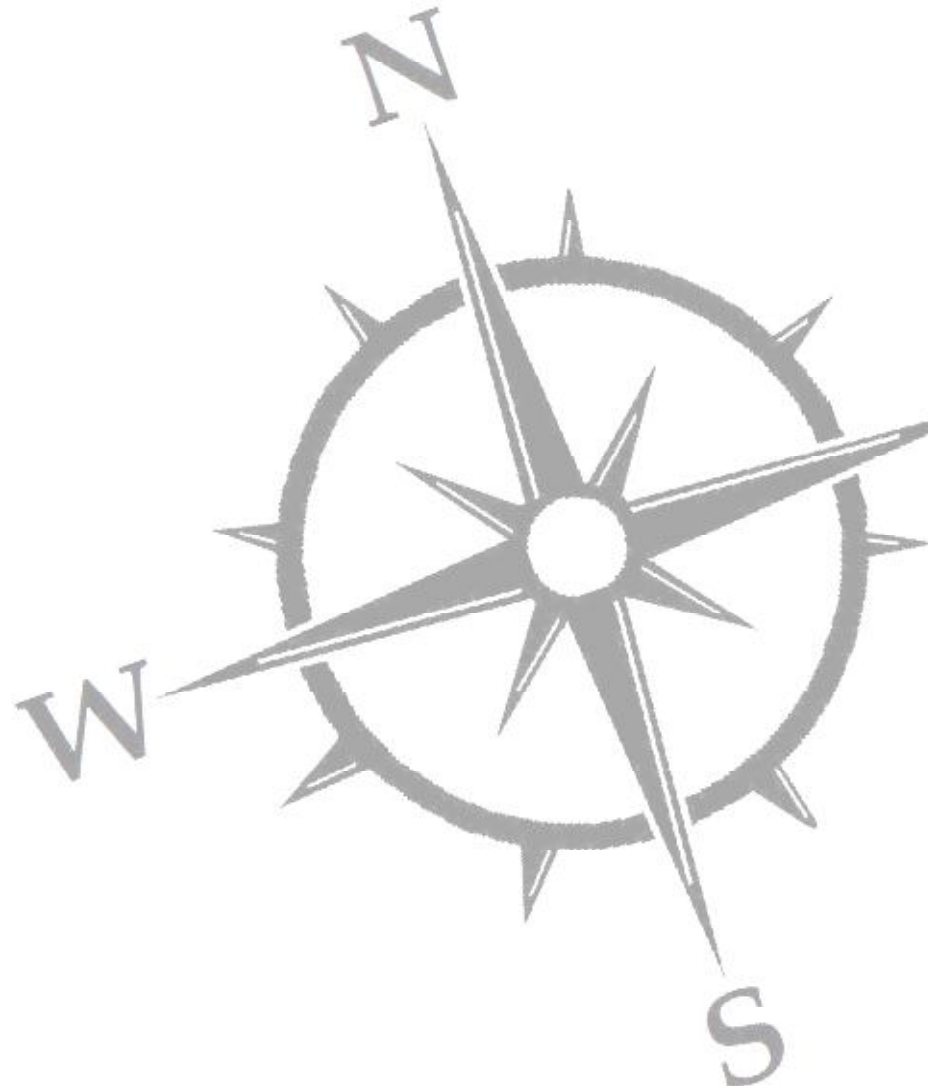
The Life of James Chalmers

(1841-1901)

Lesson: 5.23 – Safety Missionary Snapshot Series

This lesson reminds us that the Lord is ever present to protect and care for His children. When God is on our side, regardless of the opposition, we are never outnumbered. Having Jesus in our heart is like wrapping us up in the biggest and strongest football pad in the world. Nothing can harm us! James Chalmers was about to face some very scary things. He would have to trust in the Lord to protect him and keep him safe.

“The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” - Psalm 18:2







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 cannibal tribes. This missionary risked his life to go and tell these people about Jesus' love. There were many times that he could have been killed or seriously hurt. Would God keep him safe and protect him? Let's listen carefully and see what happens in this story about James Chalmers...

Missionary Story:

The steady puff, puff, puff of our steamboat was the only sound that could be heard as we slowly traveled up the Aivai River. I stood near the front of the boat looking over the rails at both sides of the river, but could hardly see anything through the thick tangled roots of the mangrove trees which completely covered the river banks.

"No white man has ever seen the people of Iala," I said as I turned to the others on board. The Iala were just one of many cannibal tribes in Papua New Guinea that needed to hear about Jesus' love.

