

Major Reed's Prayer



Major Walter Reed, was an army doctor in America. He looked after soldiers when they were ill. He tried to find ways to stop soldiers getting ill. Major Reed was a Christian. He did not like to see people suffer with awful illnesses. He prayed that God would help him. He wanted to find out about diseases. He wanted to find ways of stopping people suffering. He prayed about this for 20 years.

In the days when he lived bad diseases passed quickly from one soldier to another. The soldiers lived close together in camps. The diseases spread quickly. When this happened there was an epidemic. Epidemics could kill more soldiers than battles. A very serious disease at that time was Yellow Fever. In hot places soldiers often got Yellow Fever. It spread very quickly. No one knew how it spread. Did it spread through the air? Did it spread through touch? No one knew.

Major Reed was good at finding out how diseases spread. He had already found out about another disease called Typhoid. He found out that it spread through polluted drinking water. The American army made sure the soldiers had clean water to drink. There were no more Typhoid epidemics.

“Let's send Major Reed to find out about Yellow Fever,” said the army chiefs. “It kills so many soldiers. Perhaps it can be stopped too.”

Yellow Fever was a problem in the American army. It was a problem somewhere else too.

America is a very big country. American ships needed to get from the east coast to the west coast of America. They had to sail a very long way. They had to sail far, far away all round South America. They had to sail round a whole continent. They had to sail in very dangerous waters. Between North America and South America is a narrow piece of land. The sea is on both sides. Suppose a canal was cut through that narrow piece of land. The ships could sail through it. It would be a short cut. They could go from the east to the west of America. They would not need to go round South America. A French engineer started work. The narrow piece of land is in a hot part of the world. His men began making the canal. They lived in camps like soldiers. Yellow Fever broke out.

Many men died. The canal work had to stop.

The American army chiefs sent Major Reed to Cuba. Cuba is a hot country.

A doctor in Cuba had an idea. Perhaps mosquitoes spread Yellow Fever.

Major Reed decided to test the idea. He would find out if it was true. How

could he do that? He asked for some brave men to be volunteers. They

would be risking their lives. They would let a mosquito bite them. It would be a

mosquito with Yellow Fever. Then Dr Reed could watch to see if they got ill. If they got

ill then it was the mosquitoes that spread the illness. Soon some brave men said they

would help. The experiment began.



It was the mosquitoes! The experiment proved it. The army chiefs were pleased. They

knew now how to save their soldiers. They must kill the mosquitoes. Work began again

on the canal too. Americans took over the work. They killed the mosquitoes. The canal

was built.

God had answered the prayer that Major Reed had been praying for 20 years.