



**DiscipleLand**

*Missionary Biography Questions*

Level 2, Quarter A—Cameron Townsend

Integrate these questions and activities into your **DiscipleLand** Missionary Biography time. Expand your children's understanding of each story segment.

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## 2A—Missionary Biography

### Cameron Townsend

#### Teacher Intro—CAMERON TOWNSEND (1896—1982)

“The greatest missionary is the Word of God in the heart-language of the people.” In his early years, Cameron Townsend developed many of the characteristics that God used mightily to do “Kingdom exploits.” An unlikely candidate for missionary work, “Uncle Cam” proved to be way ahead of his colleagues. The impact of his life has been remarkable. He dreamed wild dreams - many of which came true! Christian community development, language acquisition, technology harnessed for missionary purposes, making friends in “high places,” all these were results of his indefatigable efforts to bring the Scriptures to people in their heart-language. Cameron Townsend’s life story is exciting. As you share it with your children, you will rejoice together at the multifaceted way God’s glory shines forth.

#### Lesson 1—Early Days

Read the story from page 12 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Kids can focus and accomplish many things.

##### Discussion Questions:

**Where did Cameron grow up?** (Cameron lived on a farm in California.)

**His father led the family in Bible reading and prayer twice a day. Do you think that made a difference in Cameron’s life? How?**

**Cameron worked and paid for his own expenses. Do you work to earn money? What jobs do you do?**

**When Cameron was a teenager, he nearly drowned. Cameron focused on the seriousness of life because he almost died. What did Cameron decide to do?** (He decided to work harder at his studies.) **Why did Cameron think it was important to focus on his studies?** (Possible answers: learning is important, God could use the things he learns, etc.)

**What was the result of Cameron’s focus on learning?** (He graduated as the top student.) **Do you focus on learning?**

**What are some things God might want you to focus on?**

**When we focus on God, He will help and guide us. What are some ways you can focus on God?**

##### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to stay focused on God.

Have the students draw a picture of them focusing on God.

Look at a craft store for the wiggly eyes. Let the kids glue the eyes on their picture and write, “Focus on God.” Pray with the children and ask God to help them focus on God this week.

Be sure to visit the Wycliffe website ([www.wycliffe.org](http://www.wycliffe.org)) for information about the organization founded by Cameron Townsend. Encourage the kids to visit the kids’ site ([www.wycliffe.org/Kids.aspx](http://www.wycliffe.org/Kids.aspx)). You may want to order some resources for your class: the video “KC Travels,” the CD-rom “Translation Daze,” or the book “Akebu to Zapotec: A Book of Bibleless Peoples.”

#### Lesson 2—Bible Salesman in Guatemala

The story so far... **Cameron Townsend grew up in a Christian home. As a teenager he nearly drowned. This caused him to focus on the seriousness of life. Cameron studied hard and was the top student in his graduating class.**

Read the story from page 18 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Always be willing to serve God.

##### Discussion Questions:

**In college, Cameron heard a missionary speak. Have you heard missionaries speak? Who? What did you learn from them?**

**After hearing the missionary, Cameron began to think about becoming a missionary. Have you ever thought about becoming a missionary?**

**Cameron served his country in World War I. Do you know anyone that has served their country in a war?**

**While the war was still being fought, Cameron had the opportunity to go to Guatemala. What was he asked to do in Guatemala?** (He was going to sell Bibles and give out tracts in Spanish.) **How did Cameron know that God wanted him to go to Guatemala?** (God answered his prayer and he was allowed to leave the war.) **Has God answered a prayer of yours? Tell us about it.**

**Cameron was willing to serve God. Are you willing to serve God? What could you do this week to serve God?**

##### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to serve God.

Have the students make a poster. Set out paper and washable inkpads. Since serving usually involves our hands in some way, let the kids put their fingers in the ink and use their fingerprints to write the words “Serve God.” Children can use markers to decorate their posters. Pray with the children and ask God to help them serve Him this week.

### Lesson 3—God Speaks Cakchiquel

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend heard a missionary speak and began to consider becoming a missionary. He was given an opportunity to go to Guatemala to sell Bibles and give out tracts in Spanish.**

Read the story from page 24 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Keep working hard at whatever God has for you to do.

#### Discussion Questions:

Show your students where Guatemala is located on a map or globe.

**Why was Cameron called “Mr. Shrimp?”** (That’s what Cameron means in Spanish.) **Do you know what your name means in English?**

**The other missionaries didn’t think Cameron would last in Guatemala. Why might they have said that? Did Cameron give up and go home?** (No.)

