



THE ADMIRAL OF THE OCEAN SEA

based on the book by Samuel Eliot Morison

A HomeschoolRadioShows Listening Guide
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Summary

This is a story of vision and hope and what can be accomplished when we pursue a dream. It refers to Christopher Columbus and his voyage that discovered America but it is really so much more. It is more about the spirit in which Christopher Columbus pursued life. He looked through a different looking glass. He looked with vision of opportunity and possibility. What can we learn from him?

Background

Perhaps the most famous explorer in history was Christopher Columbus. Born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451 to a weaver, young Columbus first went to sea at the age of fourteen. As a young man, he settled in Portugal and married a woman of noble background. After his wife's death in 1485, Columbus and his young son Diego moved to Spain.

Like all learned men of his time, Columbus knew the world was round. He theorized that since the earth was a sphere, a ship could eventually reach the Far East from the opposite direction. He thought to establish trade routes to Asia in this manner. The fifteenth-century Europeans were not aware of the South and North American continents during this timeframe. Mapmakers did not show an

accurate picture and no one knew there was a Pacific Ocean.

For a decade, Columbus approached the Portuguese king and the Spanish monarchs to obtain a grant to explore possible trade routes to the west. After initially turning him down, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella reconsidered once the Moors had been successfully expelled from Spain in 1492. Columbus promised to bring back gold, spices, and silks from the Far East, to spread Christianity, and to lead an expedition to China. In return, Columbus asked for and got the hereditary title "admiral of the ocean seas" and became governor of all discovered lands.

The Author

Morison, Samuel Eliot, 1887–1976, was an American Naval historian and Harvard professor. Two of Morison's books won Pulitzer Prizes: *Admiral of the Ocean Sea* (1942), a biography of Christopher Columbus, and *John Paul Jones* (1959). In 1942, Morison was commissioned by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to write a history of U.S. naval operations in World War II and given the rank of lieutenant commander (he retired from the navy in 1951 as a rear admiral). The 15 volumes of his *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* appeared between 1947 and 1962. Although he retired from Harvard in 1955, Morison continued his research and writing until his death in 1972.

Quotations

Columbus' son underlined this passage in his father's copy of the book "Media", by Seneca:
"An age will come after many years when the Ocean will loose the chain of things and a huge land lie revealed when Tethys will disclose new worlds and Thule no more be the ultimate."

"Following the light of the sun, we left the Old World." Columbus

"I am a most noteworthy sinner, but I have cried out to the Lord for grace and mercy, and they have covered me completely. I have found the sweetest consolation since I made it my whole purpose to enjoy His marvelous Presence."
Columbus

"I assure your Highnesses that these lands are the most fertile, temperate, level and beautiful countries in the world." Columbus

"Said the Mariners, this much is clear, that beyond this Cape, there is no race of men nor place of inhabitants.... while currents so terrible that no ship having once passed the cape, will ever be able to return." Gomes, Eanes de Zarara, a Portuguese historian.

"The noble spirit of this prince..was ever urging him both to begin and to carry out very great deeds." Zurara, writing about Prince Henry. He encouraged explorers in Portugal between 1419 until 1460.

Discussion & Questions

What was Columbus trying to discover? What did he in fact discover? Why is HIS discovery of America the one that is most celebrated in our culture?

As you listen to this story, you'll see that there are many different viewpoints from which to learn about Columbus and why he did what he did. Some believe he explored and risked his life for riches, others believe he did it as a mission for Jesus. What would motivate you to do such a thing?

I am reminded of this scripture from Acts 5:38-39 *"Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."*

Sometimes others look at things from a different angle than we do. Go back and listen to the part of the story that shares about the egg. Was it possible to make the egg stand? Yet others said it couldn't be done. Not only is it important to have our own dreams and purposes from God but we want to be careful to support others. Sometimes they can see a way of doing things that we cannot see. What would have happened if Christopher Columbus had listened to other people's opinions instead of listening to God? What happens when WE are one of those "other opinions"? How do we know what is from God? Discuss.

Aside from the physical difficulties of the journey, what do you think was the hardest part of Columbus' journey? Do you think it was an easier trip because he made it with his crew, or would it have been easier knowing he was risking only his own life and reputation?

