

DAVE & NETA
JACKSON



HERO

TALES

A Family Treasury
of True Stories
From the Lives of
Christian Heroes

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GLADYS AYLWARD



The Small Woman

Born in London to a working-class family in 1902, Gladys Aylward had one wish: to go to China as a missionary. The China Inland Mission, however, did not think she was qualified. But the belief that God wanted her to go to China would not die. When Gladys heard that an elderly missionary in China wanted an assistant, she saved her money working as a maid and bought a one-way train ticket. She arrived in Yangcheng, China, in November 1932.

The missionary, Jennie Lawson, managed an inn for muleteers driving mule trains across the mountains. The inn not only offered people food and a place to sleep, but Bible stories told by the two missionaries.

But Jennie Lawson died a few months after Gladys's arrival, and Gladys had to continue the work alone.

In 1938, the Japanese bombed Yangcheng. Already Gladys had adopted several orphan children. Now there were many more orphans who came to live at her Inn of Eight Happinesses. But the

Japanese thought she was a spy, and it was no longer safe for her in Yangcheng. So in March 1940, Gladys escaped with a hundred children over the mountains to the next province. A month later, she arrived safely—without losing one child!

But Gladys was weak and ill. In 1942, an American friend helped her go back to England to see her family. While she was there, the Communists closed China to all foreigners.

In 1957, Gladys once again sailed for China, this time to Formosa. She started the Gladys Aylward Orphanage and soon had a hundred children. Here Gladys Aylward, the small woman who was not qualified to be a missionary, served God until her death in 1970.

Sample

CONFIDENCE

Not Good Enough



Gladys Aylward sat uneasily in the principal's office. It was 1928, and she'd been at the China Inland Mission training school for three months. What was this meeting about?

"Gladys," the principal said gently, "your grades for the first quarter are . . . well, very poor. It would be a waste of time and money to continue."

"But," Gladys protested, "all my life I have felt that God wants me to be a missionary in China."

"Besides," the principal went on, "by the time you graduate, you will be almost thirty. That is too old to learn a hard language like Chinese."

Shoulders sagging, she rose to leave.

"But I can help you get a job as a housekeeper," he added helpfully.

A housekeeper! Gladys was frustrated. She was sure God wanted her to go to China. But she took the job housekeeping for two retired missionaries who encouraged her interest in missions. They got her a job as a Rescue Sister in South Wales patrolling the

riverfront for runaway girls—girls who often fell into the hands of criminals. Only five feet tall, Gladys seemed out of place among the big, rough sailors along the docks. But she went out every day into the damp and cold, taking the frightened runaways to shelter until she could send them home again.

But a bad case of pneumonia sent her home to London to recover. While at church with her mother, she overheard someone talking about an elderly missionary in China named Jennie Lawson. Jennie wanted a young assistant to help her.

“Why,” Gladys said to herself, “that’s me!”

As soon as she was better, she got a job as a maid. She would save every penny to pay her way to China! Her employer was Sir Francis Younghusband, an author who had traveled all over China. He loaned her books about the country to read in her free time.

One day, Gladys took her savings to a travel agent. “What does it cost to travel to China?” she asked.

The travel agent smiled at the short woman in the thin coat. She was obviously poor. Maybe she was having fun pretending. “If you go by boat,” he said, “it’s ninety pounds.”

Ninety pounds! Gladys only had a few pounds. “Is there a cheaper way?” she asked.

The ticket agent shrugged. “A *train* ticket is only forty-five pounds, but—”

“I’ll take it!” Gladys beamed. “Write me a ticket, and I’ll bring in money every Friday until it’s paid for.”

The agent shook his head. “You can’t get to China by train right now. Russia and China are at war. The border is closed.”

Gladys just smiled. “By the time I save enough money, the war will be over,” she said confidently.

On October 15, 1932, Gladys hugged her mother and father

goodbye and settled into her train seat. Five thousand miles and four weeks later, she eased her aching body off a mule in front of a run-down inn in the mountain town of Yangcheng. White-haired Jennie Lawson scurried out to greet her.

Gladys Aylward, who was “not good enough” to be a missionary, had arrived in China!



Confidence is being sure that God will help you do His work, even when people think you can't do it.

FROM GOD'S WORD:

God began doing a good work in you, and I am sure he will continue it until it is finished when Jesus Christ comes again (Philippians 1:6).

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

1. Why do you think Gladys would not give up her dream of going to China even when the mission board told her she was not qualified?
2. What is the difference between confidence in yourself and confidence in God?
3. How can confidence in what God can do help you with a problem you're facing?

Timeless Lessons for Families From Great Christians of the Past



Drawn from the lives of fifteen key Christian heroes, *Hero Tales* is a beautifully illustrated treasury of forty-five exciting and educational readings designed to help foster Christian character qualities in families with elementary-age children. This inspiring collection presents a short biography and three true stories for each hero, including:

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Whether read together at family devotions or alone, *Hero Tales* is an ideal way to acquaint children ages six to twelve with historically important Christians while imparting valuable lessons.



DAVE & NETA JACKSON are full-time authors whose talented work on the bestselling TRAILBLAZER BOOKS has earned them numerous awards as well as worldwide acclaim. They bring their gifts for meticulous historical research and carefully crafted stories to the pages of *Hero Tales*.

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