

Denise:

Women have been a part of carrying the gospel where it's not for generations. And part of the legacy they've left can be found in the courage, their stories inspire in an entirely new generation of women who would go. But that legacy can only be realized if their stories are told. Welcome to the Velvet Ashes Legacy Podcast.

Denise:

Well, hey, welcome back to the Velvet Legacy Podcast. I'm Denise Beck, executive director here at Velvet Ashes, and I'm here with Sarah Hilkemann, our program director, and we are so excited to get back into bringing you another story this month. Honestly, we wanna remind you that we are just your friendly amateur biographers doing our research and hoping to wet your appetite to learn more about the amazing women that we study. So Sarah, tell us who we are going to cover this month.

Sarah:

Well, we are talking about Amy Carmichael this month, and we're excited to tell you more about her. Amy Carmichael is one of those amazing people that in some ways we've almost given sainthood, so many people have been impacted by her work and her story. So like Elisabeth Elliot once wrote that she owed Amy as great a debt as one can owe another. I cannot pay it. Amy's story has just impacted so many people, but I think as we kind of get started, it's so important to remember that Amy was human. She made mistakes and she struggled with things, and she had a quirky personality like all of us. So we're excited to share her story with you today as we also think about what lessons we can learn from her life.

Denise:

You know, you're so right. I think about so many of these stories. So we've done, I don't know, six, seven of these stories now. And so many of them reference Amy Carmichael and how they were influenced by her and what an influence she has had in their lives. And what I love about that is, that's the heart of this podcast, is that we know that the stories that we're living need to be told because they impact, they influence, they drive other people to live their story that God has for them. And so, I'm so excited to get into and learn about this woman that was the fuel for so many of the stories that we hear about.

Sarah:

Yeah. Well, we're going back to the 1800s. We've kind of been hanging out in the 1900s for the last few women that we have talked about. Amy was born on December 16th, 1867 on the north coast of Ireland. She was the oldest of seven kids, and her father ran the local flour mill with his brother. Her parents were committed Christians, and you know, they were always eager and willing to help others. They were fairly well off. Um, the flour mill was doing well when Amy was a kid. Um, and they were very generous. So Amy really grew up with this example of care and compassion and this committed love of Jesus. Amy had a happy childhood, but um, she could kind of be mischievous or in her writing, she said she was naughty <laugh>. One time she and two of her brothers were playing outside and Amy saw this tree that had seeds that were poisonous. She said to her brothers, let's see how many seeds we can eat before we die, which is hilarious. And like the last thing to do. well, uh, thankfully they didn't die, but they were pretty sick and their mother didn't necessarily have that much compassion since she knew they had disobeyed.

Denise:

Oh, my word. I was just gonna say, it seems like there's so many of these stories that start out with, she was super ornery, you know, <laugh>, and I think Amy just fits into that.

Sarah:

I wonder if you need a little bit of that to go into cross-cultural work. <laugh> Amy was sent away to boarding school when she was 12 to a Wesleyan Methodist school. And when she was studying there, the Children's Special Service Mission held meetings in the area. This, um, was a group that was dedicated to children's ministry. And during one of the meetings, Amy was just really deeply impacted singing the simple children's song, Jesus Loves Me, which is so cool. All of her life she had known about God's love. She, you know, heard about it from her family, but she realized she hadn't really opened up her heart to God. And later she wrote, "In his great mercy, the Good Shepherd answered the prayers of my mother and father and many other loving ones, and drew me, even me into his fold". And I just love that it was a song that even today is still sung and impacts people.

Denise:

Yes.

Sarah:

So Amy's father and her uncle decided to expand their mill business. And so Amy's family moved to Belfast to open up another mill. And this was a time when there was a lot of, a lot more competition in the mill business. And so, you know, it was kind of spreading out the, the wealth that was available. And her family began to have financial difficulties. The mill really didn't go as they had hoped, um, you know, opening up this new location. And so Amy and her siblings who had been away at boarding school eventually moved home. They stopped attending boarding school, and Amy could really see the weight of the troubles affecting her father. They didn't talk about it, that wasn't proper to discuss such things, um, in front of children, but Amy could see the weight of it. Then in 1885, when Amy was 18, her father died from pneumonia.