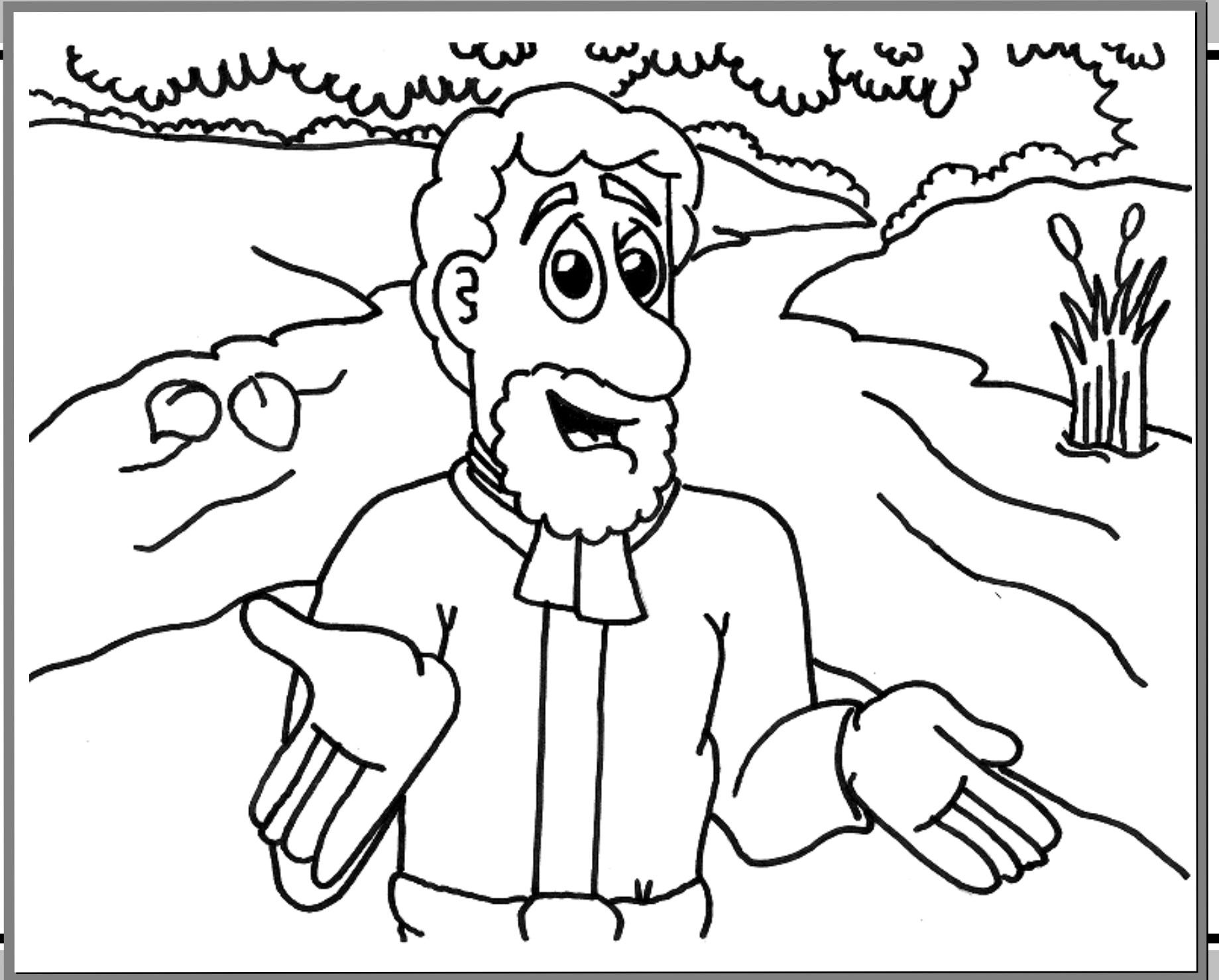
I thanked God that I was not alone on this trip. Two Papuan men, Iko and Vaaburi were with me along with Mr. and Mrs. Abel. "Iko is the only one who can speak their language," I said to Mr. and Mrs. Abel who joined me near the front of the ship. "Though it is dangerous for you to be here with us Mrs. Abel, you will help us more than anything to make friends with the people." Mr. Abel nodded his head. He knew that when the tribes of Papuans were planning to fight or go to war they would send all their women and children away to keep them safe. When the Papuans saw Mrs. Abel, they would know that the missionaries were coming as friends and not as their enemies.