What is "courage"? Does it sometimes take courage to do what is right? Does it take courage to take a stand for something you believe in, even when you are faced with opposition? Where do you get courage?

What do you think the word "mutiny" means? Do you think trying to overthrow someone's God purposed dream or plan could also be referred to as mutiny?

Today, looking back hundreds of years, we can see how successful Columbus was. Yet at the time, would we have supported him? Would we have been part of the "mutiny" against him? Would we have said, "it is impossible"? How important is it to support one another as a family?

Columbus felt a call from God. He did what others said was impossible. He

pursued. He persevered. The bible teaches us that we learn perseverance from going through trials. Columbus went through great persecution, but he believed and kept moving forward. Yet on day 32 of his journey even he was probably getting weak. Jesus however is always faithful to give us encouragement and hope. He gave Columbus a sign of hope; something that was similar to what He gave Noah, what was it? I am reminded of the scriptures from Deuteronomy 31 where the children of Israel are explorers on a mission from God.

Deuteronomy 31:8 says *"The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."* He is always faithful to give us what we need to keep going.

Columbus through his obedience to God was so successful that he left behind a legacy. A legacy is something that remains long after we pass away. A legacy is our life's purpose. Columbus was so well known for his success that hundreds of stories and poems have been written about him. You can read Walt Whitman's poem here.

Passage to India Walt Whitman (1871)
<http://www.daypoems.net/poems/2103.html>

What do you want to be remembered for? What are you doing about it now? How can you do it better?

Closing prayer: *"Dear Jesus, I thank you for the great example of explorers that have gone before us. I ask that you give me vision and purpose for my life. Please show me the direction you have for me. Please give me the strength to continue on and withstand persecution that might come with it. Help me to create a legacy that has you as the cornerstone. Thank you, I love you, in Jesus name, Amen."*

Follow Up Activities

"In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue". Why do we remember that so well? Could it be that we have heard it repeated so often? What is probably the best way to remember something? Pick a scripture and repeat it 100 times today, to yourself and to others. Did it help you remember it?

How important is it for our life's purpose to be "from God?" List some other explorers you know about that were actually missionaries. Which ones would you consider heroes? Why?

List all of the places, explorers and natural resources mentioned in the program. Write one sentence about each place.

Resource Links

<http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/hst/biography/TheLifeofChristopherColumbusfromhisownLettersandJournals/chap7.html> – A chapter from a biography of Christopher Columbus including the “egg story”

<http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/hst/biography/TheLifeofChristopherColumbusfromhisownLettersandJournals/chap1.html> – The complete biography, *The Life of Christopher Columbus from his own Letters and Journals* by Edward Everett Hale

<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/1/4/8/1488/1488.txt> - *The True Story of Christopher Columbus Called the Great Admiral* by Elbridge S. {Streeter} Brooks

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-12933117.html> – copy of a short essay entitled, “Admiral of the Ocean Sea. (worthiness of celebrating Christopher Columbus' discovery of America),” published in the *National Review*, 11/2/1992

<http://www.mariner.org/educationalad/ageofex/> - On-line exhibition showing maritime discovery from ancient times to Captain Cook's 1768 voyage to the South Pacific.

Alternate Review Questions

1. Who discovered America?
2. What was Columbus' nationality?
3. Why was he called the "Admiral of the Ocean Sea"?
4. What types of things were sought from India
5. Who was Ptolemy and when was his book Geography translated into Latin?
6. What is braggadocio?
7. Portugal began in 1140 when a Christian ruler declared himself king after a victory over who?
8. Columbus may have been inspired by Prince Henry. Who was he?
9. Columbus wrote to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, "Their Highnesses can see that I shall give them as much gold as they want... slaves as many as they shall order and I shall find a thousand other things of value..." Did this come true?
10. On Columbus' coat of arms were pictures of a castle and lion. What did these represent? What did the islands and anchors symbolize?
11. Who was Amerigo Vespucci?
12. Prince Henry could have been influenced by the legend of Prester John. Who was Prester John?
13. What was Prince Henry's nickname?
14. What is caping and keening?
15. Did people in Columbus' time have compasses?
16. Three types of ships are latins, the caravel and carracks (naos). Can you describe them?
17. Name a book that Columbus may have read?