

Jim Elliot

(**Born:** October 8, 1927, Portland, Oregon, United States. **Died:** January 8, 1956 (age 28 years), Ecuador.

Philip James Elliot was born to Fred and Clara Elliot. He was born into a family of three siblings. His father was an itinerant evangelist in the Puget Sound area and his mother conducted a chiropractic practice. Growing up, many missionaries visited his home. This proved to be an important influence in his life. When Jim was eight years old, he trusted Christ as his Savior. The Elliot family did everything together, went to meetings and Sunday school and read the Scriptures daily. It was an “old-fashioned” home and the parents instilled obedience and honesty into their children.

Elisabeth Elliot wrote of him: *“Sometime during his first two years of college Jim became conscious of the direct personal implications of the command of the Lord Jesus to go and preach the gospel.”* A small black loose-leaf note book, his companion in college days, contains evidence of his concern for the millions who had not had the chance to hear what God had done to bring man to Himself. This notebook was found on the Curaray beach after Jim’s death, its pages scattered along the sand, some washed clean of ink, others stained with mud and rain but still legible. Besides the names of hundreds of people for whom Jim prayed, the notes contained also a recipe for soap-making (*doubtless jotted down in anticipation of pioneer life on some mission field*); notes for his own sermons preached in English, Spanish, and Quichua; notes on the Auca language, and several pages of mission statistics written while in college, of which the following is an excerpt:

- 1700 languages have not a word of the Bible translated.**
- 90% of the people who volunteer for the mission field never get there. It takes more than a “Lord, I’m willing!”**
- 64% of the world has never heard of Christ.**
- 5000 people die every hour.**
- There is one Christian worker for every 50,000 people in foreign lands, while there is one to every 500 in the United States**

Jim’s exercise and burden for souls would take him to Ecuador and eventually to a strip of sandy beach dubbed “*Palm Beach*.” There, in January 1956, 5 men – Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCulley, Nate Saint, and Roger Youderian – landed on the makeshift airstrip in their “*modern missionary mule*” (a Piper Cruiser). Their goal was to reach the Waodani, a violent tribe called by the civilized tribes “*The Aucas*” (“*The Savages*” or “*The Enemies*”). They had flown over their villages, dropped gifts, and called to them using the few Auca words they knew. When Jim and his wife had discussed the dangers of this venture, he told her, “*If God wants it that way, darling, I am ready to die for the salvation of the Aucas.*” Now, with great anticipation, they awaited the arrival of the people for whom they had left home and comfort to bring them the Gospel. After four days, an Auca man and two women appeared. It was not easy for them to understand each other since the missionaries only knew a few Auca phrases. They shared a meal with them, and Nate took the man up for a flight in the plane (*his name was Naenkiwi, but his curiosity earned him a*

nickname from the missionaries – “George”). They asked him to bring others with him next time.

For two days, the missionaries waited for other Aucas to return. When lunch was over, on their last day on earth, (January 8), the men busied themselves fixing up a miniature “jungle” and model house in the sand, with the intention of demonstrating to the Aucas how to build an airstrip, should they be interested enough to want the white man to come and live among them. Then the five missionaries sang together, as they had so often done, spontaneously and joyously:

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender. We go not forth alone against the foe; Strong in Thy love, safe in Thy keeping tender; We rest on Thee and in Thy name we go. We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender. Thine is the battle, Thine shall be the praise. When passing through the gates of pearly splendor, victors, we rest with Thee through endless days

On that day, two Auca women walked out of the jungle. Jim and Pete excitedly jumped in the river and waded over to them. As they got closer, these women did not appear friendly. Jim and Pete almost immediately heard a terrifying cry behind them. As they turned they saw a group of Auca warriors with their spears raised, ready to throw. Jim Elliot reached for the gun in his pocket. He had to decide instantly if he should use it. But he knew he couldn't. The missionaries had promised that even to save themselves from being killed they would not kill an Auca who did not know the Lord Jesus. Spears flew with deadly and horrific accuracy. Within seconds, on January 8, 1956, the Aucas, for whom for 6 years Jim Elliot had prayed, killed him and his four companions.

The next day another missionary pilot flew over the beach to look for them. He saw only the badly damaged plane. Search parties found their bodies brutally pierced with spears and hacked by machetes. The plane's fabric had been ripped off as if the Aucas had tried to kill it. Nate Saint's watch had stopped a 3:12 p.m. Their wives received the news and replied, *“The Lord has closed our hearts to grief and hysteria, and filled in with His perfect peace.”* The men who went to try to rescue the five brought back from Jim's body his wristwatch, and from the Curaray Beach the blurred pages of his college prayer-notebook. There was no funeral, no tombstone for a memorial (*news reports of “five wooden crosses set up on the sand” were not true*).

Through the efforts of the widows, the Aucas discovered Christian forgiveness. Rachel Saint, the sister of one of the martyred missionaries, won the hearts of the Waodani by living with them. Within two years of the tragedy the very people who had speared the missionaries to death had become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They explained that they had killed the five out of fear, thinking they were cannibals. The news of their death resulted in an unprecedented interest in evangelism. Within a few months, as many as 1,000 students from Christian colleges across America applied to missionary agencies. Countless believers have been humbled and deeply stirred by the story of these Christian martyrs who *“loved not their lives unto the death”* (Rev. 12:11). Eternity will display how irrefutable Jim's logic was when he wrote:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”
“When it comes time to die, make sure that all you have to do is die” -Jim Elliot