

Dr David Livingstone

Africa

Foundation

Bible passage : if appropriate

David Livingstone was born in Balantyre Mill village, Scotland in 1813. The family were poor and life was hard but the Mill school gave him a love of learning. He began work in mill aged 10.

His reading inspired him to become a Missionary and explorer, leading him to train as a Doctor and linguist. He joined the London Missionary Society and moved to South Africa in 1840. He later wrote "I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been.". He determined to the places no other missionary had reached.

He married Mary Moffat in 1845 and they had six children. When he began to travel they returned to England.

Livingstone used the Zambesi River valley to penetrate inland Africa, facing hostile tribes, wild animals, swamps and malaria.

In 1856 he returned to England to the family, to write a book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, which made him famous. He also inspired many others to become missionaries. Back in Africa he regularly sent reports to London, including about the evils of the slave trade.

Livingstone continued his travels through the interior spreading the gospel. As a result his reports stopped and he was not heard of for seven years leading to rumours that he had died. *The New York Herald* sent a reporter, Henry Morton Stanley, to find him and they eventually met. Stanley's reported first words at that meeting became famous for their understatement - "Dr Livingstone, I presume".



Memorial to David Livingstone in Blantyre, Lanarkshire. The doctor was mauled by a Lion and tended his own wound, with no pain relief. His arm did not fully recover.

As with many other early missionaries there was little immediate impact. One person, called Sechele, is reported as coming to faith and that faith was very mixed. But Sechele, went on to lead many other missionaries to other tribes, with the result that many more came to faith in Christ.

Livingstone explored and spoke of Christ until his death in 1873, despite failing health. His African helpers found him dead, kneeling beside his bed in a posture of prayer. Livingstone had requested that when he died his heart be removed and buried in Africa. His body was prepared and carried by a large team of supporters over a thousand miles to the coast, and repatriated where it was buried in Westminster Abbey, London.

Many reported that Livingstone struggled with a sense of his own worth because of his humble background, but he had become famous and is still remembered today for his great contributions to world mission and his explorations, which opened the continent of Africa to the Gospel. He wrote of himself -

"I am a missionary, heart and soul. God Himself had an only Son, and He was a missionary and a physician. A poor, poor imitation I am... but in this service I hope to live."



Despite humble beginnings Livingstone became as an explorer and for sharing the message about Jesus in Africa.