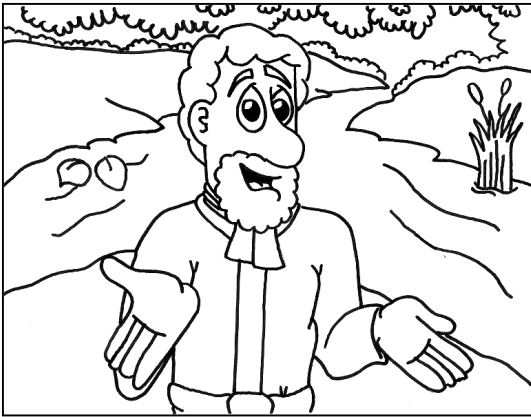
As we came around each bend in the river, all of us peered off in the distance for any sign of the Iala people. "What would these cannibals think of us in our great snorting canoe that had no paddles?" I wondered. Finally, we came around a sharp bend in the river, and Iko called out and pointed ahead. There in the distance were the houses of Iala, huddled close together on both sides of the river. The people soon spotted us and were quickly, and excitedly paddling back and forth across the river "Go slow," I yelled "we must not come at them too quickly. We only had five people and no weapons... they had hundreds all armed for a fight." Everything depended on us choosing just the right moment to step onto the shore.

I remembered back in Scotland where I sat in Sunday school one morning and my teacher had said "I wonder if there is a boy here today who would bring the gospel to the cannibals?" "With God's help, I will do it!" I had said in my heart. And here I was about to talk with another cannibal tribe about Jesus.

I remembered arriving onshore in a different village a couple of years before. The moment our boat had touched the beach, we were surrounded by an angry crowd of natives, every one of them with a club or spear in their hands. We smiled and held up gifts and tried to walk through the crowd up to the hut of the village chief. The people growled at us as we walked by and followed close behind us. Instead of accepting our gifts, the old chief flung the gifts right back in our faces. The crowd knew the chief did not approve of us and became much louder.

"I think we had better get away from here quickly or we might not leave at all," I said in English to the other missionary with me. The crowd followed close behind us, growling and yelling. One man with a large club kept walking very close behind me with the club raised in the air ready to strike me at any second. "I must take that club from him, or he'll surely slug me," I thought. Suddenly, I wheeled around and pulled a large circle of hoop-iron out of my satchel. The natives think the hoop-irons are a perfect treasure. The man's eyes looked as if he had seen a bar of gold, and he reached out his hand to grab it. In a moment, I grabbed his club away from him and handed him the hoop-iron. I raised the club over my head and waved it around while I backed down the beach. The





crowd continued to yell and growl even after we pulled our boats back into the river.

"They've stopped moving around," Mr. Abel whispered bumping into my arm. On the banks of the river, hundreds of Ialan men stood silent and as still as trees. Their canoes sat half in and half out of the water ready for whatever needed to happen. All the women and children had been sent away, for these men were ready to fight. Our engine stopped, the anchor was dropped overboard, and the steam whistle let out a loud screech, which echoed off of the trees. Like lightning, the Ialan warriors swung their bows from behind their bodies and put an arrow on the string. A hundred arrows were now aimed right at our hearts. All was silent until Iko shouted just one word at the top of his voice. It was the Ialan word for "Peace." Again and again, he shouted it, "Peace, Peace, Peace!"

All was silent again. Iko yelled a different word out, "Pouta!" It was the name of the chief of these people. There was silence again. "What order would Pouta give?" I wondered. Then from the riverbank on our right side, an old voice spoke. Every

arrow was taken from its bow. Iko then called out again to Pouta. For a few minutes, the chief and Iko spoke together. Iko then asked for a canoe to bring us ashore. There was nothing but silence.

Iko again asked for a canoe to bring us ashore. Finally, a large canoe was pushed into the river and slowly paddled towards our steamboat the *Miro*. As the canoe came closer, I turned and whispered to Mrs. Abel. "You've been very courageous. Seeing you makes them believe that we come for peace. More than any words we can say you have shown them we want peace." By this time the canoe had paddled right up beside our steamboat. I climbed in first, then Mrs. Abel, then Mr. Abel, Iko, and Vaaburi. The canoe pushed off again and paddled towards the bank, where a crowd of Ialan men seemed to be standing in every inch of space.

As soon as the front of the canoe touched the shore, I hopped out with Iko. Together we moved through the group of warriors holding their spears and walked up to Chief Pouta. I put my arms around him in a peaceful hug. Everywhere we looked, we were surrounded by wild and armed men, who stood staring back at us. "We have come so that we can be friends," I began speaking while Iko translated what I said to the chief. "We have come without weapons. We have brought with us a woman of our tribe, to show that we come in peace. We are strangers, but we come with great things to tell. Some day we will come again and will stay with you and will tell you our great message, but today we come only to make friends."

