

Pk's Perspectives ... Charlotte "Lottie" Diggs Moon

Charlotte "Lottie" Diggs Moon was born on December 12, 1840, in Albemarle County, Virginia. Her family owned large tracts of farming land and was quite wealthy in the pre-Civil War South. She was the fourth of seven siblings that survived into adulthood. The wealth of the Moon family provided the children, including the girls, with extensive educational opportunities.

Lottie excelled in literature and languages; she learned Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish in school. By the time she completed her master's degree, well-known Baptist preacher and professor John Broadus considered her to be the best-educated woman in the South. Lottie's family endured the Civil War but lost their fortune in the aftermath.

Lottie had always been adventurous and dreamed of becoming a missionary. But being Southern Baptist, a single woman was not permitted on the foreign mission field...until her younger sister, Edmonia, applied and was accepted to become an intern to Tarleton & Martha Crawford in China. Lottie decided if they'd accept one single woman as missionary, surely they'd accept two. She applied and was sent to China! To become a missionary, she had to sign a contract stating that she was committed to staying in China until a "total breakdown of health, or death."

Lottie spent 39 years in China. She began her work by forming a school for girls. At the beginning, she could only get five girls to come to her school. But it soon grew. Life was difficult on the mission field. It was hard to be accepted by the Chinese people—they called her a "foreign devil!" She was in China during the Boxer Rebellion and saw the atrocities of war again—much like she'd seen in the Civil War. Lottie's sister, Edmonia, had a mental breakdown and had to return to the United States. Because of this, Lottie began a series of letters to the Southern Baptist Mission Board encouraging them to consider the needs of their missionaries. During Lottie's 39 years in China, many of her fellow missionaries had mental breakdowns or died from the difficult conditions. Lottie continually fought for new missionaries to be placed to help with the work and for the health of those working alongside her. She shared her stories with the Women's Missionary Union (WMU) which was begun around the same time she went to China. Because of her convincing letters, women rallied to raise money for many of Lottie's projects.

Lottie led thousands of people to the Lord. She began schools, churches, and hospitals. She was also the first single woman allowed to open a new mission station. She found that she was more readily accepted by the Chinese people when she dressed like them. And she found the clothes to be much warmer and more comfortable.

Southern Baptist missionaries today have Lottie to thank for furloughs. The board implemented furloughs so the missionaries could come home every ten years (and now every four years) with the intent to rest. That change came because of her letters.

During the end of Lottie's ministry, China was experiencing a drought. There wasn't enough food for the people to eat, so Lottie would share her food with the needy. No one knew Lottie wasn't eating so she could share her food with others. By the time her fellow workers realized what she was doing, she weighed 50 pounds. They all agreed she must go home and recover. She died aboard a ship on her way home on Christmas Eve, 1912. A young missionary accompanying her said she raised her hands in greeting in the typical Chinese manner moments before she died.

The WMU named the annual Christmas missions offering after Lottie. Today, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is collected in Southern Baptist churches in December—exclusively for the support of our 3600+ international missionaries. Your sacrificial gift through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering will produce spiritual fruit that stretches into eternity. Grace, peace, & Merry Christmas! Love you, PK.