



Favorite Thanksgiving Moments

"My favorite thing is that you meet your whole family and you thank them for things they do or did for you. Another thing is that you eat turkey, potatoes, and other kinds of food. Thanksgiving is a great holiday because you fellowship, talk and play games."

~ Stephanie Smith ~

"My job on Thanksgiving is to make name cards for everyone who will be coming over for dinner. And then we get to eat, I like the food a lot. It's delicious! Next we have desert and play a board game. Then when everyone goes home we get the Christmas tree decorations out and start decorating for Christmas."

~ April Marcoux ~

"WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THANKSGIVING IS THAT MY DAD, SISTER, AND BROTHER ARE OFF WORK AND CAN BE HOME WITH US. AND APRIL AND I DON'T HAVE ANY SCHOOLWORK. I ALSO LIKE THE FOOD WE HAVE."

~ NICOLE MARCOUX ~

A special Thanks to all who participated, thank you for turning in your papers.

*Bible Challenge
from Last Month:*

Read over Ecclesiastes 11:9-10 and think about what they are saying. Write out a detailed explanation of what the verses mean and what they mean to you personally. Turn in explanation and some explanations may appear in next month's newsletter.



Selected Bible Challenge Answers

"What this means to me is to put off the childish things, go deeper with Jesus, and let nothing stand between me and Him. Be distracted with nothing but Christ. We may think that we are just kids, but He has a perfect plan for us. If we let little things get in the way we will miss Him. But we don't have to, we can know Him and allow Him to use us to touch the lives of others."

~ Taylor Cordle ~

"I believe it is saying for us to rejoice and be happy while we are young, but to remember, before any decision that we make, that we will be judged for that decision, whether it is a right or wrong decision. So we must put away evil and bad things from our hearts and remember that our youth will pass quickly. So while our youth is here we must use it wisely and make wise choices."

~ Elizabeth Santiago ~

Christmas Play

Our Christmas Play will be held on Friday, December 18th at 7:30 pm. The children are putting a lot of time into their practices. We would really appreciate your prayers and your support on opening night. We have high expectations!! Hope to see you there.

"Be Ye Thankful"

BIRTHDAYS & SPECIAL EVENTS IN

November



1st - Daylight Savings (1 hour ahead)
6th - Christine Marcoux
6th - Tammy Cordle
26th - Thanksgiving Day

NCO Kids
Monthly News

 **November 2009** 
Cover Story

Mary Slessor
(Born 1848, died 1915)

The boat drops anchor well up the Calabar River beside a rough town. This is Duke Town. The mission station at Duke Town is the destination for the only woman traveling aboard the steamer. Mary Slessor is coming from Scotland to serve God in this harsh climate.

The place is the Calabar River on the slave coast of Africa. This part of Africa is known as the *White Man's Grave*. The land a few miles from shore is unexplored. Killer elephants and lions, swarms of insects, witch doctors, and cannibals live there. To enter that land would mean death!

Life means little along the Calabar. Slavery is common and to kill a woman or a slave means nothing. If a family has too many children,



they will just leave the unwanted child in the bushes to die. The birth of twins is thought to be an evil sign. Twin babies are cruelly murdered, and their mother is driven from her home to die in the jungle.

There is no respect for truth and honesty here. The law of the jungle is "*do whatever you can get away with*." For this reason, people live their short lives in fear and filth.

Mary Slessor is 29 years old. She comes from a poor family. Her father was a drunkard, but her mother was a godly woman. Since she was 11, Mary has earned her living working in factories for twelve hours a day, six days a week. Despite these hard circumstances, she served God faithfully in Scotland, and the hardships have helped prepare her to serve Him now in Africa.

This was the situation that Mary Slessor faced as she began her work teaching in the mission station and visiting in the coastal and river villages. As soon as Mary could learn the local languages, she went without a translator. She was told that it was dangerous to travel alone, but she found that she could get to know the people better in this way.

The farther Mary traveled from the mission station, the greater needs she found. Mary told the natives the good news of Christ. She urged them to quit worshiping the skulls of dead men and not to be afraid of "evil spirits." She showed the women better ways to fix food and keep homes and children clean.

Sometimes at night Mary would lie awake on a dirt floor in some coastal village and pray, "*Oh Lord, I thank Thee that I can bring these people Thy Word. But Lord, there are other villages back in the jungle where no white man has gone. They need Jesus, too. Help me reach them!*" Then, whenever she had an opportunity, she would ask another missionary or a native about her going to these villages. The answer was always the same: "*No. You would be killed. They cannot be reached.*"

Her worst enemy was the tropical diseases which hit her so suddenly. There were many times when it seemed as though she were about to die, but she pulled through. It was a real temptation to forsake this unhealthy area and return to the cool mists of Scotland.

The Scottish missionary did go home on a short furlough, but she soon came back to Africa. She was thrilled to learn that she was now to be on her own at an outstation. Her new home was Old Town,

some distance upriver from Duke Town.