**Why do you suppose Cameron’s Spanish got better and better?** (Cameron worked hard to learn it.)

**Cameron did everything he was asked. He went on dangerous roads and slept on the floor. Do you do everything that is asked of you? Explain your answer.**

**Cameron wanted to help the Cakchiquel (Catch-e-kel) Indians.** Have the kids practice saying the Indian name Cakchiquel.

**Cameron was a hard worker. Are you a hard worker? What things do you work hard to do? Why do you think it is good for missionaries to be hard workers?**

#### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to be a hard worker for God.

Have the students draw a picture of them working hard for God. Pray with the children and ask God to help them be hard workers for Him this week.

### Lesson 4—Nothing is Impossible with God

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend worked hard in Guatemala. He traveled over dangerous roads and slept on the floor. On one trip, he learned about the Cakchiquel (Catch-e-kel) Indians.**

Read the story from page 30 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Be courageous for God.

#### Discussion Questions:

Read Joshua 1:9 to the class. Talk about the meaning of the word “courageous.”

**It took courage for Cameron to stay and help the earthquake victims. How do you think Cameron felt? When have you shown courage?**

**Cameron decided to stay in Guatemala. What did he want to do there?** (He wanted to start a school for Cakchiquel Indians and create a written language for them.) **Does this sound easy or hard?**

**Imagine a language that doesn’t have any written symbols like alphabet letters. It sounds impossible to come up with written symbols for a whole language, but Cameron was courageous enough to do it! He knew that with God—nothing was impossible. What are some courageous things you want to do someday for Jesus?**

**Do you think missionaries today need courage? Why or why not?**

#### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to be courageous for God.

Have the students draw a picture of them doing something courageous for God. The kids might want to copy part of Joshua 1:9 on their pictures. Pray with the children and ask God to help them be courageous for Him this week.

### Lesson 5—Cameron Marries Elvira

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend courageously helps the earthquake victims. He decides to stay in Guatemala and help the Cakchiquel Indians by starting a school and writing down their language.**

Read the story from page 36 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Pray and be confident of God's answer.

#### Discussion Questions:

**What did Cameron do on Valentine's Day?** (He asked Elvira to marry him.) **How did he meet Elvira?** (They were both missionaries in Guatemala.)

**Elvira and Cameron wanted to know whether or not they should get married. What did they do to find out?** (They prayed.)

**They got married because they were confident that God answered, "Yes." Have you or your family prayed before making a big decision? Explain.**

**On their honeymoon the Townsends ministered to the Cakchiquel Indians. What did Elvira do?** (She played the organ.) **What did Cameron do?** (He preached and gave out parts of the Spanish Bible.)

**Cameron began to work on the school for the Cakchiquel people and study their language. Do you think Cameron was confident that this was what God wanted him to do?**

#### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to pray and be confident of God's answer.

Have the students trace both hands on a paper and cut them out. Let the kids hold the hands together in a praying hands position (palms together). On the outside of the hands, have the kids write "Be" and "Confident." On the inside of the hands, the kids should write "God" and "Answers." Talk about times God has answered their prayers. Pray with the children and ask God to help them be confident of His answers to their prayers this week.

### Lesson 6—Language Learning Pays Off

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend prayed and felt confident that he should marry Elvira. Together they ministered to the Cakchiquel Indians. Cameron started a school for the Indians and began to study their language.**

Read the story from page 42 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* When God is involved, expect good things to happen.

#### Discussion Questions:

**What does "optimistic" mean?** (Optimistic means to expect something good to happen.) **How did Cameron show optimism?** (He took a language that wasn't written down and created a Bible for them.)

**How do you think Cameron felt when he began work on writing down the Cakchiquel language? How do you think he felt when the Bible translation was finished?**

**How long was Cameron in Guatemala?** (He was in Guatemala for four years.) **Where did the Townsends go for a rest?** (They went to California.)

**While in California they talked about their work in Guatemala. Two more missionary couples agreed to join them. Do you think Cameron expected good things to happen when the missionaries joined them?**

**Explain Cameron's quote: "If we will do the possible, God will do the impossible."**

**What are some good things that have happened to you? With God's help, what good things do you expect to happen in your life?**

#### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to expect good things to happen.

Have the students make a bracelet that says, "Expect good things." Set out construction paper or cardstock. Cut 1-inch strips. Let the kids decorate the bracelets and tape them on their wrists. Talk about how to look each day for the good things that happen (teacher picks you to be a helper, get invited to a party, win a game, etc.). Pray with the children and ask God to help them look for good things that happen this week.

