

# Foundations

## History: Heroes of the Faith

### George Whitefield, 1714-1770

**1714** December 16: Born at Gloucester, England, the youngest of six boys, to Thomas and Elizabeth Whitefield, at the family-owned tavern, the Bell Inn.

**1716** Father, Thomas, dies.

**1722** Mother, Elizabeth, marries Capel Longden, an ironmonger, who seizes control of the family tavern (The Bell Inn).

**1726** George enrolls at St. Mary de Crypt grammar school, where he enjoys reading plays and acting. Later drops out to help his mother with the inn.

**1728** George's mother leaves her husband. Family conflicts cause George to leave the Bell Inn and cease "drawing wine for drunkards."

**1730** Returns to his studies at St. Mary's. On Christmas, receives the Lord's Supper for the first time and determines to be more watchful over his thoughts, words, and actions.

**1732** Enrolls at Pembroke College, Oxford University. Pays expenses by working as a servitor (errand boy for other students). Begins praying three times a day and fasting weekly.

**1733** Invited to breakfast by Charles Wesley and introduced to the Holy Club's 10 or 11 earnest members. Borrows from Wesley *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* by Henry Scougal, which "showed me that I must be born again, or be damned!"

**1734** Like his Holy Club friends, seeks salvation through severe discipline and good works, which causes a breakdown of his health from which he never fully recovers.



**1735** Following five years of penitence, Whitefield becomes first of the Oxford methodists to experience "a full assurance of faith broke in upon my disconsolate soul!" Begins evangelizing, with converts organized into a society.

**1735** Leads the Holy Club (the Wesleys had become missionaries to Georgia). Completes his degree, is ordained a deacon in the Church of England, and preaches his first sermon. Returns to Oxford to pursue graduate studies, but then leaves to substitute preach for various friends. Decides to become a missionary to Georgia.

**1737** While voyage is delayed, his preaching electrifies Bristol and London; thousands pack churches to hear him. Publishes six sermons, while opponents publish against him.

**1738** Spends three months in Georgia.

**1739** Ordained a priest but finds many pulpits are now closed to him. Begins preaching outdoors, and soon tens of thousands hear of Christ in the fields. Some nobility, including the countess of Huntingdon, are drawn to Whitefield. In August, sails for America and preaches to throngs in New York and Philadelphia. Meets Ben Franklin.

**1740** In Georgia, selects a site for Bethesda, his orphanage, and preaches at every opportunity. *April*: Preaches in northern cities like Philadelphia and small towns like Fagg's Manor, where 12,000 hear him. *Midyear*: Back in Georgia. *Fall*: Preaching tour takes New England by storm.

**1741** Arriving in England in March, meets with great hostility, stirred largely by John Wesley. Publishes a counterattack against Wesley. Preaches extensively in England, Scotland, and Wales. *Nov. 14*: Marries widow Elizabeth James.

**1742** Itinerates in several parts of England. *June*: Begins five months of ministry in Scotland, and his sermons are "attended with much power" and often "a very great but decent weeping."

**1744** His 4-month-old son, John, dies of sickness and is buried February 8. George is attacked in bed and almost killed. *August*: Sails with his wife for America, arriving desperately ill in October, but soon resumes preaching.

**1745–1748** Whitefield's third visit to the Colonies, though beset with opposition, inspires a great wave of revival. In early 1748, ministers for a month or two in Bermuda.

**1748–1751** Lady Huntingdon appoints Whitefield her chaplain, lessening financial perils of his work. Whitefield ministers throughout England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, with extended ministry at the Moorfields (London) Tabernacle. Persecution slackens.

**1751–1752** Fourth visit to the Colonies, arriving in Georgia in October with a group of destitute children. Cancels plans for an extensive preaching tour when the Orphan House's financial needs send him hurriedly back to England.

**1752–1754** Tours Wales, visits Edinburgh for the seventh time, and returns to London for the opening of a new, brick Tabernacle.

**1754–1755** Fifth trip to the Colonies, with preaching from Boston to Georgia. *Sept. 1754*: Receives honorary M.A. from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton).

**1755–1763** Preaches often in London, as well as in Bristol, Gloucester, Edinburgh, Dublin, Glasgow, many places in Wales, and countless towns and villages. Travels briefly to Holland for his health.

**1763–1765** Sixth trip to the Colonies. Weak in health, ministers with difficulty in New York, Boston, and other places, generally with greater acceptance than ever.

**1765–1769** Devotes attention to London ministries, also traveling to Edinburgh and elsewhere. *August 1768*: Wife, Elizabeth, dies. Visits Trevecca, Wales, to help open Lady Huntingdon's College.

**1769–1770** Seventh and final trip to the Colonies is a difficult voyage. Arrives in Charleston and preaches for 10 days to large congregations. *May 1770*: Begins tour from Philadelphia, preaching as often as his frail body permits. *Sept. 29*: In New Hampshire, preaches final sermon and dies the following morning. Some 6,000 gather for the funeral.



## Whitefield's World

1718 Blackbeard the Pirate beheaded

1727 George II becomes king of England

1729 Ben Franklin begins *Pennsylvania Gazette*

1733 Georgia, last of 13 colonies, settled

1742 Handel's *Messiah*

1755 George Washington leads British forces in French and Indian War

1758 First Indian reservation

1770 Boston Massacre

### 1. Early Life

- Childhood

- College

- Conversion

## **2. Ministry Life**

- Teaching

- Travels



- Trials

### **3. Lessons From His Life**

- Providence of God

- People of God

- Purpose of Man