

About Major W. Ian Thomas

Some Christians learn that the Lord can make life an adventure. Major W. Ian Thomas of England is one of them.

The Major is every inch a soldier. With his infantry battalion he served in the British Expeditionary Forces in Belgium at the outset of World War II and took part in the evacuation at Dunkirk. Often in combat, in France, Italy, Greece, and elsewhere during the long war, he found the Lord Jesus to be his complete sufficiency. The Major is likewise a soldier of in Christ, faithful to the Captain of our salvation. He has found life an adventure with God.



Reared in a "respectable" middle-class English home, he was taken to church and taught its precepts. He learned little or nothing of the Bible, however, either at home or in the church attended by the family. At the age of twelve he was invited to a Bible study group of the Crusaders' Union by a lad of thirteen who, during that year, received Christ as his Savior. The Bible began to be meaningful to young Ian, and the following summer, still twelve years old, he was converted to Christ at a Crusaders' Union camp. That decision was made when he was alone simply by praying earnestly, "Lord Jesus, please be my Savior"! At the age of fifteen, he felt convinced that he should devote all of his life to the service of the Lord Jesus. He told God that he would become a missionary. He began to preach out in the open air at Hampstead Heath at that early age. He was also actively engaged in Sunday School work as well as in the Crusaders' Bible class. Life became a round of ceaseless activity.

Speaking of his youthful decision to become a missionary, he said: "I began to consider the best area in which I could become a missionary and the best means I could employ to be most effective--perfectly sincere and genuine questions." The first missionary influence upon young Ian's life came through a doctor serving in Nigeria in the Housa Band. "First impressions are often the strongest," related Major Thomas, and so it became his ambition one day to go and join the Housa Band in Nigeria, West Africa. He thought the best thing for him to do was to become a doctor.

At the university Ian became a leader in the Inter-Varsity Fellowship group. If ever there was any evangelistic activity going on, this youthful zealot was "buzzing around the place, every holiday, every spare moment"! He started a slum club down in the East End of London "out of a sheer desire to win souls, to go out and get them. I was a windmill of activity until, at the age of nineteen, every moment of my day was packed tight with doing things. Thus by the age of nineteen, I had been reduced to a state of complete exhaustion spiritually, until I felt that there was no point going on."

"Then, one night in November, that year, just at midnight, I got down on my knees before God, and I just wept in sheer despair. I said, 'Oh, God, I know that I am saved. I love Jesus Christ. I am perfectly convinced that I am converted. With all my heart I have wanted to serve Thee. I have tried to my uttermost and I am a hopeless failure.' That night things happened.

I can honestly say that I had never once heard from the lips of men the message that came to me then but God, that night simply focused upon me the Bible message of Christ Who Is Our Life. The Lord seemed to make plain to me that night, through my tears of bitterness: 'You see, for seven years, with utmost sincerity, you have been trying to live for Me, on My behalf, the life that I have been waiting for seven years to live through you.'" That night, all in the space of an hour, Ian Thomas discovered the secret of the adventurous life. He said: "I got up the next morning to an entirely different Christian life, but I want to emphasize this: I had not received one iota more than I had already had for seven years!" When he is not traveling, Major Thomas resides in Estes Park Colorado, where his wife, Joan Thomas, and his eldest son, Chris Thomas, live along with Chris' family. All Major Thomas' sons are spread throughout the world and are active in the Torchbearer Ministry.

Chris is the Director of Torchbearers International. Mark, is the Regional Director of all the Torchbearer operations in Europe, based at Capernwray Hall, the Torchbearer Bible School near the town of Carnforth, England. Peter is based at Monavale Homestead, the Torchbearer Bible School and Conference Center near Cambridge, New Zealand, in addition to being the Regional Director of all Torchbearer operations in the Asia-Pacific region. Major Thomas' youngest son, Andy, is actively involved in the ministry of Torchbearers but in a different way; he is a craftsman. He has been known to say, "My brothers preach, I work"! His participation in the ministry has been of great value as he leads in the construction of nearly all the new building projects.

Major Thomas continues to serve the living Lord Jesus in his 90's. He still teaches and preaches, and speaks personally to his many visitors over a cup of tea. His latest book is 'The Indwelling Life of Christ'. He is still enjoying the adventure of sharing Christ's life.