

# Her Story Silhouette by Shari House

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<i>Amy Carmichael</i>		
Life Span: 1867 - 1951	Field of Service: <i>India</i>	
Nationality: <i>Irish</i>	Years in Service: 55	

## Silhouette:

Amy Carmichael was born on December 16, 1867 in northern Ireland. She was the oldest of seven children born to a mill owner and was raised in a devout Presbyterian family. She received Christ as her Savior at the age of 15 while attending boarding school, and the following year her father moved her family to Belfast. One day at the age of 17 when Amy was walking home from church, she saw an old "shawlie" – lower class mill ladies who wore shawls on their heads much to the disdain of more "respectable" people who wore hats. The woman was struggling under a burden she was trying to carry, and although Amy felt compelled to help, she was embarrassed to be seen helping the old lady in view of others who were also walking home from church. That afternoon she felt the Lord speak to her directly, and she decided from that day forward she would rather be dead to the customs and fashions of this world than ever pass up an opportunity to show His love to others.

When Amy was 18 years old, her father passed away. In September of that same year, she attended a preaching conference in Keswick, England that was focused on "higher Christian life." During the final prayer, Amy felt the Lord asking her if she could do the same as Jesus Christ had done for her and give all of herself to Him. In that moment, she surrendered her life to the Lord for Him to use her in whatever way He could. When Amy returned home, she started a class for the street kids in Belfast and showered her love on them. She also began a Sunday school class for the "shawlies." Within just a couple of years this class had grown to the point that they needed a place that would seat 500. Through an advertisement in a Christian publication, Amy secured a monetary donation to build the building, and a mill owner donated a plot of land to put it on. She built the "Welcome Hall" where everyone was welcome no matter what their station. That same year she heard Hudson Taylor preach about the desperate need for missionaries in China, and she was convinced that the Lord was calling her into mission work. Amy was a constant witness wherever she went, and she continued working at the Welcome Hall until 1889 when she moved to Manchester where she immediately started ministering to the mill girls there.

On January 13, 1892 at the age of 24, Amy felt the Lord telling her it was "time to go." She was sad to leave her family and her ministries but excited about serving the Lord on the mission field. Amy suffered from neuralgia which affected her nerves and made her whole body weak and achy and often sent her to bed for long periods of time. Because of this, she struggled to find a mission board that would accept her. She had trained with the China Inland Mission, but just before she was to set sail for China, they told her that her health made her an unlikely candidate for field service. She did not let these rejections deter her from what she knew the Lord had called her to do. She might have been frail in health, but she was strong in heart.

By March of 1893 she was serving in Japan as the first missionary sent out by the Keswick Convention. During her short 15-month stay in Japan she saw more converts than many missionaries saw in their entire ministry. She was disappointed when she had to make the decision to leave due to her poor health, but after a short stay in Ceylon for respite, she was commissioned by the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society to go to India.



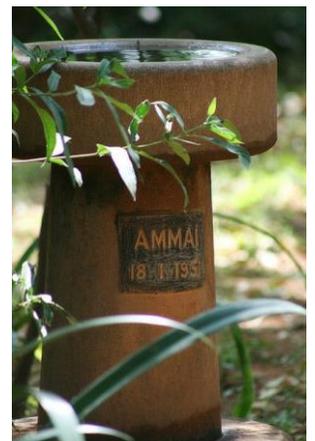
Amy began her work by going from village to village witnessing, teaching, and training women. In 1897 she formed a group called "The Starry Cluster" that consisted of Christian ladies who went with her from village to village giving the Gospel, sharing how Jesus had changed their lives, and teaching the Bible. In 1900 Amy's work took her to the town of Dohnavur near the southern tip of India. It was here she first became involved with rescuing children. On March 6, 1901 she met Preena, a 7-year old girl who had run away from the local Hindu temple and had come to Amy seeking shelter and protection. Preena had fallen prey to the situation many young Indian girls found themselves in when they were unwanted by their families. These girls were "dedicated" to the gods at the Hindu temples and then forced into prostitution to make money for the priests. The notion was revolting to Amy, and with her agreement to shelter Preena, she began her rescue work.

Amy started the Dohnavur Fellowship which quickly turned into a sanctuary for young girls. She wore traditional Indian clothing and often dyed her skin with coffee so as to be able to go undetected when she was doing her rescue work. So great was her love for every child that she would endure the pain of travelling long distances just to save one child from suffering. Since the value of a girl-child was very little, families soon began to give Amy their unwanted newborn girls. Amy's Fellowship, or her "family" as she preferred to call it, continued to grow and grow. She fought hard against the Indian caste system which caused a mother to allow her child to die rather than be seen by a physician in a lower caste, and she had to withstand the disapproval and condemnation of fellow missionaries who thought she shouldn't get so involved. Amy took on the role of mother to the hundreds of girls she looked after, and for the next 10 years her brave heart withstood extreme exhaustion, personal danger, and numerous threats of imprisonment from those who accused her of the crime of kidnapping.

Eventually Amy was able to buy some property and build a small village where she, her daughters, and her band of Christian woman were able to live. In 1918 Amy took in her first baby boy and started a village for them next to the girls'. During her decades of ministry, she rescued hundreds of boys and over a thousand girls. What started off as a home for unwanted baby girls grew to include a property of 400 acres that included homes for boys and girls of all ages, nurseries, schools, a working dairy farm, fruit and vegetable farms, and rice lands, There were kitchens, laundries, workshops, office buildings, and eventually a hospital funded by Queen Mary was added. Amy loved all her "children" and called them her precious Gems. They loved her and called her "Amma" – "mother" in Tamil.