Sarah:

He was only 54. And a lot of it was, you know, from the stress of these financial struggles. And it, it's hard to tell from her writings how this affected her. Obviously it was a difficult blow for Amy and her family, but it wasn't necessarily proper to write about those types of things, or it wasn't as acceptable maybe as it is today to show how you're feeling about something. But Amy took on a lot of responsibilities and became sort of like a second mother to her siblings. One of the things that she really enjoyed was entertaining her family and bringing them together. And so one of the things that they started was this family magazine called Scraps. So they had little articles and cartoons and drawings, all done by different ones from the family, and they would also put like scriptures and quotes and just fun little things about what the family was doing or talking about. And I don't know like how widely they shared it or anything, but it was just kind of something fun that they all worked on together.

Denise:

Well, and it's reminding me that, and Elisabeth Elliot's story, her family started something as well about, they, they wrote together, it had something to do with birds, the name of it, chirps from here or something like that. So it's just so funny to see that they, the tie in even in their families in that way. So

Sarah:

Yeah. That's so cool. I know my family did a newsletter when I was growing up as well. It was just for my, yeah, it was just for my grandparents. <laugh>.

Denise:

Oh man. My, my family did not. We were no fun. Evidently.

Sarah:

Oh, well, there was a moment after Amy's father died that I think really became a defining point in her life. So despite, you know, the family's financial troubles, Amy had really been raised in a comfortable home. She enjoyed nice clothes and good foods and, you know, just kind of the finer things of life. But one Sunday, Amy was walking home from church with her family, and she and two of her brothers were walking ahead of the rest of the family. Um, that was kind of what they normally did. And they came upon this beggar woman who wasn't really dressed properly against the cold of the day. You know, she was bedraggled and dirty and she was carrying this heavy sack of coal across her back. She was really struggling with the weight of it. And so Amy and her brothers went up to help this woman.

Sarah:

Now this would've been scoffed at even by other believers at the time, which is a little hard to understand, but different classes didn't interact with one another. And so Amy was kind of embarrassed, you know, she's helping this woman, but then other people are walking by and, you know, reacting as they noticed Amy helping this woman. But in the midst of this, she had this really defining moment. There was a fountain in the center of the road where they were walking, and for whatever reason, Amy was kind of looking and studying this fountain. And she clearly heard this voice speaking what she would come to realize was the words of First Corinthians three, 12 through 14, which says, "Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become evident for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire. And the fire itself will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work, which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward". So Amy realized, you know, this was really God speaking to her. And, and her heart really changed. She realized she wanted to focus on the things that were important to the Lord. She wanted to be seen like the verse says, to be found worthwhile, like gold and silver and not hate and stubble.

Denise:

Mm. Okay. I just have to take a minute because as a mom hearing that it says she was with her family when she was walking. I don't know, do you know if her mother was there when she was seeing that? Cuz I just imagine seeing your kids living out what you had instilled in them and the compassion of her family. I remember my son, we were at a restaurant and the, um, an older man fell in the parking lot and was laying there and he ran out to help him up. And I just, um, and he carried him to his car. And, and like, as a mom, like seeing your kids like live out the compassion, I just, I can't imagine how blessed Amy's mother was with that. And, and I love that as we're gonna see, Amy truly lived her life like this no matter where she was.

Denise:

And, and one of the things, as we help train people to go to the field, my husband always says, who you are here is who you are there. Yeah. And as I keep reading the story of Amy, it was like nothing happened on the ship when she went to serve, it was the same Amy. She lived her life like this no matter where she was. And so as we continued to to hear about that, Amy's compassion began to show in other

areas. So there was these group of girls that were working in the mills in Belfast, and they worked long 14 hour days. They were, I don't know if any of you watched the, the old BBC shows about this time period, you know, and the poor people and the poor conditions that they were working in. Well, she was experiencing, seeing and living life with these people.

Denise:

And they were called the shawlies because they couldn't afford to wear coats and to dress normally and sophisticated probably. They didn't care. They were just trying to survive. And so they had these shawls wrapped around them. And so Amy began to realize these people needed help. And she, her compassion drew her to them. She noticed that people recoiled at the shawlies. They couldn't afford to wear nice clothes. And so the respectable people of Belfast, instead of offering aid and help, just absolutely went the other direction. And, and Amy, um, began to include them, invite them to reach out to them. But she noticed that people of her church were just appalled if these shawlies attended church, you know, they, they were not dressed appropriately and they did not fit in socially. And so as more and more of the Haws felt comfortable to attend church with Amy, she began to realize this is not the place for them, and they needed a place of their own.

