

Counting the Cost

by Grace Tazelaar, MS, RN

Sometimes mission service is viewed as glamorous and adventurous, but mission service is costly. Jesus requires that we take up our cross to follow him. It is costly to follow Jesus.

As a Wheaton College alumna, I've heard this quote by James Elliot many times, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim, along with two other Wheaton alumni, became martyred missionaries in Ecuador. The story of their murder and subsequent establishment of a Christian church among the Waodoni people has been retold many times and in the movie, [The End of the Spear](#). Bringing the gospel message to those who have not heard the Good News of Jesus Christ requires total life commitment. Jim Elliott paid the ultimate sacrifice in that effort.

Years ago I heard [Dr. Helen Roseveare](#) tell her story of being beaten and raped during the revolution in the Congo. She pointed to Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." She said of her experience, "Christ was actually offering me the inestimable privilege of sharing in some little way in the fellowship of his sufferings."

My dear friend and colleague, Dr. Dan Fountain, attended one of the first [Urbana Student Missions Conferences](#) as an InterVarsity student and he made a commitment to be a medical missionary at that time. For over 30 years he and his wife, Miriam, who was a nurse, had faithfully served at Vanga Hospital in the DR Congo.

Miriam had grown up in the Congo near where I served in Uganda. I discovered that she knew many of the missionaries from Arua and that we could both count to ten in Lugbara. Dan and Miriam had counted the cost of following Jesus, served him faithfully, and never looked back. Miriam died in 2011 and Dan died in 2013. They modeled for me, and many others whom they mentored over the years, what it means to follow Jesus.

It is costly to follow Jesus. For healthcare professionals, it may mean giving up a lucrative practice to live in places where resources are limited. For academics, it may mean giving up prestige that accompanies research and publication. For Christians it often means opposing political correctness to stand up for biblical truth.

Sometimes following Jesus means going to locations considered unsafe, where there is violence or war. Other times, it requires sacrificing personal preferences in dress and diet to incarnate Christ to people who have not heard about him. Some, like Helen Roseveare, suffer beatings and rape, while others, like Jim Elliott, give their physical lives. It's all part of counting the cost.

Full-time mission service always requires a team of people who are committed to funding and praying for missionaries. Please pray for a missionary you know who is counting the cost of following Jesus.



[Grace Tazelaar](#) is a veteran missionary nurse who offers wisdom from years of experience serving God cross-culturally. Find more resources, best practices, and what you need to know about missionary nursing at [NCF Missions](#).