

Why My Friend Died: Remembering John Chau

On November 17th, 26-year-old John Allen Chau counted the cost and launched out to share the Gospel with one of the most isolated tribal people groups in the world—the Sentinelese people of North Sentinel Island in the Indian Ocean. Almost nothing is known about these ancient people who have had little to no contact with the outside world. Sadly, John Chau was killed while attempting to share the Gospel with the Sentinelese as they showered arrows towards him upon his approach to the island. Some say he was an adventure blogger who took a foolish risk for the sake of a thrill, some say he was crazy, others say he should have left the Sentinelese alone; but John Chau, now a martyr for the Lord, knew with all his heart what the world will never understand—that no risk is too great for the Gospel, and the saving power of Jesus is for everyone. May Tertullian’s statement prove true both for the life and death of John Chau, as well as the furthering of the Gospel among the Sentinelese people: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

Thank you to All-Nations Bible Translation for allowing us to share the following from their blog, and All Nations for their photo of John Chau.

Why My Friend Died

I met John Allen Chau at the Canadian Summer Institute of Linguistics in 2017. My first impression of him was of a quiet determination and a ready warm smile that lit up his whole face. There was an air of confidence about him that pervaded the atmosphere around him. Was it his faith? Was it his years of mountaineering and extensive emergency medical training? Probably all of this factored in, he was just the kind of person who inspires your confidence and trust from first encounter.

I believe it was one night in the computer lab that he shared with me his burden for reaching the people of Sentinel Island. I was impressed immediately that this was something no one but God alone could relieve him of or take from him. He had already heard all the arguments of why this was a fool’s errand and would jeopardize any mission associated with it, let alone the life of the individuals involved. He kept his vision, it was a sacred trust for him that no amount

of reasoning would wrest from his grasp. I tried to get together with him the last time in April this year. Circumstances and travel interfered, we never got together. I think we were drawn together through mutual understanding of what it is to experience God's call, a call that is clear to the one called but often inexplicable and unreasonable to others. I cautioned him, not to dissuade in any way, but that he walk quietly and humbly before God in answering this call. It was sad to hear of the presumed outcome of his visit to Sentinel Island, but to me it was no surprise. I fully expected that he would follow through no matter what obstacles were in his way, or succumb in the process. Giving up wasn't an option for John. I will always admire him and remember him for his singular dedication to God and getting His message of salvation through Jesus Christ to the Sentinelese people. May his sacrifice awake curiosity and wonderment in the hearts of the islanders and may it inspire us to pray for and work toward reaching the last groups who have not heard of our Savior—until either all have heard or God relieves us of the burden as he did for John.

-Ben S., member in training with All-Nations Bible Translation