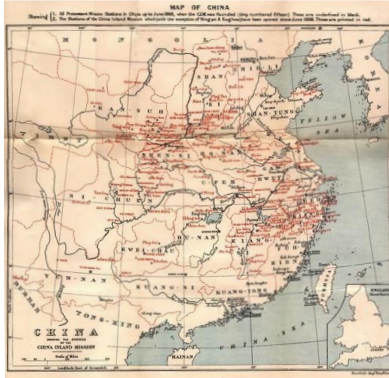


# The John and Betty Stam Way: Faith in God Leads to Stories About God

By Steve Burchett



Has God answered prayer in your life recently? Do you have any specific stories to tell about God's faithfulness? And be honest: do you almost always take the "safe" option in life?

John and Betty Stam served with China Inland Mission (founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865), first as single people, and then as a married couple in China. They were martyred in 1934 after they had been married a little over a year and were not even 30 years old. They left behind a baby girl named Helen Priscilla, who was just shy of three months old when they died.

John and Betty lived by faith in such a way that they had stories to tell about God's loving intervention in their lives. While a student at Moody Bible Institute, Betty wrote a short poem titled "My Testimony" that spoke of her confidence in the Lord.

And shall I fear  
That there is anything that men hold dear  
Thou would'st deprive me of,  
And nothing give in place?  
That is not so —  
For I can see Thy face  
And hear Thee now:

"My child, I died for thee.  
And if the gift of love and life  
You took from Me,  
Shall I one precious thing withhold —  
One beautiful and bright  
One pure and precious thing withhold?  
My Child, it cannot be."

While God was increasing Betty's trust in his faithfulness and power and was opening her eyes to beautiful truths about his love, the Lord was also transforming John into a man of faith. He decided early on never to make his needs known to anyone but God. When he took a part-time job in the cafeteria at Moody College even though it did not cover his expenses, he looked to God to come through. God never failed him, providing through people like a key ministry leader and even a fellow student just by asking God alone.

But John wasn't perfect in his trust. One year at Moody, he was offered a ride home from Chicago to Paterson, New Jersey, for Christmas break. John knew that the ride would be very cold because there would be no heat. This was a problem because he didn't have a pair of warm socks. Anticipating this frigid trip, he went on a walk by the lake and was feeling sorry for himself, thinking, "Well, it's all right to trust the Lord, but I wouldn't mind having a few dollars in my pocket."

John instantly regretted the thought and rebuked himself: "To think that I'm valuing a few dollars in my pocket above the Lord's ability to provide a million if I needed it!"

Soon after, John was crossing Michigan Avenue and saw a wet five-dollar bill lying on the ground. "Oh, what a rebuke it was from the Lord! Just one of those gentle rebukes the Lord can so wonderfully give us." With that \$5, he was able to buy two new shirts (which he desperately needed) and a pair of warm socks — socks he would sometimes wear a few years later in China when it was cold. Those socks were a consistent reminder to him of God's love and power.

When I first began serving with the ministry Christian Communicators Worldwide, I remember Jim Elliff saying on more than one occasion, "Live in such a way that you have stories to tell about God." John and Betty Stam, confident in God's faithfulness, love, and power, had plenty of stories to share beyond the wet \$5 bill experience.

Do you?

That kind of life will require prayer and faith. It will also mean not always making safe, risk-free decisions aimed at personal comfort. Even fellow Christians may think your choices are "too dangerous." John Stam's words from his speech given to fellow Moody students at his graduation are emboldening: "The faithfulness of God is the only certain thing in the world today, and we need not fear the result of trusting him."

Someone might object, "But they were killed on the mission field!" True, but even their deaths at the hands of evil men testify to God's faithfulness. When their heads were severed from their bodies, they were instantly with Jesus, which is "far better" (Philippians 1:23). As John's father wrote in a letter to family and friends about the martyrdom of John and Betty, "They loved him, they served him, and now they are with him. What could be more glorious?"

<sup>1</sup> I recommend reading *John and Betty Stam: Missionary Martyrs* by Vance Christie (either Barbour Publishing, 2000, or Christian Focus, 2008). The information in this article comes from that book. For pictures and a helpful map related to their lives, *By Life or By Death* by Andrew Montonera (Moody Publishers, 2024) is excellent.