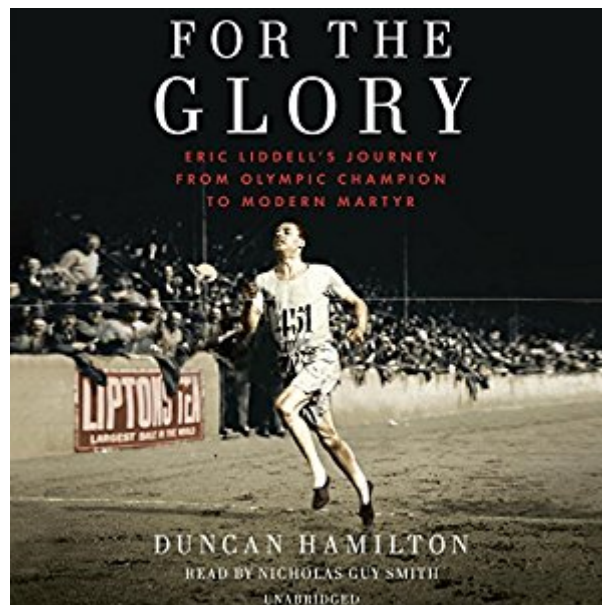




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# **For The Glory: Eric Liddell's Journey From Olympic Champion To Modern Martyr**



## Synopsis

The untold and inspiring story of Eric Liddell, hero of *Chariots of Fire*, from his Olympic medal to his missionary work in China to his last brave years in a Japanese work camp during WWII. Many people will remember Eric Liddell as the Olympic gold medalist from the Academy Award-winning film *Chariots of Fire*. Famously, Liddell would not run on Sunday because of his strict observance of the Christian Sabbath, and so he did not compete in his signature event, the 100 meters, at the 1924 Paris Olympics. He was the greatest sprinter in the world at the time, and his choice not to run was ridiculed by the British Olympic committee, his fellow athletes, and most of the world press. Yet Liddell triumphed in a new event, winning the 400 meters in Paris. Liddell ran - and lived - for the glory of his god. After winning gold, he dedicated himself to missionary work. He travelled to China to work in a local school and as a missionary. He married and had children there. By the time he could see war on the horizon, Liddell put Florence, his pregnant wife, and his children on a boat to Canada while he stayed behind, his conscience compelling him to stay among the Chinese. He and thousands of other Westerners were eventually interned at a Japanese work camp. Once imprisoned, Liddell did what he was born to do: practice his faith and his sport. He became the moral center of an unbearable world. He was the hardest worker in the camp, he counseled many of the other prisoners, he gave up his own meager portion of meals many days, and he organized games for the children there. He even raced again. For his ailing, malnourished body, it was all too much. Liddell died of a brain tumor just before the end of the war. His passing was mourned around the world, and his story still inspires. In the spirit of *The Boys in the Boat* and *Unbroken*, *For the Glory* is both a compelling narrative of athletic heroism and a gripping story of faith in the darkest circumstances.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are some historical figures who stand out because of their amazing accomplishments and there are some who stand out because of the depth of their character. There are a select few who stand out for both accomplishment and character, and prominent among them is the Flying Scotsman, Eric Liddell. Liddell accomplished great feats of athleticism, then left behind fame and fortune to pursue a much higher calling in the dangerous mission field of China. He did it all with the highest character, living a life that was very nearly unblemished before it came to an untimely end in a Japanese prison camp. His story has been told through books, movies, and documentaries, and it has just been told anew through Duncan Hamilton's *For the Glory: Eric Liddell's Journey from Olympic Champion to Modern Martyr*, easily my new favorite. Hamilton has woven together a brilliant, beautiful, stirring look at an incredible man. As far as I can tell, Hamilton does not profess to be a Christian and this gives him a different perspective on Liddell than most (or all) of his prior biographers. Many of Hamilton's other works focus on sports so perhaps it was Liddell the athlete that first drew him. Yet as he focused on the athlete he necessarily had to focus on his character and the faith that generated it. His work, then, tells far less of Liddell's inner man and far more of his words, his works, and the way others encountered and perceived him. Hamilton is especially keen to liberate Liddell from the way most of us know him—the film *Chariots of Fire*. Though that film was plenty good, it left those who viewed it with a skewed perspective of its hero. "Most of us are smart enough to realize that filmmakers who pick history as their subject tinker with the veracity of it. But our perception of an event or of a person still becomes inextricably bound to the image presented to us. So it is with *Chariots of Fire*. So it is with Liddell. We've ceased to see him. We see instead the actor Ian Charleson, who played him so compassionately." Hamilton remedies this by giving us Liddell as he was. And that is something special. There were a number of elements that made this biography stand out to me, the first of which was Hamilton's telling of the 1924 Olympics and especially of Liddell's gold medal triumph. He tells this in such a way that you can almost see it, you can almost feel the electricity of the crowd, you can almost hear them roar. It's brilliant. And yet he is sure to circle back at the end of the book, to Liddell's final race. Liddell was suffering deeply in this time, yet wanted to do something fun for the people who were with him in that Japanese prison camp. He ran one last race which, because of his failing body, he could not win. "Seen in

