

ASBURY COLLEGE AMBASSADOR

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ONE GENERATION WILL COMMEND YOUR WORKS
TO ANOTHER; THEY WILL TELL OF YOUR
MIGHTY ACTS. —PSALM 145:4

■ 100 YEARS OF THE
GREAT COMMISSION
CONGRESS

■ MEDIA COM STUDENTS
RETURN FROM
THE OLYMPICS

■ ASBURY COLLEGE
CELEBRATES RECORD
ENROLLMENT AGAIN

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Dr. E. Stanley Jones Naturally Commissioned

As many of you know, Dr. Eli Stanley Jones 1907 was an amazing man most often known for his missionary work. It is easy to be awed by his 60 years of work in India, something still bearing fruit even today. The Christian Ashram movement he founded still brings thousands to deeper, more meaningful relationships with God. Beyond what he did, perhaps two of the most amazing things about him are how his life naturally seemed to be about fulfilling the Great Commission, and that God was shaping him from the beginning to fulfill that imperative.

Before we go any further, let's be clear on what the Great Commission is with this passage from Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."

Despite the weight of this passage, you will be hard pressed to find it in Jones' autobiographical writings. It's as though his thoughts were naturally centered on how to achieve it, not whether he should; as though his focus was on fulfilling it, not discussing it. Only later in life did he realize how deeply it was woven into him from his beginning.

In 1901 at the age of 17, Dr. Jones experienced a "conversion" (which today we might call "being saved") at a revival in Baltimore. He writes in his autobiography, *A Song of Ascents*, that after the revival's third day, he went to the altar and, "... had scarcely bent my knees when Heaven broke into my spirit. I was enveloped by assurance, by acceptance, by reconciliation. I grabbed the man next to me ... and said, 'I've got it.' 'Got it?' What did I mean? ... I had Him - Jesus - and He had me. ... As I rose from my knees, I felt I wanted to put my arms around the world and share this with everybody.

Little did I dream at that moment that I would spend the rest of my life literally trying to put my arms around the world to share this with everybody." From the moment of his commitment to Christ, he had already started thinking about spreading the Good News.

His path to India wasn't a straight line, though, or even a clear one. At the time of his conversion he was studying law, working in a law library to save money for college and thinking seriously about going into the ministry. Soon, though, his family lost everything and became nearly destitute. To support them, Jones went to work selling commercial insurance in the poorer sections of town; even then he was able to save enough for a year of college. He remarked later that these events taught him toughness, sympathy and were facets of God's training for his life as a missionary.

During this time in Baltimore, he also started his steps toward the ministry. At one of his first attempts at preaching, he went to the pulpit, started his sermon, became distracted, forgot what he was to say and headed back to his seat. On the way to his chair, God prompted him to tell the congregation what He had done for him. Instead of sitting down, Jones walked down in front of the pulpit and did just that. He realized right then that his job was not as much to stand up and preach as to be a living witness for Christ, and that played heavily in his decision to become a missionary.

He also heard Dr. H.C. Morrison, then president of Asbury College, preach during a revival in Baltimore. Jones saw him as one of the last of the old "southern orators" and said that if Asbury could make him preach like that, he should go there. With his savings from his library and insurance sales work, he left for Kentucky. Even then Asbury College had a focus on world evangelism so, as part of the story, it is only fitting that he would come here despite thinking it was only about preaching.

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“Every stage of being is a stage of becoming. It is open ended.”

Another pivotal moment for Jones came during a prayer meeting with four other students in an Asbury College dorm room. The Holy Spirit swept through and filled them all. What started with them moved through the campus and on through the town. There were people all over, filling the auditorium, in the halls, even kneeling outside in the grass and he was there ministering to the crowds. Before it was over, every student had professed conversion. He believed that experience drew him closer to the Holy Spirit than ever and it would work through him in ways it couldn't before. What struck him later was that he had no intention of becoming a missionary, but after his incredible experience with the Holy Spirit, the stage was set.

Jones was later asked by a student group to make a presentation on Africa. On the way to give the presentation he became troubled and ducked into a classroom to pray and tell God that, when that meeting was over, he wanted a missionary to come from it. Little did he know that he would be that new missionary.

Graduation day soon came followed by a letter from Asbury's president saying that the school thought he should go into evangelical work in America. At the same time he got a letter from the Methodist Mission Board saying that he should go to India. Not knowing



E. Stanley Jones, 1907

which way to go, he knelt down with the letters, prayed for an answer, and God told him, “India.”

He said that, “Every stage of being is a stage of becoming. It is open ended.” That could be seen as the essence of his unyielding efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. He knew that no matter how many people he introduced to

Christ, there would always be more who needed to hear the gospel; but, the more who heard the Good News, the closer to Christ he felt. As he helped folks become Christians, he moved farther along his perpetual spiritual pilgrimage and left a legacy that inspired countless others. ■

— Frank Goad
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