Beyond the Gates of Splendor is a true story about a violent isolated tribe in Ecuador, five young North American missionaries who sacrificed their lives trying to contact them, and how a tragedy turned into a story about change, love, faith, and forgiveness.

When the five missionaries first contacted the tribe they were extremely violent. Their homicide rate was sixty percent. Some of them even believed in killing and burying their own children with them. Two years after the five missionaries were speared to death the wife and daughter of one of the missionaries and a sister of another went to go live with the Waodani. Their message of love and forgiveness transformed the Waodani tribe and after just two years their homicide rate dropped by ninety percent.

Almost forty years later, Steve Saint, the son of one of the missionaries, took his family to go and live with the tribe. Ironically the Waodani tribesman who killed Nate Saint, is now called grandfather by Nate Saints grandson and even joined Steve Saint and his family at his son's graduation.

I hadn't heard much about this movie before watching it, so I didn't really know what to expect. I'm not a very religious person, but I do believe in God, karma, and just being a good person. I definitely enjoyed this documentary. The movie has made me really understand what it means to love and to forgive. I always hear that it's good to forgive but don't really understand why, but this movie sort of proved it to me.

If I try and put myself in the same situation that Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint were in, I don't think I would be able to do what they did. In fact, I don't know if I would have fully believed this story if there hadn't been actual footage. What they did is so big, that it's a little hard to grasp. It's an amazing story, and I'm a better person having heard it. Hopefully when I face hardships in my own life I will apply what I've learned from this film.

"Really, the story of the Waodani is an almost exact model of how Christ and His Church operate. Through Christ's death, God sees fit to forgive humanity much like the missionaries forgave the Waodani. This commitment to forgiveness is total: He comes to live in the jungles of our hearts", by Melinda Ledman.
Through the Gates Reflection

The real life example shown in this movie definitely made me think about my life, and the things that I valued before truly became worthless. This did not happen a long time ago, only about fifty years have passed, but I just didn’t think that people sacrificed their lives like that in order to bring the Word of God to these tribes. I am a Christian myself and have thought about becoming a missioner. However, I don’t believe I understood the whole meaning of my dream. Now that I look at these five families, I think I know how it is like to be in their situation. Apostle Paul was also a missioner, and he says that he had to face many difficulties while bringing the good news to the people. They did not accept him and he was beaten, sent to jail, and did not have good living conditions. The Bible also warns us that anyone who will speak about Jesus will face difficulties. Nevertheless, I somehow feel happy and confident inside when I know that God is with me. I am sure that the five men who died knew that they were dying for the name of Jesus Christ and death did not frighten them. Their lives were dedicated to God and that is why they decided not to fight back at those who speared them to death. After this, I want to be a person whom God can use in order to do His will. I know that if I do what God wants me to do, than nothing in this world will be more important than accomplishing His will: telling people about the love and death of my Savior, Jesus Christ. In everyday life here in America, it is so easy to forget about God. School, work, business, friends and family all take so much time that I sometimes forget about my Creator. However, after seeing this movie, I can’t. He died for me on the cross, and I can’t ignore that. Therefore, I dedicate my life to Christ and am thankful for this movie. It made me realize the true meaning of my existence in this world. While I am in college, I should be God’s messenger because I believe that He can use me here and prepare me for the future plans that He has for me. Suddenly, I notice that there is a lot of work to be done and I pray to God that I can be one of His dedicated people to shine in this world.

Thanks Dusty.
Beyond the Gates of Splendor was a wonderful documentary with a powerful message. It was awesome to see the missionary men on film the actual day they had died. Listening to the wives, children, and Waodani people from the events gave a personal side to the story that we wouldn't necessarily feel if we were watching the Hollywood version. To see Frank Drown in tears as he explained the day they found the men was heartbreaking.

The overall feeling I took away after watching this was that I have heard this before. Not this exact story and situation, but the way God has of bringing events around full circle. For example, I will share a story with you about my own family.

My sister Alisa brought her fiancé David to my grandparents to meet for the first time. In talking with him, my grandfather learned David's grandfather was a German soldier in the same concentration camp at the same time my grandparents were there. Somebody asked my grandfather how he felt about Alisa marrying David. My grandfather, being the wise man that he was, knew the beauty of this. He told us that God is good. This is the way God teaches us to not only remember the past, but to bring the two sides together forever on. It made perfect sense.

I am so glad the tribe let their story be told. Americans seem to have a short memory. Although the idea of this story has been played out in one form or another again and again, we still don't get it. Even for those of us who do, it is a good reminder to see it put another way. God will speak to us anyway he can to get through to us. Even though it is sad the killings happened, if they had not, we wouldn't have been able to see so clearly the beauty of how their remote tribe and a group of Americans came to be family.

I particularly loved the part of how the Waodani related the killings they knew about to Jesus and how he was also spared. The five missionary men could have saved their own lives by shooting the Waodani, but how would that save their souls? The Christians knew their souls were saved. Who would save the souls of the men who killed them? As awful as it is, the message of a martyr speaks very loud. Thank God for the bravery of Marj Saint. If she did not go back and share her message with the Waodani, they would have continued their bloodshed for longer. To see her grandson form a close friendship with one of the men who killed his grandfather was beautiful to see.

I had never seen how America looks from the eyes of a remote jungle dweller before. We are fat because when we walk, we don’t move our legs, the sidewalk moves us to the next place. We drive to a house; they open a window, and give us hot, ready to eat food. Warehouses stocked full of food; when the people smile at us, we hand them a card, but they hand it right back, and then we can take the food! It may not be quite that simple in
reality, but it does make me smile about how wonderful technology is. It frees up plenty of time to do other things, like play in the park with our kids.

One thing I heard about the feature film is when the film crew recruited real tribe people to play the roles of the Waodani, they were very interested to know about the characters they were to portray. The acting was better than what the Hollywood people could have asked for. The tribe people really got into their roles and enjoyed being a part of the movie. Perhaps they needed to hear about the events also, from a God point of view.

Overall, I am so glad I took part in the viewing of this documentary. If it was not for credit, I doubt I would have seen it. It was fun to share the story with my family. Now I am looking forward to seeing the feature film. Thank you, Dusty, for presenting it to us!