

# PORTRAITS OF COURAGE



STORIES OF  
BAPTIST HEROES



Julie Whidden Long

# LOTTIE MOON BAPTIST TEACHER



**Who:** Charlotte (Lottie) Moon


**Where:** From Virginia to China

**When:** 1840-1912

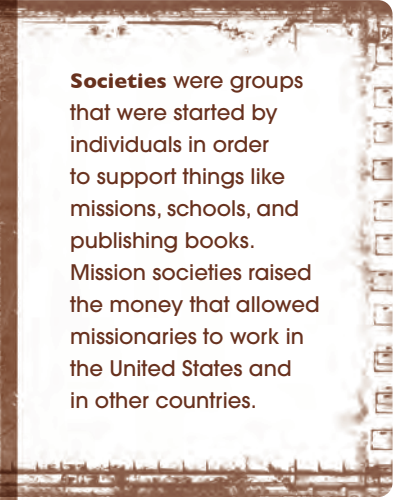
**What she did:** Worked as a missionary in China, teaching Baptists that women could do God's work

**W**hen Charlotte Diggs Moon was born into a wealthy and privileged family in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1840, no one would have guessed that she would die in a harbor in Japan seventy-two years later with no possessions to her name. But Moon did just that. Why did she give up all that her childhood offered her? She heard a calling from God, and she followed it, all the way across the world from her old Virginia home.

As a young girl, however, Charlotte Moon, who was called Lottie, did not concern herself with listening for God's will. Even though her family raised her as a Baptist, she held no interest in religion until "God touched her heart" as a teenager.



Lottie and her sisters were very intelligent. While most girls did not have opportunities for education, Lottie's family could afford to send her to the best schools. Her parents believed that their daughters should have the same chance for learning as their sons. Lottie loved to learn new languages. She studied French, Italian, and Latin, and she mastered the languages of the Bible. Lottie graduated from the Albemarle Female Institute in 1861. She became one of the first Southern women to receive a Masters of Arts degree. For several years after her graduation, Lottie taught school in Cartersville, Georgia.



**Societies** were groups that were started by individuals in order to support things like missions, schools, and publishing books. Mission societies raised the money that allowed missionaries to work in the United States and in other countries.

After the Civil War, opportunities arose for women that had not been available before, and Lottie began asking questions about women's roles in the church. She wondered why women could have opportunities in society, but could not serve God's church in new ways.

Lottie sensed a call to be a Christian missionary early in her life. At that time, however, **mission societies** did not allow single women to go alone as missionaries. In order

for her to do mission work, she would have to marry a missionary. But the wives of missionaries serving in China had recently learned that only women could minister to Chinese women, and the missionary wives sent word for help.



They said that even single women would be welcomed to serve in China. In response to the call for help, Lottie's sister Edmonia went to North China in 1872. Soon after, Lottie heard God's calling to China "as clear as a bell."



She followed her sister to China a year later and began work at the Baptist station at Tengchow.

Lottie worked in China just as she had in the United States. She taught school. Lottie taught reading, arithmetic, and geography to her Chinese students. She also gave them singing lessons. For Lottie, teaching was a way of doing ministry. She ran a girls' school, and then other schools for boys and girls. At one point, she managed six schools at one time.

Although Lottie was committed to education, she soon discovered that the schools did not have to be her only avenue of ministry. She was concerned with the spiritual lives of Chinese women. She preached to them, taught Bible studies to them, cared for poor women in her home, and traveled from village to village teaching women to read and work. She even made cookies to give to children in order to build relationships with them. The children affectionately called her "the cookie lady," and her reputation in her village spread. In doing these tasks, Lottie found that



*Lottie and her Chinese friends*

she could share the love of Jesus with the Chinese people.

When Lottie first arrived in China, she admitted that she considered the Chinese as people less valuable than Americans. She had been raised in a wealthy family, and she had a fine education. She wore American clothes to set herself apart from the Chinese. Separating herself from the Chinese comforted Lottie.

Soon Lottie realized that the Chinese people acted more interested in getting to know her if she showed concern for them. She began wearing Chinese clothing, mastered the Chinese language, and came to respect the Chinese culture. Because she appreciated their traditions, the Chinese people accepted Lottie.