Everyone stood silently looking at the strange visitors. "Now, we must leave and get aboard our steamboat as quickly as we possibly can," I said. We walked back down towards the canoe past many Ialans still holding their spears. We climbed into the canoe and quickly paddled to the steamboat.

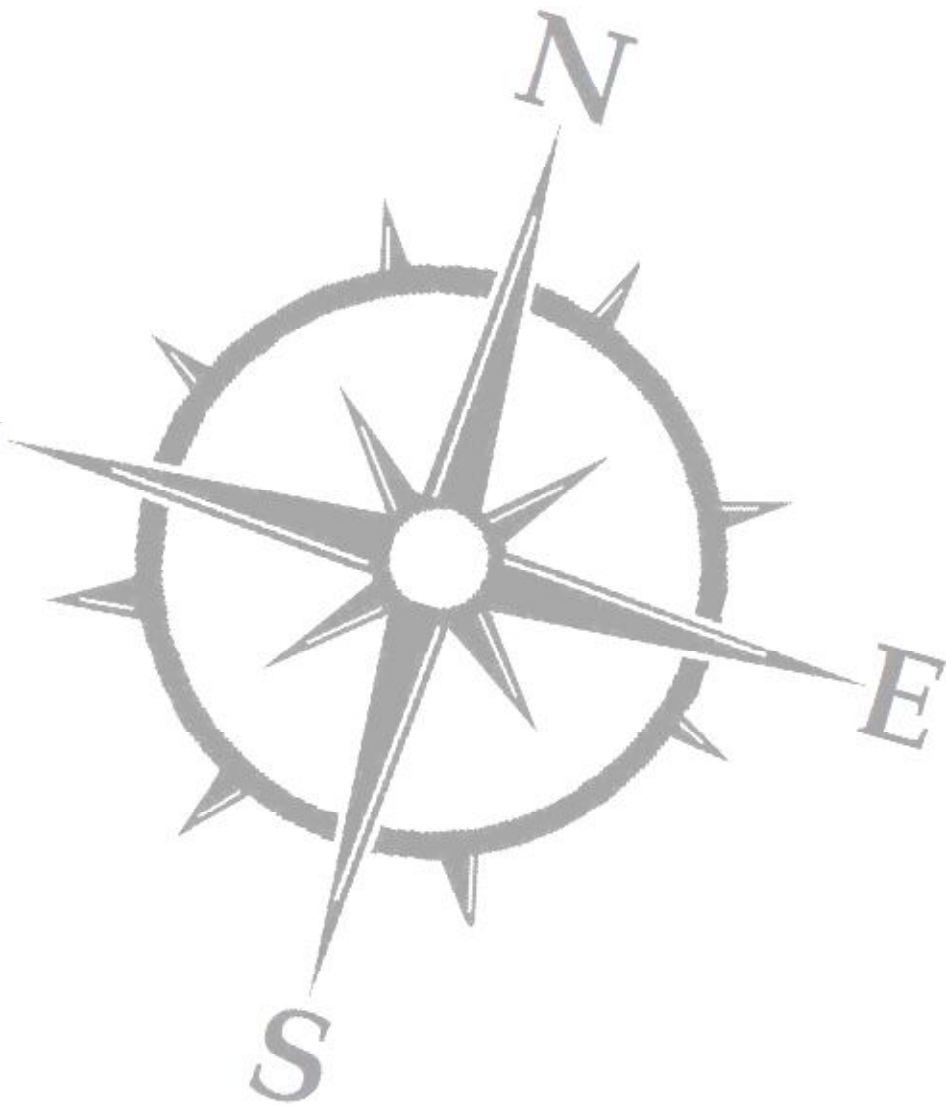
Back on board, we turned the ship around and headed back down the river. "My plan for this first visit is to come, make friends, and get away again quickly," I said. "When we are gone, they will talk about us. The next time we come, I am hoping we will be greeted as friends."

Application:

You know, boys and girls, Psalm 18:2 tells us that God is like a strong castle that we can run to for protection. The safest place that we can be is right where God wants us to be. God protected James Chalmers as he worked with the many cannibal tribes in Papua New Guinea. James always traveled without weapons knowing that weapons would make the cannibals think he was trying to attack them.

James Chalmers worked in Papua New Guinea for over 23 years. During that time he visited 105 villages, 90 of which had never before seen a white man. He helped to train hundreds of native men as teachers who went to share the message of Jesus with other Papuan tribes.

(For additional information, discussion questions, and materials on this lesson please refer to lesson 5.23 on page 90 in your Africa 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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