



Shackleton:

A Study in Leadership, Perseverance,
and Providence.





Introduction

Sir Ernest Shackleton (1874-1922), knighted by King Edward VII, set sail from London on August 1, 1914 for Antarctica, on the same day that Germany declared war on Russia, Belgium, and France (WWI). With a 27-man crew, he sought to be the first to traverse Antarctica on foot, an 1,800 mile journey. The race to be the first expedition to reach the geographic South Pole had already been won by the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, when he and four other men arrived at the pole on December 14, 1911. Now, almost three years later, Shackleton considered his goal to be “the last great expedition left on earth.” Aboard the *Endurance* (after Shackleton’s family motto, *By Endurance We Conquer*), they left for Buenos Aires and the Antarctic Circle.

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“After plowing through one thousand miles of ice-encrusted waters, the ship got stuck ‘like an almond in a chocolate bar’” in the Weddell Sea. As Morrell and Capparell note, “the men were stranded on an ice floe more than twelve hundred miles from the farthest outposts of civilization.” The story that follows is “the greatest survival story of all time” (Shane Murphy).





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Some sixty years after “Shackleton took five men and sailed 800 miles in a lifeboat over tumultuous seas to reach the inhabited island of South Georgia in the remote South Atlantic, First Officer Lionel Greenstreet was asked, ‘How did you survive when so many expeditions perished?’ The old salt, then eighty-two, answered in one word, ‘Shackleton.’” Another British explorer, Apsley Cherry-Garrard, remarked that if he was “in the devil of a hole and wanted to get out of it – “give me Shackleton every time.”

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In the course of my preparation for this series, I came to see that the best way to introduce the story of Shackleton to you was visually. Director George Butler directed the 41-minute IMAX film, *Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure*, in 1999 and 2000, incorporating the still photographs of Frank Hurley, the professional photographer aboard the *Endurance*. This film will set the stage for our three-week *Study in Leadership, Perseverance, and Providence*.

