



Giving Everything for the Gospel

The Story of Narcissa Whitman

A beautiful bride stood before the altar. Her face shone with a radiant smile as she said her vows. When the ceremony was complete the minister presented the couple to the assembly, “Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you Dr. and Mrs. Marcus Whitman.” Narcissa, for that was Mrs. Whitman’s first name, was a kind-hearted Christian, a beautiful woman, and a determined individual. For many years she had a desire to become a missionary but the American Mission Board turned her down because they wanted couples. Marcus was also rejected because he was unmarried. Their common goal of becoming missionaries and the idea that they could be more effective together led them to marry. The day following their wedding, the bride and groom started their journey west that would bring them to the fertile soil of lost souls.

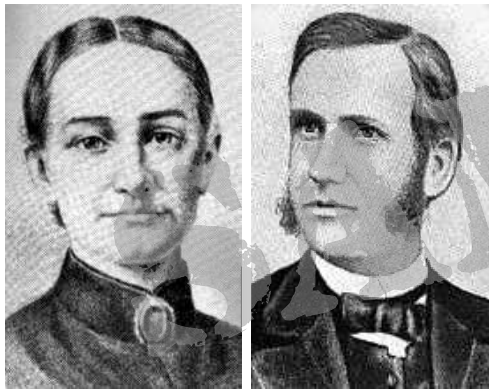
The Whitmans were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Spalding, another missionary couple. The year was 1836. Their destination was Oregon. Their goal was spreading the gospel. Along the trail Narcissa kept a journal, which she sent to her family back east. One journal entry reads, “Do not think I regret coming. No; far from it. I would not go back for a world. I am contented and happy notwithstanding I get very hungry and weary. Have six weeks steady journey before us. Will the Lord give me patience to endure it? Feel sometimes as if it was a long time to be traveling. Long for rest, but must not murmur.” Another journal entry said, “We are now on the west side of the Blue Mountains, crossed them in a day and half. Dearest Mother, let me tell you how I am sustained of the Lord in all this journey. Yesterday and for two or three days past I have felt weak, restless, and scarcely able to sit on my horse yesterday in particular, but see



Marcus Whitman (1802-1847)

how I have been diverted with the scenery and carried out of myself in conversation about home and friends This morning my feelings were a little peculiar. Felt remarkably well and strong, so much so as to mention it. But could not see any reason why I should feel more rested than on the morn previous. When I began to see what a day's ride was before, I understood it. If I had had not better health today than yesterday, I should have fainted under it. Then the promise appeared in full view, 'as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.' (Deuteronomy 33:25) And my soul rejoiced in God and testifies to the truth of another evidently manifest, 'Lo! I am with you always.' (Matthew 28:20)" Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding accomplished a feat that had never been done by any other white woman: they crossed the Rocky Mountains. Since they performed an act that was rather hazardous, unknowingly they paved the way for thousands of other women to follow. The path to Oregon was now open to families. The missionaries arrived at Fort Vancouver on September 12, 1836.

Not only were the Whitmans full of charity for the Indians, they also displayed love for the many whites who were now coming west. A picture of their Christian virtue was painted by the story



Narcissa and Marcus

of the orphaned Sager children whom the Whitmans adopted. When the Sager children lost both their parents on the journey west, the wagon train planned to leave the children at Fort Hall with enough money to pay their passage with a caravan of traders heading east in the spring. Leading the Sager family now was a strong-willed, 13-year-old boy named John. John had formally been known for his practical jokes, laziness, and disobedience. After John's parents died he took the responsibility as head of the house very seriously. He became responsible, hard

working, and dependable as though he was trying to make amends for his former slothfulness. Intensely, John wanted to go to Oregon to fulfill his father's dreams. On a cool and quiet night, John, his brother, and his five sisters slipped out of camp with the intent of following the wagon train and then rejoining them when they were too far along to send the children back to the Fort. Many adventures confronted the children. When they stumbled into the Whitmans' mission they were frail, famished, and fatigued, but by the providential hand of God they arrived there alive. Bravely John had led them over 1,000 miles through the wilderness. A daughter had been born to the Whitmans, but she had passed away. Marcus and Narcissa took the Sager brood into their home and loved them as their own children.

As the years went on more and more white men began settling in the Oregon region. With them came disease. In 1847 an epidemic of measles broke out among the Indians. Dr. Whitman did all in his power to alleviate the suffering, but despite his efforts large numbers of the Indians died.

Quotes

I have a freedom in prayer for my beloved Parents. Earnestly desired that God would bless them in their declining years, and smooth their passage to the tomb; that in the absence of their earthly comforts, he would fill their souls with his more immediate presence, so that they may never have cause to regret the sacrifice they have made for his Name Sake.

~Narcissa Whitman in her journal



I am beginning to learn that it is the sweet, simple things of life which are the real ones after all. ~Laura Ingalls Wilde

I always trust in Providence.

~Catharine Sevier, pioneer woman of North Carolina

I believe it would be much better for everyone if children were given their start in education at home. No one understands a child as well as his mother, and children are so different that they need individual training and study. A teacher with a room full of pupils cannot do this. At home, too, they are in their mother's care. She can keep them from learning immoral things from other children.

~Laura Ingalls Wilder



Was there ever a journey like this, performed where the sustaining hand of God has been so manifested every moment.

~Narcissa Whitman in her journal

BOOK REVIEW

Caddie Woodlawn

By Carol Ryrie Brink



Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live as a pioneer in the 1800's? What great challenges and unforeseen adventures would you face? *Caddie Woodlawn* takes you along the courageous life of a young pioneer girl living in the woodlands of Wisconsin. The story is full of excitement with fears of Indian massacres, a prairie fire, the loss of a beloved dog, an unusual friendship with an Indian, and so much more. Extremely well-written, *Caddie Woodlawn* is sure to entertain anyone who loves the pioneer era.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Answers are on the next page.

1. Was Wisconsin a state during the 1860's? _____

2. How many children were in the Woodlawn family? What were their names? _____

3. Have you ever had a special pet like Nero? Tell about it. _____

4. Do you know someone like Hetty who is always left out? How can you reach out to her? _____

Write a Story From This Picture

Make up names and personalities for each of the people in this painting. Then use your imagination to construct a story. Use a separate piece of paper if necessary.



SAMPLE
