

TIPPING POINT:

Tipping Points in Life:

Elizabeth Elliot is probably one of the most well known missionaries of all time. And while her story is full of success and changed lives, it's also full of tragedy. Her tipping point came before any success in the mission field. In fact, it was the decisions she made at her tipping point that led to huge kingdom impact and the change of an entire tribe. Her story goes like this....

Jim Elliot, her husband, and 5 others were on a mission to reach the Auca tribe deep in the jungles of Ecuador. This tribe had been marked by violence, and had already killed several Shell Oil employees. So the team of 5 missionaries went about building a relationship with the tribe through offering gifts via buckets lowered down from a small plane. When they felt like the timing was right, the team of missionaries went to meet the Aucas face to face, and were tragically speared to death. This event rocked the world. Even Life Magazine did a 10 page expo on it.

With the horrific death of her husband, and the outcry of hate toward the Auca tribe, Elizabeth stood on her tipping point and made a decision that would rock the world equally as much. She chose love. With every reason and right to hate, Elizabeth chose the opposite. And it wasn't a choice made in words only, but was fortified in deed as she returned to the tribe just two years later and lived among them. Elizabeth (and Rachel Saint, the sister of one of the murdered missionaries) learned the culture, language, and demonstrated forgiveness to the men who murdered their family members. Her choice of love opened the door to share Christ and his love to the tribe, setting into motion the ripple effect of transformation among the Aucas.

Discuss

- What do you think Elizabeth was feeling as she stood on her tipping point?

- How do you think Elizabeth made the decision to love the people who killed her husband?

- This is obviously a drastic example of a tipping point, but on your trip, there will be several tipping points that you and your team encounter. Can you think of some? (i.e. On the second half of your trip, when you're tired, will you give your all and finish strong, or retreat with half-hearted effort? Or when your teammates go from a lot of fun, to a little annoying, how will you treat them?)

- How will you make your decisions at the tipping points you encounter on your trip?

Tipping Points in the Bible:

King Saul was on the hunt. A hunt to kill David. David had been anointed by the prophet Samuel and was going to be the next king...but not yet. Currently, Saul was the king, but he was ridden with jealousy over David and his success. David was a mighty warrior, and wherever he went, he triumphed. The Lord kept blessing him and delivering their enemies over to David and the men he led into battle. In fact, after one victory, the women of the town came out dancing and singing "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." (1 Samuel 18:7) That was it for Saul. That was the last straw and from then on, Saul couldn't help but watch David carefully and jealously.

Saul grew many plots to kill David. He was obsessed with tracking him down and killing him, but every trap he set led to another victory for David (can you imagine how frustrating that must have been?). So as the hunt continued, David was often on the run or in hiding. Until eventually, David happened upon the perfect situation. He was hiding in a cave, when Saul entered to relieve himself. There wasn't a better opportunity to take Saul's life and begin his reign as King. The only problem was, that wouldn't have been following God.

David's men tried to convince him the Lord had given David this opportunity. Take Saul's life and put an end to being hunted down like an animal. After all, wouldn't David on the throne, be better for everyone? So David stood at a tipping point. His decision, either way, would ripple throughout the kingdom and into his own kingship.

Read 1 Samuel 24

Discuss:

- How do you think David felt as he encountered this tipping point with Saul?

- What did David rely on to make his decision?

- How important is Self-Control to making the right decisions when we encounter tipping points? How about Love?

Activity

When King David or Elizabeth Elliot reached their tipping points, it wasn't the first time that they ever put into practice love or self-control or patience. They were well practiced in these because of all the tipping points along the way where they made choices to act out of the fruit of the spirit. So when the time of great trial or temptation came, they were ready.

On this trip, you will face many different tipping points. Some will be larger than others, but the decisions you make at those times will probably not be easy. Earlier you listed some potential tipping points. Consider those, as well as the overall impact of your mission trip while doing the following activity together.

Write a covenant together. How will your group agree to treat each other, and those you meet along the way, on the upcoming trip? Include specifics and make it all positive. Consider using some verses and prayers as well. When you're done writing it, have everyone sign it. Bring it on the mission trip and hang it in a common area where you can all see it each day – including your own agreement to choose to love others. Search for at least two other passages of scripture that reference choosing to love others, even when it's most difficult.

Apply It:

What is one way this week, (long before your mission trip) that you can choose to love when it's not the easiest choice? Be specific, answer the questions Who? What? When?