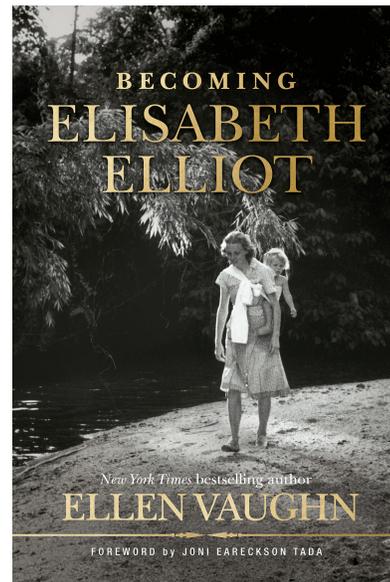


**Vaughn, Ellen. *Becoming Elisabeth Elliot*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2020.**

Reviewed by Audrey McGrath, IMB Field Personnel, APAC

Ellen Vaughn's book, *Becoming Elisabeth Elliot*, gives readers wonderful insight into the life and faith of Elisabeth Elliot. Vaughn hopes to "introduce this gutsy woman of faith to a generation that does not know her" (10). The book starts by describing how Elisabeth, or Betty, as she was known, was brought up in a home of order, devotion, and laughter. She discusses Betty's years at school, including the time she met Jim Elliot. Vaughn explains their struggles as Jim and Betty sought the Lord's will regarding marriage. Vaughn tells stories of their time in the Ecuadorian jungle as they dealt with medical emergencies, wild animals, floods, and more. Their hearts were set on sharing the love of Christ with a tribe of people known for their violence called the Waodani. Jim, with four other men, flew to meet with members of this tribe and consequentially died at the end of their spears. Vaughn recounts Betty's life after their deaths and the struggles she faced along with their young daughter, Valerie. Betty was befriended by two women from the tribe and eventually went and lived among them to work and learn their language. After leaving the Waodani tribe, she shared her story and inspired millions through her writing and speaking.

Vaughn shares many struggles faced by Elisabeth Elliot that are also faced by missionaries today. She discusses how Betty dealt with times



when people did not care for her personality, even telling of Betty's first encounter with Jim's mother, which Jim called "a flop." She narrates Betty's setbacks—including the loss of a year's worth of translation work when some luggage was stolen. Vaughn describes Betty's struggles with grief—not only the horrific loss of her husband, but other tragic deaths along her journey as well. Readers also learn of times when Betty struggled with interpersonal relationships, especially with Rachel Saint, the sister of one of the men killed. Vaughn describes Betty's anguish as she wondered where the Lord really wanted her to serve and if she was making a difference. Most missionaries will not face the extreme difficulties that Elisabeth faced, but all can learn from her faith and dependence on the Lord. All can be encouraged by her dedication to obedience and determination to "do the next thing" (268).

Vaughn included journal entries and excerpts from letters, which made it feel like Elisabeth was helping tell her own story. She did not shy away from presenting difficult parts of Elisabeth's life, but instead described the strong emotions Elisabeth felt during those times. She vividly depicts Elisabeth's anguish after the death of her husband. She portrays the struggles Elisabeth faced as she sought to know God's will for her life. Vaughn also clearly narrates what it was like in the Ecuadorian jungle. The book does, however, come to a somewhat abrupt halt at the point when Betty and Valerie return to America. Vaughn gives a brief description of how she spent the years after her return—including caring for her second husband in his battle with cancer. As much as the reader may wish to hear about this part of Elisabeth's life, they must wait, for as the author says, she will "tell those strong stories in another volume" (258).

For those interested in the life of Elisabeth Elliot, there are several resources available. The best resources are Elliot's own books that tell her story. *Through Gates of Splendor* is the story of the five men whose lives were taken at the end of a spear in the Ecuadorian jungle. *These Strange Ashes* recounts Elisabeth's time working with the Colorado Indians of Ecuador. *Devotedly: The Personal Letters and Love Story of Jim and Elisabeth Elliot* by Valerie Shep-

herd, the daughter of Jim and Elisabeth, is a book of letters written between Jim and Elisabeth. The letters show their faith, love, and commitment to the Lord.

Vaughn's book, *Becoming Elisabeth Elliot*, helped me to see the strong faith of this amazing woman. I feel this book would be a great encouragement to others who are serving overseas, as they see the ways Elisabeth, though facing both inward and outward struggles, continued to seek the Lord and follow Him in obedience. Many missionaries would find it helpful to see the realistic portrayals of how Elisabeth processed each of the struggles she faced. There was so much authenticity in the feelings, questions, and doubts expressed in this book. *Becoming Elisabeth Elliot* gives a great picture of a life where "the only measure of any human action came down to one thing: *obedience*" (259).