

# THE ENEMY GOD

## **The Journey** **A Companion Guide to the Film**

Dear Viewer,

We are excited that you are interested in exploring *The Enemy God* in more depth. This powerful true story is a testament to the reality of the spirit world, a memorial to our Yanomamö friends in Coshilowäteli (*Thriving Village*), and a legacy that they would like to leave for you to ponder...and act on. We hope that the following pages of discussion questions are helpful to you as you watch the film and the special features on your own, in a small group or in a bible study. There are also several pages of additional information about the Yanomamö people and the history of *The Enemy God* project.

If you want to learn more about indigenous people groups in the Amazon and in other regions, here are some organizations, some Christian and some not, who can help you.

- Survival International - UK-based indigenous-rights organization:  
<http://www.survival-international.org>
- Mision Padamo -Venezuelan-based NGO, led by Yanomamö:  
<http://www.missionpadamoaviation.org>
- International Mission Board (Southern Baptist Convention):  
<http://southamerica.imb.org>

Yours truly,  
The Producers of *The Enemy God*

Visit [www.TheEnemyGod.com](http://www.TheEnemyGod.com) for more information, videos, and photos.

## UNDERSTANDING THE YANOMAMÖ

The Yanomamö are, simply put, the most studied people in all of anthropology. If you take a class in cultural anthropology, you *will* study the Yanomamö. Dozens of books have been written about them, while National Geographic, NOVA and many others have produced numerous documentaries.

Some 30,000 Yanomamö live on the Brazil-Venezuelan border. They are isolated from the outside world by the vast rainforest, living by subsistence farming, fishing, hunting, and gathering. Worldwide interest in the Yanomamö began in 1968 with the publication of anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon's book, "Yanomamö, The Fierce People." Today, Googling of the words Yanomamö(o) and its alternate spelling, Yanomami, will yield over 860,000 hits!

Like most indigenous peoples, they and their lands have been abused and misappropriated by the "usual suspects": miners, rubber tree tappers, loggers and ranchers. They have been contacted and studied by anthropologists and missionaries. This has stirred up many controversies surrounding the Yanomamö. Are they endangered children of nature or indigenous warmongers on the verge of destroying themselves? Have the outsiders—anthropologists, scientists, religious workers, and filmmakers—hurt them or helped them? Should they remain isolated, only to be studied, or should they be encouraged to join society? Who has the right to speak for them? Do they have the right of self-determination as a people? These and a dozen other issues remain unresolved. With so many fragmented opinions, the battle rages to this day.

In Venezuela, unlike Brazil, the Yanomamö have no political voice. In 2006, the Chavez government closed off access to the Amazonas region of Venezuela, condemning the Venezuelan Yanomamö to a life of almost total isolation. Education is not available in most villages. Where there are village schools, they barely function and teachers' salaries are left unpaid for months at a time. With the nearest road some 300 miles away, travel into the region is limited to many-days travel by river or a much quicker trip by bush plane. But Chavez forced out the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) providing air service. Health care and even the most basic of medical supplies have become non-existent. Since then, the death rate has sky rocketed. Deaths from easily curable diseases and injuries like snakebites now threaten these isolated villagers. Many of the Yanomamö are opposed to this compulsory isolation, not only for practical reasons, but because they say, "We're not animals that need to be kept in a cage and studied."

## THE ORIGINS OF THE FILM

On behalf of his tribe, Yanomamö headman "Shoefoot" (Bautista Cajicuwa) approached missionaries who live and work with the Yanomamö with a request: to find a lasting way to tell the story of his village from a Yanomamö perspective. He was frustrated by the portrayal of his people by outsiders who claimed to speak for them. "There have been many documentaries telling about the life of my people. Most of what they say about us is not true." says Timoteo Perez, another village leader. The community asked if it would be possible to bring their story to a wider audience through a feature film. These friends of the tribe then came to 10X Productions to see if the making of a film was a possibility. *Yai Wanonabälewä: The Enemy God* is the result of that request.