the terrible light of what awaited him, this race is Liddell's best and unquestionably his bravest. Where his initial speed came from, and how he managed to sustain it for so long, is unfathomable. The courage he summoned to run at all is extraordinary, a testament to his will. Liddell never competed again, and those privileged to see his farewell to athletics appreciated only retrospectively the absolute miracle he performed in front of them. The dying man had lost, but to them he was still the champion. Another element that stood out was the depth of the criticism that faced Liddell when he refused to complete his race on Sunday. The press maligned him and friends turned on him. He was regarded as daft and unpatriotic. Yet he let his character speak for itself, even as the games began. "No one was further removed from the bright young thing and the anything-goes bohemian than Eric Liddell. And an easy, but horribly flawed, assumption was made about him because of his character. His expression of religious faith was perceived as a sign of innate weakness. Because of his decision not to compete on a Sunday, Liddell was dismissed as a pacifist in top competition—a man with a soft center. The notion was ludicrous. Once, pointedly asked how he won races so often against the odds, Liddell answered: "I don't like to be beaten." On the track Liddell knew where to find the opposition's jugular—and he also knew how to rip it out. Paris was a test of temperament for Liddell long before it became a test of speed, requiring qualities no one could coach: fortitude, integrity, forgiveness, stoicism, will. You either possessed these or you didn't." He did in great measure. And then there is the account of what Liddell did with his fame. "There have always been personalities who hide only where the press and the photographers are certain to find them and plunge into fame, letting its riptide carry them away. Liddell wasn't one of them. Fame was only worthwhile because it made him much more likely to be listened to. He wasn't one of those Bible-thumping preachers who, good book in tow, had to wander peripatetically in search of audiences. The audiences came to him. The problem was finding meeting halls big enough to accommodate them." He did not seek fame, it sought him. And he used it to tell others about Jesus. But then he also left it behind to serve God in obscurity and great danger so he could tell even more people about Jesus. And then there is the account of Liddell's death and the mark it left not only on his family but on the whole community in that prison camp. Hamilton portrays Liddell as living an almost unbelievably good life that was followed by an agonizingly tragic death. His death came after much physical weakening and suffering but also much mental anguish. Not only was he separated from those he loved most, but he fell into a deep depression at least in part because doctors had told him his physical symptoms were a sign of mental weakness, that he was going through a nervous breakdown. He "felt inexplicably guilty about it [telling friends]." He said,