Denise:

And so after praying about it, she decided to purchase a tin building for the sum of 500 pounds. And, um, it became known as the Welcome Hall in 1887. And the fun thing is, is that this place is still in existence today. Um, maybe not in the exact same form of Amy's vision for this, but she wanted it to be a place where it wasn't just about church. It was a place where these young girls, I mean 14 year old girls who were working these terrible hours could have access to fun, to recreation. She could even start helping with those social skills that were preventing them from engaging well with others. And, and so today that building is known as the Welcome Evangelicals church. And, you know, does not look like the tin building it was today, but it's so sweet to see a piece of her that begun all those years ago, still in existence today.

Denise:

But, you know, so during this time, Sarah, like you alluded, her family was having a really rough go financially. And she, it was around this time that basically their wealth was gone. Their father's gone. They're virtually bankrupt. And so they were having to make some really difficult decisions. And so all of her brothers, you know, that she was with dispersed. So two of them immigrated to America, one went to Canada, one went to South Africa. I mean, this wasn't just a let's move cities, they were just out of there. Amy with her mother moved to the city of Manchester in England. And, um, I know many of you might hear that and think of the, the football team, Manchester United. That's what I think of, you know, but, so that's where they were. And um, Amy, true to her nature began her work among the less fortunate, those that needed help in the slums and, and she was teaching them about Christ.

Denise:

And she was tireless. She was living in near the mill. It was a rundown apartment. It was infested with roaches. So, you know, think of the area that a mill would be in and people that she would be ministering to. And then honestly, her health was just from all I understand, never really great. And so she began to suffer from neuralgia, a painful disease. And, um, and for the sake of her ailing health, people were like, you need to stop, you need to go somewhere, you need to get rest. But she didn't know where to do that. And she began praying about that. And her prayers were answered in the form

of a man named Robert Wilson. He was an old family friend, he was a committed Christian. The Carmichael children affectionately dubbed him the DOM, which is the dear old man. And it just makes me smile because I'm just like, oh, they were just kids like everybody else, with their fun family jokes and names for people and nicknames.

Denise:

And so basically, Robert was a man in his sixties. His wife had died, and actually quite recently a daughter who would've been the same age as Amy had passed away. And so he was looking for someone to help look after him. And this gave it fit, filled some of his needs. Amy actually began taking on some of his financial work and correspondence and, you know, lived with him to be an aid in some ways, but then also it became a peaceful place for her where she could recover and pray and continue her work. And it was a, you know, from all accounts, it was a really happy and comfortable couple of years. And when she was able to stay at this place with, with Robert the DOM. And so, but it was also during this time that she was around 22, 23 years old, that she really felt an audible call, heard an audible call to go.

Denise:

And the, the words that she says she actually heard were of two words, and they were the words, go ye. And she knew what it meant. The Lord had already been preparing her heart to move out of her comfort zone. And this caused grief within her because she felt a level of responsibility to two very important people in her life to her mom and to the DOM. And she's like, Lord, are you asking me to, to add grief to them by answering this call to you? And that was not something she was very excited about doing. And yet she was blessed to learn that they were believers themselves and felt that the only option when you hear the word of the Lord asking you to do something is to answer that call. And so while of course they were sad, they were very supportive. And so it was actually a few years earlier that she had been at the Keswick convention and she had heard from the missionary Hudson Taylor.

Denise:

And he was, for all of you that don't know, um, the founder of the China Inland Missions and was kind of an instigator in that moment in her life where she knew she was gonna be a missionary, but she just hadn't known when. And so in the back of her mind, that's playing actually Hudson Taylor was a family friend of the DOM. And so it made sense for her to look in that direction for her first, okay, go ye, maybe I'm supposed to go to China. And so she began to put all the things in place to do that, and because of her health was rejected, and so that door was closed. And of course she was a bit over frustrated with that. I mean, I think those of us who have gone have probably had these doors closed that we were like, but Lord, you, you want people. And I said, I'm people. And, and so, but it was exactly one year later that the doors opened and she felt this clear direction to head to Japan. And so she boarded that ship and was always looking for opportunities all along the way to share her faith.

Sarah:

Well, the DOM, Mr. Wilson was definitely influential in this whole process. And he knew someone in Japan who was with the Church Missionary Society leading a team called the Japanese Evangelistic Band. So, uh, Mr. Wilson wrote to this leader, but Amy being determined and feisty as she was, she didn't even wait for the yes to come. She didn't wait for the reply to come before she was like, okay, I'm just, I'm just gonna head out <laugh>. So, um, yeah, on March 3rd, 1892, Amy set sail, and of course it was hard to say goodbye to her mother and Mr. Wilson not knowing if she would see them again. She

actually had to take several different ships on this journey to Japan. And some were nicer than others. During one of kind of the harder times, she found a large piece of cardboard on the ship and she wrote "in everything, give thanks", and she put it on her bed so she could really remember God's goodness in the midst of seasickness and rodents on the ship and all of this. But yeah, like you said, she was just always looking for opportunities to share her faith and to share Jesus. And so, um, on one of these, um, journeys, she was able to share with the captain of the ship. And by the time, you know, they got to the end of that voyage, he had given his life to the Lord,

Denise:

Love that.

