

# FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

## HOW MISSIONARIES CHANGED THE WORLD

This segment comes from **EPISODE 4: POWER + HUMILITY**.

The church's record of holding power – from Emperor Constantine in the 4th century onwards – has involved some terrible acts of coercion, exploitation, and abuse. Yet Jesus set an example of selfless service, and started a “humility revolution” that fundamentally transformed the West and the way we think about leadership and power. For groups like women and indigenous peoples, what has it looked like when Christians have exercised power for their own benefit? What has it looked like when they've exercised it for the good of others? This segment looks at the surprising impact of Christian missionaries on the world, particularly focusing on the Serampore Trio in India.

### THEME QUESTION

Place a mark on this line for where you think Christianity falls on the scale between power & control, and humility & sacrifice.



### ENGAGE

1. Read the information box about the practice of foot binding in China, and answer the following questions.



Foot binding was the practice of tightly bandaging the feet of young girls in order to change the shape of their feet and make them smaller. It was practiced in China for around 1000 years until the early 20th century. Women with bound feet had reduced mobility and frequently experienced gangrene, ulceration, and lifelong disabilities.

**IMAGE:** Chinese Foot Binding(5) by John C Bullas BSc MSc PhD MCIHT MIAT available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/johnbullas/501815667> under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 2.0 Licence. Full terms at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>.

- a. What is your response to this practice?
  - b. Just because a cultural tradition has developed, does that make it a good idea to keep?
2. Discuss:
- a. Does every child, in every country in the world, deserve the right to be educated no matter what?
  - b. Do we have the right to educate everyone, even if it involves challenging the cultural practices of a particular society?
3. Find three images on the internet that capture your view of “missionaries”. Explain how these images reflect your understanding of missionaries and your attitude towards them.
4. How does this quote from Jomo Kenyatta make you feel? Do you see this kind of description as typical of Western Christian missionaries?



“When the Missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the Missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible.”

## UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE



**WATCH** the segment: “How missionaries changed the world” ([cpx.video/missionaries](https://cpx.video/missionaries))

1. Robert Woodberry says, “When we look at the missionary movement as a whole, its average effect has been profoundly beneficial for the vast majority of people who have interacted with them.”
  - a. What are some examples Woodberry gives of this beneficial effect?
  - b. In what ways are these results surprising?

2. What proof is there that the Serampore missionaries cared about the local people and cultures?
3. What is the practice of *sati*? What was so disturbing about the practice of *sati* to William Carey? How does this practice make you feel?
4. Discuss: Did William Carey have the right to challenge the Indian culture with regards to *sati*?
5. Why did the Serampore missionaries create Serampore College, and in what ways was it culturally sensitive for its time?



6. Give the answer you think the Serampore missionaries would give to someone who said that widows and the uneducated poor in India should just accept their lot in life.
7. Justine Toh recounts William Carey’s conversation with Scottish missionary Alexander Duff, where Carey said, “Mr Duff, you have been speaking about Dr Carey, Dr Carey ... when I am gone, say nothing about Dr Carey – speak about Dr Carey’s Saviour.”
  - a. What does this suggest was Carey’s prime motivation in being a missionary?
  - b. What might this quote show us about how Carey was influenced by the life and teachings of Jesus?



## BIBLE FOCUS

### READ 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

**CONTEXT:** This passage is part of the Apostle Paul’s first letter to the church in Thessalonica, a port city in Greece. Paul was one of the original Christian missionaries. In this section, he reminds the church of his first visit to them as a missionary, and the way that he and his companions lived among them.

1. Build a CV for Paul highlighting the strengths he had as a missionary. Focus on his characteristics, actions, attitude (especially in the face of struggles), and motivations.
2. From the video, how close were Serampore missionaries to following Paul’s example?



## APPLY

1. Write a journal entry from the perspective of one of the first students at Serampore College, outlining your experience of the college and of the missionaries.
2. Imagine you are either an Indian widow or a poor, previously uneducated child in India whose life has been changed by the missionaries. Act out a television interview with a talk-show host answering the question, “Would you have preferred that the missionaries had never come to India?”
3. Hold a debate on the topic “Missionaries have had a negative impact on the world.”
4. Reflect: What would your life look like if you displayed the humility William Carey did?



## EXTEND

1. Read this article from ABC Religion and Ethics, “[Were Christian missionaries good for liberal democracies?](https://www.abc.net.au/religion/ethics/were-christian-missionaries-good-for-liberal-democracies/)” ([cpx.video/missionariesarticle](https://www.cpx.video/missionariesarticle)), by CPX’s Natasha Moore. Doing your own research online, find another article that has a negative perspective on missionaries. Write your own article critically evaluating the points that each article makes.