Lottie told of her discovery in a letter back home to one of the Baptist mission leaders. She wrote, "I am more

and more impressed by the belief that to win these people to God we must first win them to ourselves. We need to go out and live among them, manifesting the gentle and loving spirit of our Lord. . . . We need to make friends before we can hope to win converts," or people who decide follow Christ. Lottie learned to do missions in a new way and became a model for sharing Jesus' love.

Believing that God granted her, an unmarried female missionary, gifts equal to those of the men, Lottie declared that women should receive the same opportunities for ministry and mission work as men. She wrote about her views of women's roles and influenced others to believe in the rights of women to perform professional roles.

Lottie continued teaching, and her Bible studies for women became so popular that sometimes men would sit in the next room to listen. At that time in both China and America, women did not customarily teach men. When men began attending her classes, Lottie continued teaching. She claimed that she could not turn men away who wanted to be taught the Bible while "some young man among Southern Baptists in America who *ought* to be" in China stayed home. When some criticized her for preaching, she said that if they did not like what she was doing, they could send men to do it better.

While in China, Lottie wrote letters to leaders at the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board to tell them of the desperate need for more missionary workers in China. She wrote to Baptist women to encourage them



*Lottie near the end of her career*

to create mission societies in their churches for the support of foreign missions. In 1888, Lottie suggested that a Christmas offering be collected to send missionaries to help her and to support her work. Her plea succeeded, and the offering became a tradition each Christmas for Southern Baptists. Through the 2006 offering, the Lottie Moon Offering had raised a total of \$2,883,824,379.98 for foreign missions. What a gift!

Lottie experienced many joys during her missionary years. She saw Chinese people accept the

gospel message and become followers of Jesus. She saw lives changed through the relationships she formed. Lottie also experienced sadness, loneliness, and hardship. When China entered a war with Japan in 1894, Lottie and other missionaries were accused of being spies for the Japanese. A famine struck China in 1912. Lottie's devotion to the Chinese people motivated her to give up her own money and food so that they could eat. Sadly, her sharing affected



her own health. She gave so much away and refused to eat until she weighed only fifty pounds. Her failing health concerned the other missionaries. They arranged to send Lottie home to the United States to recover. Sadly, she did not make it home. Lottie Moon died aboard a ship in a Japanese harbor waiting to return to the United States.

Lottie's legacy is best known because of the offering that bears her name. Her story is still told in Baptist churches almost one hundred years after her death. The letter she wrote home in 1888 requesting that an offering be taken to support foreign missions started a tradition for Southern Baptists. Each year, churches give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to raise money for missions not only in Lottie's China, but all around the world. Tens of millions of dollars are collected each year, making it one of the largest offerings collected by Christians.

Lottie Moon painted a new portrait for Baptist women. Her example and devotion as an unmarried woman missionary proved that women had gifts and skills to do ministry. Women's roles in ministry did not change quickly, but Lottie became a role model for many Baptist women. Her example encouraged them both to support missions and to commit their lives to serving as missionaries and ministers themselves.

Lottie's work in China provided opportunities for the Christian message to be shared among the Chinese people. She opened doors for missionaries to go and work among the people there, and she opened the hearts



of the people to hear and believe the gospel.

Lottie was a teacher. She taught girls and boys how to read and write, and she gave them a chance to become successful. More importantly, however, Lottie taught about Jesus. She taught God's children of all ages about the Bible and about God's love for them. She showed them how to live faithfully and how to love their neighbors. Lottie Moon, through her love for God and for the Chinese people, emerged as a Baptist hero who still teaches us how to follow Jesus today.

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STORIES OF BAPTIST HEROES

Written by Julie Whidden Long, this 128-page book, designed especially for younger youth and older children, presents the stories of Baptist heroes. These heroes lived in various countries and centuries and represent many phases of Baptist life. By highlighting the biographical dimension of the Baptist past, these inspiring stories help readers appreciate the personal contributions of heroic Baptist men and women.



Rev. Julie Whidden Long is the pastor of First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, Georgia. She previously served as minister of children and families (2005–2013) and associate pastor (2013–2018) at FBCX Macon. Additionally, Rev. Long was the associate director of Baptist Women in Ministry (2018–2019) and launched a coaching and consulting practice in 2020. A native of Fitzgerald, Georgia, she is a two-time graduate of Mercer University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Christianity and History from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 2002 and a Master of Divinity from McAfee School of Theology in 2005. She is married to Jody Long, executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia, and they have two children.