Sarah:

Yeah, she was, she was just always looking for how to serve and love and care for the people around her. But just thinking of all of her long journey, you know, we think we have it tough when we have to do the 15 hour plane rides, which are not fun, however.

Denise:

We don't have the rodents and seasickness.

Sarah:

Well, hopefully not

Denise:

<laugh>,

Sarah:

When she finally arrived in Japan, it was, it was anything but, you know, the romantic or idealistic hope that one might have for starting the adventures of cross-cultural life. When she arrived in Japan, it was kind of at the tail end of a typhoon. And so she was having to go through this storm to get to shore, and she got there, she's drenched, you know, from all of the rain of the typhoon. And then there was no one there to meet her. She hadn't been expecting the missionary to be there when she arrived. So she gets to shore, she's looking around and it's like, um, I'm not seeing anybody. There's nobody that speaks English even, what do I do? But after lots of, she sat there and waited and then like through hand motions and just, she basically blindly followed several Japanese people who kind of took pity on her, I think.

Sarah:

And they eventually took her to the home of an American trader who was there, and they were like, okay, we know this one other person that looks like you. Um, and so they brought her to this man's home. And it was like, okay, at least she found someone who spoke English, and he actually knew of the missionary that she was supposed to meet. And so eventually she got where she was supposed to, she got where she was supposed to go. But the adjustment to life in Japan was really hard, obviously. And kind of one of the overarching experiences of the season for Amy was loneliness. She kind of wrote about some of these different things, but she struggled with things like jealousy at the friendships of

other missionaries. And in the season she was really also struggling with her singleness. You know, she had given up so much of her life to take care of her family and Mr.

Sarah:

Wilson, and now she was overseas and she kind of just felt desperate in some of these moments. Like, is this my lot in life forever? Is anything ever gonna change? And she wrote to her mother, "don't imagine that by crossing the sea and landing on a foreign shore and learning a foreign lingo, you burst the bonds of outer sin and hatch yourself cherubim". So it was just that reminder of our struggles don't leave us when we cross oceans and borders. And, um, the things that maybe we struggled with, uh, back in our home country, we will also struggle with overseas. She really struggled with the language and she was quite impatient. She didn't like that it was taking a long time to learn the language. She just wanted to get out and share the gospel <laugh>, she was just eager to share it with people.

Sarah:

But then she often felt helpless and awkward in her interactions as she tried to understand the culture. And, you know, I think many of us who have served cross-culturally can raise our hands and say, yes, we get that, those helpless and awkward moments. One day she and her language teacher, who was also a believer we're sharing the gospel with an older woman, and the woman just seemed really distracted. And finally Amy realized that it was because of her western clothing, and she felt terrible, you know, obviously that this had taken away from the woman hearing the gospel. Her team at the time had stayed quite English, uh, in their customs and dress, but Amy decided she wanted to begin wearing Japanese clothing, and her team leader actually agreed. And so she became one of the first ones on her team to do that. But she just continued to struggle with her health.

Sarah:

Um, the issues that she developed earlier were still with her, and she was diagnosed with something called Japanese head, uh, which was apparently something that foreigners often got. Um, no one really knew what it meant necessarily, but Amy was having fainting spells and terrible headaches, and sometimes she'd have to, you know, rest in bed for a week at a time. And so the doctor told her to leave Japan in order to rest. So after just 15 months in the country, she left to go and spend some time resting in Shanghai. And she was just there for about a week and was feeling pretty good. And she felt like God was telling her to go to Ceylon, which is now known as Sri Lanka. So this feels a bit impulsive maybe to many of us.

Sarah:

And she just went not knowing like, is this just a short term thing? Is this where I'm gonna spend the rest of my life? Uh, and she wasn't actually there super long. And then at the end of November, 1894, Amy received a word that the DOM, Mr. Wilson had suffered a stroke, and she was asked to come back to England. This is probably one of the only reasons Amy would have left. You know, she wouldn't have left for many other reasons. And so she was able to go back and spend some sweet time with Mr. Wilson and just kind of rest and recover. And then while she was in England, she also published her first book, which was called From Sunrise Land, and it was a collection of her letters from Japan. It was very well received. It went into a couple of different printings. Um, but, you know, in the midst of all this, she just didn't feel like her work was done overseas. And so she was really praying and seeking what God had next for her.