Her first view of Old Town was of a human skull swinging from a pole in front of the town meeting house. Each hut had its own little gods. Mary's "home" was a mud hut next to a trader.

Her days were full of treating sick, teaching the Bible, and visiting neighbors. Mary became known throughout the area for her wise, fair counsel. There was a Christian chief, King Eyo Honesty the Sixth, who often asked Mary for advice in dealing with white men. She, in turn, asked him for help in working with the natives.

Mary was successful in Old Town, but she was also deeply burdened for the remote Okoyong tribe that had never heard the gospel. How could she bring the love of Christ to these people as well? They valued only three things: guns to have power, chains to keep their slaves, and liquor to dull their minds. But God was leading her there, and Mary was willing to trust God to show her how to win these savage people to Christ.

Mary prayed for God's leading. At last, in June 1888, she quietly announced that she would go upriver alone and find a place to settle. "*You will die. You will die*," her friends told her. They wept at her leaving.

King Eyo Honesty said that if she must go, he would send her as a "big person" in his own special canoe. It was the grandest canoe in all of Calabar. Mary accepted Eyo's offer and headed for the land of the Okoyong. The farther they went, the more her twenty paddlers wanted to turn back. They feared the Okoyong. But the Lord was with the group, and they arrived safely. The Lord had also prepared the heart of the chief of the first village they found. Mary was the first outsider ever allowed to live there. The chief also said that she could build a school.

This area was far more wicked than any Mary had seen. The people respected only vengeance and cruelty. To a people who did not know what love was, Mary brought the love of Christ.

This was a wild time for the missionary. Hardly a day went by without a serious crisis. Mary knew that she could not expect to change their lives immediately, but she could not merely stand back and watch these people do wrong. She got little rest and her health was bad. But she was always there when she was needed.

After a time, Mary realized that as long as the

Okoyong had nothing else to do, they would get drunk, and drunkenness always led to fighting. "Perhaps," she thought, "if they knew there was something better, this would stop."

Mary displayed her nicest possessions: some cloth, a teapot, and an old sewing machine. The Okoyong liked what they saw. "You can have nicer things than this if you take the palm oil and yams to the traders," she told them.

"These things you have--very nice," said one chief. "But it is no good. Traders afraid to come here. No good for us to go to them. River gods kill us."

"I will go with you. You will be safe.

"No. Too much bad."

Mary told of the wonderful things down the river. Finally they agreed to go and loaded a canoe. The chiefs and warriors shook with fear as they set off towards Duke Town and Old Town.

King Eyo hosted a great feast for the visiting chiefs. He showed them the good things they could have if they gave up their old ways. He told them that the God of the "white Mama" was the true God. Eyo was kind to the poor, backward Okoyong chiefs. Before they left he gave them each presents, including some fine cloth. The Okoyong could hardly believe their good fortune.

As a result of these meetings, the Okoyong region was opened to outsiders. Mary had done what traders, soldiers, and diplomats had been unable to do for four hundred years. There was now a reason for honest work. This experience was a turning point in the life of the Okoyong people.

In time, many of the Okoyong would accept the gospel. The idols disappeared from the villages and in their place small churches were built. A court system was established to settle disputes, and Mary was made the first judge.

As for Mary, she felt a tug on her heart for the region beyond the Okoyong. Her converts in Okoyong protested, "*We love you. They will kill you. Do not go.*" Mary loved the Okoyong people, just as she had loved the people of Old Town. But her call was, "Onward! I dare not look back."

Mary's reputation as a great and wise woman and as a fair and honest judge had gone before her into the land of the Azo, a dreaded cannibal tribe. At first the Azo people seemed to show little interest in her message, but soon many accepted Christ. Mary reported that there was one town that had two

hundred converts. None of them could read, so she pleaded for pastors to come to instruct the new Christians.

In the time she had left, Mary did all she could. She walked the paths until she was too old and feeble. Some Scottish friends sent her a cart that could be used to pull her to the villages. They urged Mary to come to Scotland for a rest. She wanted to, but prayed instead that God would give her the strength to finish the job among the cannibals. Strength came and she worked faster and harder.

Two years later, in January 1915, the Lord took Mary home to be with Him.

A government boat was then sent to carry her body down the river to Duke Town. She was buried on a hillside by the mission station where she had first served.

The group which gathers on that cemetery is a testimony to the life Mary Slessor lived. There are high government officials who found they could trust this woman's advice. A dignified tribal chief, once a cannibal, stands there. He found the "white Ma" a faithful friend. There is a young man whom Mary nursed through a fever. Twins are there who would have been murdered at birth had she not come. As they look up from her grave to the land around them, they see a country that Mary Slessor claimed for Christ while standing on the deck of a rusty ocean steamer almost forty years before.

This land cannot be the same again, nor can they.

