

## *Only One Missionary*



Because of her father's drinking problem, 11-year-old Mary Slessor was putting in 12-hour shifts in the mills, helping her family pay their bills.

By age 14, Slessor had become a skilled jute employee, working from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. with just an hour for breakfast and lunch. Jute is a long, soft, vegetable fiber that can be spun into strong, coarse threads.

Slessor, born in 1848 in Aberdeen, Scotland, into a poor, working-class family, found she could prop books on her loom while working. As she read about the land of Calabar (modern Nigeria), she grew convinced she should go there as a missionary. Slessor was 27 when she heard that David Livingstone, the famous missionary and explorer, had died and decided she wanted to follow in his footsteps.

In 1876, she sailed for West Africa aboard the *SS Ethiopia*, which, ironically, was loaded with hundreds of barrels of whiskey.

Remembering how alcohol had hurt her family, she said, "Scores of barrels of whiskey, and only one missionary."

But what a missionary! Slessor was a combination circuit preacher, village teacher, nurse and negotiator who single-handedly transformed three pagan areas by preaching the gospel. She diverted tribal wars and rescued women and children by the hundreds. For 40 years, she labored as God enabled her.

For the last four decades of her life, Slessor suffered intermittent fevers from the malaria she contracted during her first station in Calabar. The fevers eventually weakened her to the point where she could no longer walk long distances in the rain forest, but had to be pushed along in a hand-cart. In early January 1915, while at her remote station near Use Ikot Oku, she suffered a particularly severe fever and died on Jan. 13, 1915.

Several memorials in and around the Efik provinces of Calabar and Okoyong testify to the value placed on her work.

In whatever life circumstances facing you, if you should ever feel that your work of serving others is not very important or it's unappreciated, just remember Mary Slessor. Don't underestimate how God can use you.

One plus God is a majority in any setting.

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me (1 Timothy 1:12 NKJV).*