Denise:

And so as she was praying about that, she ended up getting an invitation from a friend inviting her to India, and knowing her health issues, really felt like, okay, the climate there and, you know, things might be better. This might be a good fit. And so she said, yes, she arrived in November of 1895, and the truth is she would never return to England. So you, you think about her initial moved around so much, but this was it. She was never gonna return. Um, little did she know, but you know, things that happened in Japan had began to shape her. Things like living more like the locals and, you know, not allowing her British customs or English customs to get in the way. And so she just didn't fit in to the stiff missionary community in Bangalore, and it caused her to want to reevaluate.

Denise:

I even heard that, you know, the missionary community would, would have tennis hour where they would play tennis together in their tight corsets. And, you know, like just protecting probably some of their culture that they wanted to, but, you know, just did not seem to fit with the Amy that we have began to get to know. And so she ended up finding a missionary family named the Walkers. They were a godly family. They, they really understood the Hindu religion, and they shared her heart for reaching out to these people. And for several years she would live with them. And along with the Walkers and their daughter, they began to do this ministry where they would go into the villages and they would, they would preach and teach. And, and it was in the southern tip of India, in a state of Tamil.

Denise:

I don't know if I'm saying that correctly, but one of the things that Amy said is she began to get used to life in India. Um, she goes, you gotta bring two senses when you come, your sense of humor, you have to bring, and you have to leave your sense of smell. So she was just like, she was a funny lady, you know, she was just like recognizing the reality of what it means to live here. But, you know, the, the other missionaries just continued to find her to be an embarrassment. They just did not understand her. They did not understand the native dress, which we now know. It was a heart to not have anything to separate her from the gospel that she wanted to share with these people.

Denise:

Yeah. And I mean, that's a whole topic in itself, just how different people choose to how much to fully assimilate. But I think the heart behind it all is what can you do to prevent anything from stumbling the gospel for others? So, so as they began to travel into villages preaching the gospel, sleeping in tents, there weren't a lot of conversions maybe happening during this time. But in September of 1898, there was an upper caste girl that decided to devote her life to following Christ. So, you know, the caste system in India is huge. You don't cross castese, you don't speak or associate or definitely live outside of your cast. And so, um, it was a huge deal that this Upperclass girl felt the call of the Lord in a way that caused her to be willing to live outside of her caste. And her family was just over it.

Denise:

They were trying to do everything to get her to denounce her, her new faith. They threatened with legal action. They offered bribes if she would return to Hinduism, beatings, poisoning. You know, she decided to leave her family and join Amy and the Walkers. She was so convicted, she wanted to begin sharing the gospel as well. So they, they did baptize her, and Amy called her Jewel of victory. We might find that Amy has these little names that she begins to give to people that are close to her. So, so she ends up, Jewel of victory, begins, um, becomes a first member of what will become a band of women that would

be known as the Starry cluster. And I loved the meaning behind this. So Amy and the women, you know, eventually take on this name because of the Bible verse Daniel 12:3, which says, those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Denise:

And so the Starry cluster obviously felt very passionate about sharing their faith with others. They wanted to shine like those stars. So as more and more women began to hear the gospel, they began leaving their families to live and their caste and joined these wandering story cluster evangelists. So many of these women were high caste, and they abandoned their caste to join this group. And so some people in this group, it was comprised of a widow who had been kept as a virtual unpaid servant by her in-laws upon the death of her husband. There was a woman who lost an arm. She was considered useless. And, um, a few other women that definitely stood out. But these women decided they wanted to give up wearing jewelry. And that might sound like a small thing, unless you are familiar with Indian culture and how much of an honor it is, how much your jewelry said about you, the more jewelry you had, the better positioned you were to marry well.

Denise:

So this was something that was evident of a pride that they recognized in themselves as it associated with jewelry, and they just did not want to have anything separating them from what God called them to do. And so they decided to not wear jewelry and, and has caused such a big stir that they later realized that it was actually a protection because people decided that they weren't even worth their time. So robbers and things that might have invaded them said, we're, we're not even gonna bother with these women. We know they don't wear jewelry. So, so what, you know, culturally may have seemed inappropriate to some, actually became a protection for these women as they continued their work. Amy, in this group of Starry clusters, you know, kept sharing the gospel with untouchables. They wanted to respect culture as much as possible, but the culture they were most interested in was the culture of the gospel.