“There is just one thing that troubles me | I ought to have been able to cast it all on the Lord and not have broken down under it.” He died without knowing the truth, that he had a malignant brain tumor that was destroying him from within. Still, he died as he lived, professing his love for God and his dependence upon him. His last words were fitting: “I completely surrender.” Hamilton’s telling of Liddell’s life is uniformly positive, perhaps because he simply couldn’t find any major blemishes. It’s almost like he finds himself shocked at the sheer goodness of his subject. His telling occasionally reflects a little bit of antagonism toward certain Christian organizations and includes a couple of unfortunate word choices and cultural references. But these are only minor quibbles with what is otherwise a brilliant book—one of 2016’s must-read biographies. I will let Hamilton speak once more as he reflects on the life he spent so much time studying. “Valorous lives like his—which must be calculated in terms of value rather than length—encourage us to make our own lives better somehow. In his case that’s because everything he did was selfless, each kind act bespoke for someone else’s benefit. He believed entirely that those to whom much is given are obliged to give much in return—and should do so without complaining about it. In adhering to this, he never demanded grand happiness or great comfort for himself. He grasped only for the things that mattered to him: worthwhile work and the care of his family.” May he inspire us to live such simple, meaningful, surrendered lives.

In his book, *For the Glory: Eric Liddell’s Journey from Olympic Champion to Modern Martyr*, sports journalist Duncan Hamilton chronicles the life of one of the unlikeliest Gold Medalists in the history of the Games. Liddell, who was made infamous in the press for refusing to run on the Sabbath, won a race of longer distance in record-breaking time, surprising everyone but himself. But Liddell’s story doesn’t end there. Hamilton eloquently describes how this remarkable man continues his race beyond the finish line in Paris, willingly forsaking his own personal fame in order that he might answer a higher call as a missionary to China. *For the Glory* is exquisitely written, meticulously researched, and incredibly moving. Hamilton is a gifted communicator who weaves a detail-rich narrative that captures the essence of his renowned subject. From the beginning, the reader is immersed into the history surrounding Eric as he comes to life within the pages of this incredible volume. Liddell’s journey from childhood to Olympic Champion is inspiring, but it is his story after Paris that truly speaks of the man Eric is. Even as gold is refined by fire, so a man’s character is revealed in the heat of torturous circumstances. *For the Glory* is an account that allows us to see the humor, humility, and selfless sacrifice of Eric

Liddell, even as he deteriorates and succumbs in a Japanese concentration camp. I have loved Eric Liddell since I was a child and watched Chariots of Fire multiple times so, not surprisingly, I have read several biographies of his life. This book is better than a movie. For the Glory is the best biography I've read on its subject, and may be one of the best non-fiction books I've ever read. For the Glory may appeal to everyone from pure sports fans to history and biography buffs alike. May we Christians be convicted by Liddell's example and live for the glory of the One who takes us all the way to the finish line. I was given a free copy from the publisher in exchange for my honest review

Awesome inspiring story, that will lead you to wonder WHAT on EARTH have I (personally) been doing. Eric Liddell is a true saint, that gave his all for Christ. Excellent sports story too (I believe written by a sports writer?) but the overall picture is awesome and will likely bring you to your knees before our Savior. I believe this would be an excellent work for your child that is in High School or College sports, they will relate well and learn some very inspiring lessons

Chariots of Fire , a movie that captured 4 Academy awards in 1981, focuses on one small time in the life of Eric Liddell. The book brings to life the man who touched the lives of so many in England, Scotland, China, and around the world. He lived out 'the Sermon on the Mount' Duncan Hamilton's book is the best biography I've ever read, his ability to craft sentences in all his books is unusual good, but in this book, going to places and interviewing persons who knew Liddell and live with him in the internment camp, what he did, and how he enabled people for all sectors of society, readers are able to be there as well. It's a book that may well change your life as it has mine.

The movie Chariots of Fire, like all movies, required compression to tell a story that was not very well known. It's simply the nature of the medium. Duncan Hamilton in this book however gives a much fuller and robust picture of the life of Eric Liddell. It is an amazing biography one that will both thrill & inspire and well as convict and encourage. I highly recommend it to all.

Reminds me of C.T. Studd's who said, "Only one life, it will soon be past; Only what's done for Christ will last." Erin Liddell, Olympic gold medal winning considered greater value to suffer for Christ and proclaim Christ than pursuing the fleeting pleasures of these world. Why, because Christ is worthy! Great, inspiring book.

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