## YANOMAMÖ WORLDVIEW

Our film is the true story of Shoefoot recounting his life as a shaman and the supernatural struggle for survival of his people. One of the Yanomamös' concerns is for their own survival as a people. The Yanomamö practice a cycle of revenge killings that is destroying their people at an alarming rate. This custom comes from a belief system that attributes all deaths to spiritual causes. No death is caused by germs or accidents, but rather by an enemy shaman acting through his spirits. Each death must be avenged. In their traditional culture, there are two basic ways this can be done. One is to enlist the help of your village shaman to put a curse on a member of the enemy village or, one can rally a war party to attack and kill an enemy from the opposing responsible village. The Yanomamö were trapped by this lifestyle, even though they knew it was destroying them as a people. Shoefoot and his people believe that the only hope for their survival is to follow new ways of peace that come from following the Great Spirit who they know as "Yai Wanonabälewä." In their language, that name literally means the "Enemy God." In our film, *The Enemy God*, "Shake", the main character in the film, discovers the truth about this enemy spirit, which ultimately sets his people free from their culture of fear and revenge – though not without a cost.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: THE ENEMY GOD**

As you watch the film, two major storylines emerge: Shake's questions about his spirits, and the conflict over Yellow-Petal. These two stories are intertwined but we will divide our discussion into two parts.

### **BATTLES IN THE SPIRIT WORLD – SHAKE'S STORY**

1. What is the greatest honor a shaman receives? How do you see it impact their lives?
2. What are the results of the Yanomamö view of sickness and death?
3. What is the question about spirits that drives Shake forward?
4. What event or events cause Shake to begin to question his spirits?
5. What do you learn from the film about how the Yanomamö see the interplay between the spiritual world and the physical world?
6. Early in the movie there is a scene where the warriors go out into the rainforest and tie their weapons to the "special tree." Their belief is that the tree will remove the guilt they feel - from all the people they killed in the big battle.
  - a. As the story progresses, is their belief validated?
  - b. How is the "special tree" a foreshadowing of the gospel?
7. Is the Yanomamö view of the spirit world and physical world similar to yours? How is it the same or different? What does the Bible say about these views?

### **OLD WAYS VS. NEW – YELLOW-PETAL'S STORY**

1. What values in Yanomamö culture do you see lived out in Yellow-Petal's story? What is Firelick's view of his rights as a Yanomamö man?
2. What is the difference between the "old ways" and "new ways" Shake is promoting? Do the "new ways" affect Yellow-Petal? If so, how?
3. What different views do you see promoted by "outsiders" in the film: Venezuelan soldiers, government officials, missionaries, and anthropologists?
4. What is the central question at the heart of the argument between the men over going to war toward the end of the film?

5. Since he gave up his spirits, does Shake still believe in the spirit world? How do you see that demonstrated? What is different about his spiritual practices, if anything?

### YOUR STORY

1. Does anything in the Yanomamö's story teach you anything about your life, your spirituality, etc?
2. Most Yanomamö in Venezuela live in much the same way as you saw in the "old ways" scenes. How do you feel about that?
3. Jesus told stories to spark the thinking of his audience and to move them to examine their beliefs and lives. What, if anything, about this story has impacted your life, your beliefs, your future actions?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**  
**“REVEALING THE ENEMY GOD – THE  
JOURNEY”**

**SHAMANISM**

*Read Rom. 1:18-23, and Rom10:13-15.*

1. What accurate information did the Yanomamö have about God, heaven, etc?
2. Is the information the Yanomamö people have, enough for them to put their trust in Christ? What misinformation did the Yanomamö people believe about God?
3. What part do missionaries play in closing that information gap?
4. Is this misinformation similar to misconceptions, idols and/or temptations that are prominent in our own culture? In our own lives?
5. How can you challenge these misconceptions and help topple these idols?
6. Why do some of the Yanomamö people aspire to become shamans?
7. Does this surprise you? Where do you think this aspiration comes from?
8. The Yanomamö shamans want to heal the children, and also want the “honor” of being a “Child Eater.” How are good intentions in our culture and our lives sometimes twisted in this same way?
9. According to the Yanomamö worldview, what is the cause of death and sickness? What is the outcome of this type of thinking?

**THE INDWELLING ENEMY GOD**

1. What are your thoughts about Gary’s experience?
2. What do the Yanomamö people call some of their shamans?

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3. What is the juxtaposition between “the one who lives with us” and the Christian belief of an indwelling Holy Spirit?
4. Romans 1 talks about how God has made himself known. What is one way He seems to have made himself known to the Yanomamö people, especially the shamans?
5. What does God’s dwelling in a believer depend upon?