Denise:

And when it called for them to be countercultural, they were, and they crossed those castes, and they continued to speak life and love to women. And, um, you know, there was persecution with that. It was just part of it. But Amy wanted them to know, no punches pulled, there was persecution with this life, you will experience hardships, but you need to be dedicated at 100% from the beginning. And so Amy's preaching and teaching began to attract children as well. And so the first young girl that came to believe suffered greatly at the hands of her relatives, um, for converting to Christianity. Her cousin fared no better. In fact, at one point he was left tied to a pillar as a way to discourage him from his faith. And so in order to frighten the children that were becoming drawn to Amy, she earned this nickname called The Child Catching Missy.

Denise:

So they wanted children to think that she was like this gingerbread, or what is that Hansel and Gretel type figure where, you know, she's, she's gonna attract you and steal you, and she's a scary woman, you know? But the children were still drawn to her. And one child in particular, as we're gonna hear her story, really changed the course of Amy's ministry. So a little history about culture at that time. There were these, um, women called Devadasis, and it was common in this temple worship that they would,

families would give their girls. It used to be, you know, a status thing. You would give your girls to the temple sometimes as young as four. They were dedicated to marry the Hindu goddess of fertility. And, um, they were sent to the temple to serve this goddess. And really they became nothing more than prostitutes.

Denise:

And so the young girls that were given to the temples were usually at this time, from really poor families who wanted to unburden themselves and another mouth to feed. They were basically sex slaves for the men in charge of the temple. Um, they lived their whole lives in the temple, and very few of them ever managed to escape. While Prena was about seven years old, when she had been given to the temple by her mother, her mother had been widowed, and it was thought that she was cursed, and that she was responsible for the death of her husband. So part of trying to get over that stigma, make amends for whatever she had done, she wanted to give her daughter to the temple. And so Prena was left there not allowed to return home, and she began training to become a Devadasi, a temple girl, married to god, and, and she would have to perform these rituals, and she hated it.

Denise:

I don't know how else to put it. Absolutely hated it. And so because of that, she escaped once. I mean, that's amazing when we hear not very many people did. So she escaped and she actually made her way home to her mother. And her mother being so committed to overcoming the shame that she felt she had brought on by, you know, widow refused. Even though this daughter is clinging to her and screaming to be allowed to stay, she refused to allow her to stay. And so Prena was taken back into the temple. And at this point, now they're really watching her because she has managed to escape, and they don't wanna have anything, you know, they don't, they don't give her any freedom at all. But, um, they also branded her hands with hot pokers as a punishment for her escaping. But she had somehow heard of this child stealing Missy, and she, in her mind, knew that if she could just get there, she would be safe.

Denise:

And so she planned an escape. And there was one day that the temple door, which was huge and thick double doors, was left unattended. So in a moment of opportunity in 1901, she slipped through the doors and ran and ran into this coconut grove. There was a little stream, and she was found by a woman who knew Amy Carmichael. And she's asking her, please take me to the child stealing Missy. She wanted to be stolen. I, I bet at this point, she didn't even care if the rumors were true, you know? And so at six o'clock the next morning, she was taken by her friend to Amy, where Amy was sitting on the veranda having breakfast, and this little child ran up to her and just put her arms around and said, I'm Pearl eyes, which is, I think what Prena actually means. And it says, and I'm gonna stay with you forever.

Denise:

Now, the temple really wanted to reclaim her. They, they came and tried, but, um, Pearl Eyes or Prena kept saying, no, Amma, Amma, she kept calling Amy the Tamil word for mother. And Amy became even more convinced that she was led to her by the Lord. And through getting to know Prena and Prena sharing the stories of what was actually happening, I mean, I think people maybe had an idea of the atrocities that were going on, but it was probably one of those things we don't really wanna know. It's part of our culture, we don't really wanna know. But Amy began to get the whole story, and she was definitely not okay with it. And so it opened up her mind to a new calling in her life that was to help

these children. And it was also during this time that she wrote the book *Things as They Are*. And honestly, Sarah, this book I found to be fascinating, because I feel like at *Velvet Ashes*, that's what we do, is we want women to tell these real stories. We, we aren't interested in the newsletter versions of people and their lives. It's like, tell things as they are. There's a safe place to do that. And however, this book was not well received.

Sarah:

I was gonna say, yeah, it's acceptable now, we love it. But it was not then.