In 1931 at the age of 63 Amy suffered a fall which left her quite crippled. By 1935 her health had worsened, and she became bedridden. She didn't let this stop her though, and she spent her time daily in prayer, teaching, visiting with the children, and showering her love on them. All through the years, Amy continued to fight against temple prostitution, and finally in 1948 just a couple years before her death, she was able to see it outlawed.

Although Amy died on January 18, 1951 at the age of 83, both the Welcome Hall and the Dohnavur Fellowship continue on today more than 70 years after her death. She died in Dohnavur where she had lived and served the Lord faithfully for over 55 years without a single furlough. She is buried in the garden located in the center of the Fellowship campus. The word "Amma" is engraved on a simple bird fountain that marks her burial spot . . . such a fitting tribute as it was to her so many took their flight and found in her a well of love. She is truly a woman of whom it could be said, **"She hath done what she could"**!



# Her Story/My Story:

Amy's life's goal was to make God's love known to those around her. She often taught her children in word and in deed about the great love that God had for them even though their family and society had abandoned them. One of the 35 or more books Amy authored is called "If" and is about knowing the true love of Calvary. Here are some of Amy's thoughts on the matter:

- "If souls can suffer alongside, and I hardly know it, because the spirit of discernment is not in me, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If I slip into the place that can be filled by Christ alone, making myself the first necessity to a soul instead of leading it to fasten upon Him, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "if I belittle those whom I am called to serve, talk of their weak points in contrast perhaps with what I think of as my strong points; if I adopt a superior attitude, forgetting "who made thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?" then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If I take offence easily; if I am content to continue in cold unfriendliness, though friendship be possible, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If my attitude be one of fear, not faith, about the one who has disappointed me; if I say "Just what I expected," if a fall occurs, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If I do not give a friend "The benefit of the doubt," but put the worst construction instead of the best on what is said or done, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- ". . . if I put my own good name before the other's highest good, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If I can write an unkind letter, speak an unkind work, think an unkind thought without grief and shame, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If I do not feel far more for the grieved Saviour than for my worried self when troublesome things occur, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If I make much of anything appointed, magnify it secretly to myself or insidiously to others; if I let them think it "hard," if I look back longingly upon what used to be, and linger among the byways of memory, so that my power to help is weakened, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If I hold on to choices of any kind, just because they are my choice; if I give any room to my private likes and dislikes, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"
- "If the ultimate, the hardest, cannot be asked of me; if my fellows hesitate to ask it and turn to someone else, then I know nothing of **Calvary love.**"

I remember when I first went to Nigeria the reaction I got each time I would go into a village to witness and invite them to church. Many of the Nigerian kids had never seen a white lady before, and I was very strange to them. One day I visited a village called Ekolaba. As I entered the village the kids that were playing outside started gathering around me and staring. They followed me from house to house, and each house we went to seemed to produce three more children for our caravan. By the time I got to the center of the village there must have been 20-30 kids standing about 5 feet from me giggling. If I looked in their direction at all, they would run and scream with laughter. None of the kids spoke English, so when I came to a house with a Yoruba lady on the porch, I said, "They don't like my white face." She replied, "Oh, they like it and your long hair." I had worn it down that day, and so it was long and very light compared to theirs. One girl came very close and touched me. This seemed to be the go ahead sign for the other kids because pretty soon they were all swarming around me.



In situations like this, the kids would often pull at the skin on my arms, rub my face, and stroked my hair trying to figure out what kind of breed of "animal" I was. These children . . . scruffy, dirty faced, half-clothed . . . had my attention, and since I could not speak their language and they could not speak mine, I would just hold them in my arms, smile at them, and love on them the best I could.

Believe it or not these kind of children, the ones you can see so desperately need love and attention, are the easiest to love. It is those like an obstinate teenager, or a church member who has gone astray, or the church busybody that we seem to have a hard time showing love to. Amy's love for the people God called her to serve was never ending. It never gave up. It never relented. It reached beyond what others might have felt fulfilled what was necessary or required of another. Her love was not dependent on the actions of others. It came from a source deep within her and from the example of Jesus' love toward her. Her love for others was a Calvary-type love.

## *Bible Study:* A Love Like Calvary

Long before Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote the now commonly used phrase, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways," God spoke these words in [Jeremiah 31:3b](#) ". . . Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." The Bible is full of some of the most amazing stories of love like that of Solomon and the Shunamite woman or Hosea's love for his unfaithful wife. We can see the great love between a parent and a child in the stories of Abraham and Isaac, Eunice and Timothy, and Joseph who loved Jesus as his own. One of my favorite stories in the Bible is that of the love shared between David and Jonathan, a friendship whose love surpassed that of a spouse, but no greater love story has there ever been or will there ever be than the love story of Calvary. So many adjectives come to mind when I think of the kind of love that Jesus had for me on Calvary, but here are few:

1. **Calvary love** is a **Forgiving** love. [Romans 5:8](#) "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
2. **Calvary love** is a **Forbearing** love. [2 Peter 3:9](#) "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
3. **Calvary love** is a **Forever** love. [Lamentations 3:22](#) "'It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."
4. **Calvary love** is a **Formidable** love. [Romans 8:38-39](#) "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
5. **Calvary love** is a **Forthright** love. [1 John 4:10](#) "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
6. **Calvary love** is a **Forgetful** love. [Hebrews 10:17](#) "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."
7. **Calvary love** is a **Forward** love. [Jeremiah 29:11](#) "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."
8. **Calvary love** is a **For everyone** love. [John 3:16](#) "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The love Amy showed toward everyone challenges me to look at what kind of love I have toward others . . . the lovable and the unlovable . . . the deserving and the undeserving. What kind of love do you show to those around you? Is it a Calvary type love?