## Lesson 7—Travel and Illness . . . and Lots of Ideas!

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend worked on the Cakchiquel Bible translation. After four years of living in Guatemala, the Townsends took a rest in California. Two other missionary couples joined them in their work. The Cakchiquel Bible was finally finished.**

Read the story from page 48 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Keep thinking of ways to serve God.

### Discussion Questions:

**How do you think Cameron celebrated the arrival of the Cakchiquel Bible? How do you think he felt giving the president of Guatemala a Cakchiquel Bible?**

**Cameron became sick. What was his illness?** (He was sick with tuberculosis.) **Tuberculosis usually affects the lungs and the person has a cough, fever, weight loss and chest pain. The Townsends returned to California so that Cameron could get well. What health problem did Elvira have?** (She had heart problems.)

**While resting in California, did Cameron forget about his missionary work?** (No.) **What was he busy doing?** (He prayed and planned new ways to serve God.) **What were his new ideas?** (He wanted airplanes to fly missionaries to hard-to-reach places and a school to train missionaries.)

**Cameron wanted to start a missionary school in Mexico. Did that work out?** (No.) **Did Cameron give up?** (No.)

**Why should missionaries be thinking and planning new ways to serve God?**

**Can you think of a new way for you to serve God? What is it?**

### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to keep thinking of ways to serve God.

Have the students draw a picture of them serving God in a new way. Pray with the children and ask God to help them think about new ways they can serve Him this week.

## Lesson 8—Trouble and Joy

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend finally received copies of the Cakchiquel Bible and gave one to the president of Guatemala. Both Cameron and Elvira were sick and needed to rest in California. Cameron's mind didn't rest, he thought of new ways to serve God—airplanes for missionaries and a school to train missionaries.**

Read the story from page 54 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Help others learn how to serve God.

### Discussion Questions:

**What was the name of the first school to train missionaries?** (Camp Wycliffe was the school's name.) **Where was the school located?** (The school was located in Arkansas.) **What was the school like?** (Everyone sat on nail kegs, slept on the floor and learned how to translate the Bible into new languages.) **Does Camp Wycliffe sound like a place you would have liked to attend?**

**What happened to the number of people that attended Camp Wycliffe each year?** (Each year the numbers grew.)

**What did Cameron want people to know?** (He wanted people to know that thousands of tribes didn't have a written language so they couldn't have a Bible.)

**Cameron wanted everyone to have God's Word in his or her "heart language." What do you think a "heart-language" is?** (Heart-language is the language you grew up speaking.) **Do you have a Bible in your "heart-language?" Why do you think it is important for people to see that God speaks their heart-language?** (It shows that God loves them and knows how to communicate to them in their language.)

**Cameron taught people about the needs of the Bibleless peoples. How did he teach this to them?** (He spoke in churches and wrote books.) **How can you teach people about the needs of Bibleless people?**

**People learned about the need for Bible translators and many joined with Cameron to learn how to serve God through translating the Bible. Would you like to learn to be a Bible translator?**

### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to help teach others how to serve God.

Have the students draw a picture of them teaching someone about ways to serve God. You could make a code for the children to crack (look on the Internet for codes). Write the memory verse or a favorite verse in the code. Let the kids practice translating the verse. Pray with the children and ask God to help them hear what He has to say to them this week.



## Lesson 9—Ideas Turn Into Organizations

The story so far... **Cameron Townsend started a missionary training school named Camp Wycliffe. He spoke and wrote to teach people about the need for Bible translators. Many people answered the call and become Bible translators.**

Read the story from page 60 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* It is important to care for the needs of people.

### Discussion Questions:

**Did everyone care for the needs of the uneducated tribal people?** (No.) **Did Cameron?** (Yes.) **Does caring for someone's needs show God's love?** (Yes.)

**What are some needs that missionaries help meet?** (Needs: learn about Jesus, food, water, shelter, clothes, happiness.)

**When has someone cared for one of your needs? When have you cared for someone's needs?**

**Cameron started three new organizations to care for the needs of missionaries who help people without Bibles in their heart-languages. Wycliffe cares for the needs of missionaries, Summer Institute of Linguistics cares for the needs of the translators and JAARS cares for the travel needs of missionaries. How do you think Cameron felt when these organizations became successful? Which of these three organizations would you like to visit? Why?**

**How does your church care for the needs of people in your community?**

### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to care for people's needs.

Have the students make a collage of pictures that show them caring for the needs of people. Pray with the children and ask God to help them care for the needs of others this week.

## Lesson 10—From Disaster to Blessing

The story so far... **Cameron Townsend cared for the needs of the Bibleless peoples. He started three organizations to help meet the needs of missionaries who translated Bibles (Wycliffe Bible Translators, Summer Institute of Linguistics and Jungle Aviation and Radio Services).**

Read the story from page 66 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Stay busy doing God's work.

### Discussion Questions:

**Cameron thought it was important for single women to be able to serve God. Many single women became translators. Why do you think single women were discouraged from becoming missionaries?** (Possible answers: dangerous, won't find a husband, too hard physically for them, not proper, etc.)

**Cameron was always busy traveling and telling people about the tribes without a Bible in their heart-languages. Why did he stay so busy talking to people about the Bibleless tribes?** (He was one of the only people doing that and he saw how big the need was.)

**What very sad thing happened in Cameron's life in 1944?** (Elvira died.) **Do you think that Cameron will retire?** (No.)

**Even when life is hard and sad things happen, we can stay busy for God just like Cameron did. What things are you busy doing? What things are you busy doing for God?**

### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to stay busy doing things for God.

Have the students draw a picture of a clock (with hour and minute hands and numbers). Beside each number on the clock, the kids can draw a picture of something they could stay doing for God. Pray with the children and ask God to help them stay busy doing things for Him this week.

## Lesson 11—A Second Mrs. Townsend

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend's wife died, but he stayed busy telling people about the tribes without a Bible in their heart-languages.**

Read the story from page 72 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Never stop doing what God wants you to do.

### Discussion Questions:

**At Mrs. Townsend's funeral, people sent Spanish New Testaments instead of flowers. Why do you think they did that?**

**Cameron took the Bibles and gave them to the people in Guatemala. How do you think he felt as he gave out those New Testaments?**

**Perseverance means to keep on going, even when things are hard and you want to quit. Do you think it was easy or hard for Cameron to keep going without his wife?**

**Cameron did persevere and started new work in Peru.** Show your students where Peru is located on a map or globe.

**On a visit to Guatemala he met Elaine, a teacher of missionary children. After writing letters back and forth, they got married. How many years did they work together in Peru? (10) How many children did they have? (4)**

**Cameron was glad that he persevered after Elvira's death, now he had a wife and kids. Have you ever persevered? Explain.**

### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder to persevere.

Have the students start writing the words, "Keep on keeping on" all over a paper. Kids should start in a corner and keep writing the slogan over and over as the words wind or snake all over the paper. Pray with the children and ask God to help them keep on working hard for Him this week.

## Lesson 12—World Travel and Famous People

The story so far...**Cameron Townsend took the Spanish New Testaments from his wife's funeral and personally gave them to the Guatemalan people. He persevered and started new work in Peru. Cameron remarried and they had four children.**

Read the story from page 78 of the DiscipleLand Teacher Guide.

*Big Idea:* Always be ready for God to send you a new adventure.

### Discussion Questions:

**As Cameron got older, he didn't slow down or rest, instead he was adventuresome. What does it mean to be adventuresome? Do you think that you are adventuresome? Why or why not?**

**One adventure led to Mr. and Mrs. Townsend being in a plane crash. God protected them and they lived. Do you think the plane crash ended the Townsend's time as missionaries? (No.)**

**The Townsends traveled and spoke to audiences. They invited people to join Wycliffe Bible Translators. If you heard Cameron speak, do you think you would become a Bible translator?**

**Cameron and Elaine moved to the Soviet Union (now Russia) and it was very dangerous. They started Bible translation work there even though it wasn't safe to do that. Would you work on Bible translation if it weren't safe? Why or why not? Why do you think people continue to be Bible translators in unsafe places?**

**How old was Cameron when he died? (85) Did the Bible translation work stop because he died? (No.) What is Wycliffe's 2025 plan? (They plan to have translations started in every single language by the year 2025.) They will need lots of new Bible translators to accomplish that awesome goal. Take a few minutes and have the class pray for Christians to answer the call to be Bible translators.**

### Do Something About It...

*Objective:* Create a visual reminder the life of Cameron Townsend.

Have the students draw a picture of Cameron Townsend. Talk about some of the things he did: went to Guatemala to sell Bibles, started a school for Cakchiquel Indians, wrote down the Cakchiquel language, translated the Bible into Cakchiquel, started three organizations to help Bible translators, traveled, spoke and wrote about Bibleless peoples. Pray with the children and ask God to help them serve Him like Cameron Townsend did.

NOTE: This is a good time to remind the children to check out Wycliffe's wonderful children's website ([wycliffe.org/kids.aspx](http://wycliffe.org/kids.aspx)). Also encourage the kids to look at the Wordspring Discovery Center website ([wycliffe.org/wordspring](http://wycliffe.org/wordspring)).