Denise:

<laugh>, right? And so people were like, the publisher was like, no, we're not gonna publish this book. You know, it's, it's shining light on the hard things. And they probably were interested in the, the happy stories. And so Amy and the Starry Cluster had been all about evangelization and preaching in the villages. Their shift in focus began to be rescuing these children. And she was really influenced by George Mueller and his, I Am Never gonna Ask for Money Philosophy. And so it became this thing in Amy's life where she wanted the Lord to provide the money without her specifically asking people for it as a stamp of approval, that what she was doing was his will for her. And so we see things like that as buildings begin to be built, and as you see more needs that Amy takes to the Lord and to be provided for.

Denise:

And, you know, they weren't without challenges. They, there were a lot of illnesses that they couldn't get the medicine for. And she began to feel, okay, well, we need a hospital. And they were, it always hinged on money. And so, as most of us know who are missionaries, we tend to not have stores of money just waiting for that project. It's usually provided at the last minute. And so, you know, she began praying and asking the Lord. Well, in 1912, Queen Mary actually recognized her work and helped fund the hospital at Dohnavur. And Dohnavur is a name that is really synonymous with Amy Carmichael's work. It's a place where you can go today and still see the remnants and flourishing actually of work that is happening. And so her little mission compound grew to include things like the nursery schools, a boys section as they begin to realize boys were being rescued as well. You know, trafficking work is something that is very, I don't know that popular is the right words, but we hear a lot about it today. And I feel like Amy was more like the pioneer of this anti-trafficking work. Other things like schools and printing places were added, but there were, there were lots of things that were challenging during this time, Sarah. And, and one of those actually brings us to the next season of Amy's life.

Sarah:

Yeah. Amy, you know, like you have shared Denise, Amy had gotten to see God provide so faithfully for her and for the ministry at Dohnavur. Well fast forward a little bit to you, September of 1931, Amy went with two other women to inspect a property where they had hoped to set up a village dispensary, you know, so all of these different places that they had, um, been getting and building and growing all the things that they could offer and do. And so they had finally found a house and it was being renovated. And so she and these other, um, two women were gonna check on the progress of the renovations. And so at this point, Amy was about 63, not quite 64, the landlord wasn't there when the women first arrived at the house to see the renovations. And when he finally got there, it was dark already.

Sarah:

Amy went outside into the yard to kind of check on things to see what had been done out there. And she didn't see that there was a hole that had been dug, and she fell in. Immediately she was in, you know, terrible pain. And she was rushed to the hospital at Dohnavur. First they treated her for a broken leg in a really badly injured ankle, and sent her home, but she just wasn't recovering. The pain wasn't going away. And eventually they found that she had also really badly injured her back in the fall. And this caused eventual paralysis and just constant pain. So for the next 20 years, Amy would almost constantly be confined to her bed and really only be able to be up for like an hour at a time, and only be able to walk a few steps. So, I mean, think about all that she has done, how determined she was always doing something and caring for other people, and now she had to adjust to a very different life.

Sarah:

Um, but I think that determination also allowed her to press on and shift her focus. It wasn't like, I'm done, I can't do anything. So she had named her bedroom the Room of Peace, and it really became that for her in this this 20 year span of time, she was able to read many of the books that people had sent her over the years that she hadn't had time to read. And those who were caring for her worked really hard to keep things beautiful so that she could enjoy. There were gardens outside her window, and they just worked really hard to keep those beautiful, so she would be able to enjoy that. And then also during this time, she realized she could write, you know, we talked about a couple of the different books that she had already written, but many of her books, she was a prolific writer.

Sarah:

Um, many of her books came out of this 20 year span of being bedridden. And Amy also prayed, I just love this. She prayed through the years of World War II when there was this threat that Japan could invade India. And thankfully that didn't happen. But obviously there were the things, um, happening back home. And she prayed through the financial struggles when checks that were mailed, you know, didn't make it to India. And, um, all of the struggles for her friends and her supporters back in England. And then she also prayed through those years of changes in India, you know, as they fought for independence and worked to see some of these changes come.

Denise:

I also read, as you're talking about this, it reminds me, um, Elisabeth Elliot was talking about the fact that during this time Amy had this brass cross, that whenever she got to the point where she was in too much pain, that she couldn't even think or pray, she would ask for her friends to bring her, her brass cross, and she would just hold it. And that was all she could do for that day. And it was one of Elisabeth Elliot's greatest possessions that someone gave that cross to her after Amy Carmichael died. Wow. And I, I think about this, when you're talking about the time when she's in such pain, um, and sometimes just holding that cross was all she could do.