#### WILLING HEARTS

*Read Ex. 3:9–13 and 4:1–17.*

1. What are Moses’ objections to God’s plan?
2. How does God answer these objections?
3. Do you ever see this pattern played out in your own life?
4. What limits God’s providence and can we thwart his plan for our lives?
5. What kind of opposition or hurdles did Joe and Millie face on their journey to Christ and the mission field?
6. In what ways was God’s providence apparent on their journey?
7. What hurdles do you face in your walk and how do you see God’s providence manifested?
8. What is your/your church’s vision for missions? What is “missions”? Where is your field?
9. What part of that vision is yours to take up (Giving, Praying, Going)?
10. Joe’s response to God’s initial call was, “I’d like to be a missionary but I can’t. I don’t have enough education.” What obstacles stand in the way of following God’s vision for your participation in the great commission?

## LIVING BY FAITH

Read I Tim. 5:17-18, Luke 10:7 and Deut. 25:4.

1. As “faith” missionaries, the Dawsons were required to raise their own financial support. The Dawsons decided to trust God and just not “speak of money to anybody.” Are there other Biblically acceptable approaches to missionary fund raising?
2. Joe made the comment, “We learned to trust the Lord right off the bat.” Share an experience where you were either successful or failed in trusting the Lord. Recall Joe and the check. Why do we have such a difficult time trusting God for the impossible?
3. Millie made the observation that they began depending on people rather than the Lord for daily provision. Why do we as believers tend to drift in that direction?
4. How do we prepare ourselves for times when faith is difficult? (Ps 107:3-4) Do you think the Dawson’s move to Venezuela was foolhardy or faith?
5. Joe asked Millie, “Can you be just as thankful for your ‘nothing’ as they are for their ‘whole lot’?” How would you respond to Joe’s question?
6. How can we arrive at a point of contentment in our Christian walk?
7. During their missionary training the Dawsons were faced with an empty cupboard and embarrassment at their poverty being known. Describe a situation in your walk with God that is similar to the one faced by the Dawsons.
8. Millie made the comment that God had a wonderful plan to provide for them but that she grumbled like the children of Israel. How do we as Christians do the same thing?
9. What do you think motivated the Dawsons – where did their passion come from?
10. I don’t want you to answer this next question out loud.  
In response to the kind of faith the Dawsons have demonstrated, what are some things you can pray for yourself?

## KEEPING FAITH

*Read Mat. 14:25-33.*

1. Joe told of the fear that gripped him when the boat captain began to tell stories about the jaguar and the piranha. In the grand scheme of what God was doing, how large should these fears have loomed in Joe's mind?
2. How often do we get distracted by small fears and forget to keep our eyes on the things God is doing?
3. What were some of the circumstances that Satan used to discourage the Dawsons?
4. What does Satan use to discourage you?
5. Marie said it all boils down to "putting your total trust in God." How do we go about doing that in our everyday lives?
6. Mike made the comment, "If your eyes are on man and his praise, you're not going to last." In addition to fears, what else distracts you from watching God's work?
7. How do you think we can overcome these fears and distractions?

## FIRST ENCOUNTER

1. Mike makes the statement, "God uses us for our benefit, not because He needs us."
  - a. Do you agree or disagree with his statement? Why?
  - b. Job 38:1-11 presents one side of the equation and Isaiah 6:8 presents another side. How do we balance both of these truths?
2. Faith makes the point that Joe and Millie's family were not supportive of their decision to become missionaries. Why is it, that more often than not, new "ventures" are met with resistance in the Christian community?
3. Joe made the comment, "Let's just trust the Lord all the way...and leave everything in His hands." How does this idea, which is spelled out in Prov. 3:5-6, played out in your everyday life?

- a. Where do you see room for improvement?
  - b. How did Joe's idea, "Let's just trust the Lord all the way...and leave everything in His hands," play out during the Dawson's first encounter with the Yanomamö people?
  - c. How was God's hand evident when the Dawson's daughter Velma was taken from her crib?
4. How can we reconcile Faith's assertion – "the Lord was looking out for us and keeping his hand on us" with Mike's comment, "There's been a lot of tears."

Notes and Personal Reflections: