

Because I cannot say it better myself, I am simply passing on to you [what Pastor Tim Challies wrote](#) about an event I missed last Sunday. Sunday was the 56th anniversary of the deaths of five young men giving the gospel to an unreached people group in the jungles of Ecuador in South America. They are known as the 5 Ecuadorian Martyrs. I wish I would have been on the ball about the anniversary, but I missed it. I need to get better at those kinds of things so that our church benefits from the history of Christianity. You might know the name Elisabeth Elliot. Her husband, Jim Elliot, was killed that day along with the other young husbands and fathers. The rest of today's musing comes from [the keyboard of Pastor Tim Challies](#).

The Ecuadorian Martyrs Tim Challies 01/09/12

Sunday was the 56th anniversary of the deaths of the missionary martyrs to Ecuador: Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Peter Fleming, Ed McCully, and Roger Youderian. As I pondered that event, I began to think about the impact of their deaths and how the Lord has used it both in the short-term and in the long-term.

The impact of their deaths, at least until now, appears to have been greatest among American evangelicals and the US missions movement.

In the US

Just days after the men were killed on January 8, 1956, LIFE magazine sent photographer and reporter Cornell Capa to cover the story, which was then published within the month. (You can now [read the entire article online](#) in its original printed form; Capa quotes at length from the diaries of Nate Saint and Peter Fleming.)

And within just a year of their deaths, Elisabeth Elliot, the widow of Jim Elliot, published [Through Gates of Splendor](#), a best seller which told the story of these men and their mission to reach the Auca Indians. Soon after she also published [Shadow of the Almighty](#), which focused more particularly on her late husband and the broader scope of his life.

These publications, along with many others then and afterward, helped make the deaths of these men famous in America and around the world. Their story inspired a generation and is said to have resulted in hundreds more joining the mission field and millions more dollars being given toward the cause.

One indicator of the ongoing influence of their story is that, on the 50th anniversary of their deaths, another book was released ([End of the Spear](#), written by Steve Saint, Nate Saint's son) as well as a [major motion picture](#) by the same title.

Among the Aucas

Though the majority of their influence may be on their homeland, the ministry of the men who died has not failed to bear fruit among the Auca as well.

Around the same time *End of the Spear* was released, *Christianity Today* published an [article](#) retelling the missionaries' story and updating us on what has happened among the Aucas since that time. After their husbands' deaths, some of the widows stayed on to continue ministering to the tribe, seeing some of them come to faith.

According to the Billy Graham Center archives, at least two of the men who had participated in the murder became Christians; and in 1966 they traveled to Berlin to give their [testimonies](#) at the World Congress on Evangelism.

Other Resources

- Scroll down on this page to see a [timeline of events and publications](#) related to efforts to reach the Auca.
- Listen to 2 [audio sermons by Jim Elliot](#).
- Read Steve Saint's 1996 article in *Christianity Today*, "[Did They Have to Die?](#)" in which he tells the fuller story of what happened the day his father was killed, including more information from the Auca side, and gives some personal reflections.
- Listen to a talk by Steve Saint given at the 2005 Desiring God National Conference titled "[Sovereignty, Suffering, and the Work of Missions.](#)" I was at that event and can testify that this is a powerful talk—one that had me in tears.

Mike VerWay

Pastor

First Calvary Baptist Church

Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077

www.1stcalvary.com