Sarah:

Yeah. Even in the midst of that pain, you know, Amy was always encouraging the staff and anyone that came to her room, you know, who needed a word of wisdom. And it, it bothered Amy, I think, especially at the beginning because she was so determined, it bothered her to have to potentially be a burden for other people in taking care of her. But she was always looking for ways to encourage and pray and share what the Lord was doing in her, in the midst of all this pain. But, you know, slowly through the years, Amy's strength faded, and those who were taking care of her noticed, you know, that she was just sleeping more and more. And then finally on January 18th, 1951, Amy didn't wake up. She had left very

specific instructions for what to do when she died. She wanted to be buried in the garden, this place of beauty that she had loved. But, you know, no, um, no headstone, no casket even. She just wanted to be laid on a stretcher and have flowers placed on her whole body. And they carried her stretcher, you know, kind of through the town. And so many people came out to say goodbye. And, you know, there were just this, this heap of flowers over her as they, um, buried her. And then the staff at Dohnavur placed a just very simple bird bath over her grave with just one word on it. Amma.

Denise:

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, which you can still see today, correct? It's,

Sarah:

I think so, yeah.

Denise:

Still there today. I think it's like, not super publicized, but it's just mixed in with, you know, the, the surroundings and if, you know, you know, kind of thing. But yeah, that, that picture of her, you know, funeral, you know, that she was just laid out in display. I kind of, when I was doing some studying about it, you know, said that she was left out on, like, it reminded me of like the queen almost, you know, like it laid in state for people to visit her because there were so many people that she had impacted, and the line of boys and girls that had grown up into adults that wanted to come and pay their respects that each brought a flower. And so, you know, when she's trying for simplicity here, I just want a simple no casket, just flowers, the, the, the mound of flowers that were so big that you couldn't even see her anymore.

Denise:

And they described that when they lowered her into the ground, it just filled with flowers, all of the flowers that had been, you know, just totally filled it up. And I just thought, what a beautiful moment and, you know, finish to this beautiful life, um mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And so Sarah, this, like, this woman, this story that has impacted so many people. I mean, I guess if you were to sum it up, it was really just simple. It was a life of compassion, you know, that was lived, no matter what location she was at, she just lived out compassion.

Sarah:

Yeah. And just looked for how could she show that compassion wherever she was, you know, it wasn't, it wasn't that she, it was like, oh, wherever I'm at, I'm gonna work with children, or, you know, whatever that was. But God just opened these doors and she saw the places where people needed compassion and they needed to know about Jesus. And, you know, just that determination of not just seeing the problem, but okay, what are we gonna do to take care of this? What are we gonna do to help in the midst of it?

Denise:

You know, and that compassion requires responsibility. I think she felt responsible to have compassion, you know, and that it didn't just mean like, oh, I'm so sorry that you're going through this. It was like, no, I have a responsibility to help you through this. And that was mm-hmm. <affirmative> from early on in her life. She played that out. It wasn't just, I'm gonna see you and sit with you. It's like, no, we're gonna link arms and we're gonna do something about this together. Um, you know, you alluded to that she

was a spiritual mother to Elisabeth Elliot, and I liked hearing that Elisabeth Elliot also said she was an impact on Jim Elliot, that she remembers Jim quoting her poetry, Amy's poetry to Elisabeth. And, and Elisabeth was saying, men desperately need women to look up to. And Amy was one of those women. And I just, I loved that.

Denise:

I, I think it's, it's so interesting as we sit here telling the stories of women that two very prolific women in the legacy of missions, you know, had such an intertwined thing. You know, Elisabeth Elliot had even said, some people tell me I am to them what Amy Carmichael was to me. You know, I am that inspiration. And it's, and it's just, it's the power of story that we're willing to tell our stories to encourage each other, that give us the courage to keep going. And, and we hope that, you know, this has been that for you. We hope that you maybe have been inspired by some of the 35 plus books that Amy Carmichael has written, or other stories of women, or perhaps, you know, it's a woman that you are seeing live a life like this wherever you are serving all over the world that's inspired you.

Denise:

But it is, the reason we do this podcast is do you know how important it is to tell your story? We can say that we have faith, but when we see people living out their faith, it encourages us to live our lives differently. So keep living your life. Tell your story. We'd love to hear your story. We're, you know, we're all about story here at Velvet Ashes. And so if there are stories that have impacted you, famous or not famous, and you would love to tell us about them, please message us. We would, we would love to hear that we have a whole other year of legacy stories to plan. We'd love for you to be a part of that with us. So until next time, we hope that you have enjoyed the first calendar year of Velvet Ashes Legacy podcast as we look toward 2023 and telling you more stories. We would love to thank Eine Blume for our theme song Daughters and Sons, and we hope that you just keep remembering until next time, you might be living the story that will be the courage for someone else's legacy. Thanks for joining us.