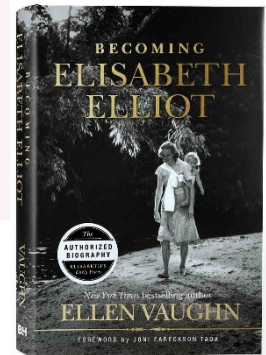




# LEADER'S GUIDE

## BECOMING ELISABETH ELLIOT BY ELLEN VAUGHN



"This book tells the colorful tale of how Elisabeth Elliot came to be, through her adventures in the jungle of Ecuador."

**ELLEN VAUGHN**

### THEMES

Biography

Evangelism

Womanhood

Growing Up

Faith

Grief

Suffering

### HEADS UP! (TRIGGERS AND DELICATE TOPICS)

Murder

Martyrdom

### BOOK SUMMARY

'Becoming Elisabeth Elliot' is the first part of a two-volume authorized biography of Elisabeth Elliot's life by Ellen Vaughn. This book tells the story of a, "Young missionary in Ecuador when members of a violent Amazonian tribe savagely speared her husband Jim and his four colleagues."

The book is divided into three sections;

Part One: Beginning (a brief introduction of Betty Elliot).

Part Two: Becoming (the story of Betty's childhood, early adolescence, and missionary time in Ecuador).

Part Three: Being (a description of Betty's life post-Ecuador, to be continued in Volume 2).

Elisabeth was a woman who wholeheartedly sought after the Lord, determined to be obedient no matter the cost. Even after the death of her husband Jim, the song on Elisabeth's lips for the duration of her life was one of resting in God's great love and sacrifice. This didn't mean that Elisabeth didn't experience seasons of doubt, loneliness, depression and deep heartache. Still, during these dark seasons, she could "Do the next thing" with her hope of heaven encouraging her to put one foot in front of another.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS

1

Q. In the foreword, Joni mentions, "Many young people... don't recognize the name of Elisabeth Elliot." Before reading this book, did you know much about 'Betty' or other Christian heroes?

### TALKING POINTS

Answers may vary significantly. There may be those who know about many Christian heroes and missionaries and those who no little or none.

2

Q. Why do you think it's important to remember Christian heroes?

### TALKING POINTS

"They [young people] live in an egalitarian culture where everyone's story is extraordinary, whether it has the stamp of Christ or not. The leaders they look up to lack heroic qualities. Courage is rare. Good character, rarer... Suffering should be mitigated at all costs. And if it cannot be avoided, it must be drugged, divorced, escaped from, or prayed away" (foreword xiv).

The lives of Christian heroes often display;

- An authentic witness.
- Courage against adversity.
- Joy and hope despite great suffering.
- A longing to fight against sin (their own and the sins of others).
- Devoted obedience to God.
- An example for us to follow.

3

Q. For Elisabeth, the central question was not "How does this make me feel?" but simply, "Is it true?" If so, then the next question was, "What do I need to do about it to obey God?" (p15). Discuss.

### TALKING POINTS

We can't always trust our feelings, but we can trust the Word of God;

- We may feel abandoned or let down by God, but the Bible says, "He will never leave us or forsake us" – 1 Kings 8:57.
- We may feel like our suffering is pointless and hopeless, but God promises to use it for our sanctification (our good) and His glory – Romans 5:3-8.
- We may feel like our sin is unforgivable, but God promises to forgive those who are safe in Jesus – 1 John 1:9.

How does knowing the truth help us become more obedient to the Lord?

- When we believe that the Lord loves us, that He will never leave us, that He will use our suffering ultimately for good, and that He will forgive us - our trust and faithfulness in Him grow.
- More trust and faithfulness will result in more obedience.
- We are unlikely to be fully obedient to God if we are secretly questioning in our hearts whether God is actually good, whether He really loves us, and if He really wants what's best for us.

# 4

Q. Jim and Elisabeth's courtship has received a lot of attention in the past, both good and bad. It was placed on a pedestal during the peak of purity culture, while also accused of being toxic, abusive and harmful by today's standards. What were your thoughts?

## TALKING POINTS

No relationship in our broken world will be perfect. As in many relationships, there are both lovely and imperfect aspects because we all sin and fall short of God's glorious standards;

- Jim and Betty's long courtship displayed her faithfulness and endurance of character.
- While unfair and unjust in its harshness at times, Jim's hesitation was ultimately because of a deep desire to do God's will.
- While many aspects were imperfect, God redeemed their courtship through their marriage and blessed their union with little Val and a deep, passionate love for one another.

# 5

Q. Betty was often accused of being rude because of her introverted and no-nonsense personality type. Can you relate to this?

## TALKING POINTS

Each of us is gifted with a unique personality from God. Whether we are introverted or extroverted, we can love others well through the equipping of the Holy Spirit;

- If we are inclined to prefer solitude, are shy, or uncomfortable around others, the Holy Spirit can draw us into healthy, life-giving fellowship with other believers. We may still enjoy being alone, but we can also enjoy the company of others and, in most cases, learn to be socially comfortable.
- If we are more extroverted, the Holy Spirit can equip us to be more others-focused and help us become slow to speak and quick to listen.

# 6

Q. Chapter 22, 'The Second Death', gives an account of Jim's death. Which part of this story stayed with you after you had finished reading it?

## TALKING POINTS

The account of the brutal murders in chapter 22 is both tragic and graphic, yet full of hope because we know that these faithful heroes have gone to be with Christ.

Answers to this question will vary. Some may have found it distressing, and some may have thought about the women and children left behind. Some may question the purpose of the pain, while others may focus on the hope of heaven. Try and seek an answer from each member present.

# 7

Q. Elisabeth endured more suffering than most throughout her life. What habits and decisions did she make to remain faithful and believe in God's promises?

## TALKING POINTS

Elisabeth held a steadfast belief that the Lord was good and desired good things for her. She said, "What God means by happiness and goodness is a far higher thing than we can conceive" (p260), and through it all, Betty learnt to "Do the next thing" (p268).

There are a few things we can remember while enduring suffering and trials;

- God's supernatural peace and joy comes to soothe our heavy hearts during grief.
- Praying scripture can help us experience peace and draw nearer to the Lord.
- We may be blessed through help and support from others (Christian love and community are often demonstrated when a church family is suffering hardship).
- We must first think of God's perfect love for us, then consider our circumstances, so we do not begin to question His perfect love.
- God is worthy to be praised in all circumstances, not for all circumstances, but in them.
- Trials and suffering can strengthen our character and confident hope of salvation (Romans 5: 3- 5).
- Our suffering may encourage others, shine Christ's light and role model the Christian faith and endurance to others.
- On the other side of our suffering, we may have some perspective and understanding we did not have during the suffering.
- When we get to heaven, we will find the things we did, and the lessons we learned along the road we walked were unmistakably the best path for us.
- What has happened to us may have helped advance the gospel and save one (or many) for Christ.
- Our pain and trials in life can indeed bless and help others overcome their suffering through shared experience, advice, and comfort.
- We can offer to mentor another going through a trial we have walked through ourselves.
- God works all things together for the good of those who love Him.

## 8

Q. Rachel Saint, although a faithful follower of Christ, seemed to be unable to embrace Elisabeth and her presence in the Auca tribe because of her jealousy and a need to control things. Why must we take emotions like this captive to the will of Christ?

### TALKING POINTS

Rachel's refusal to allow Elisabeth to participate in the linguistic Bible translations of the Auca language meant that the gospel was prevented from being properly shared and accessible as soon as possible;

- We must never allow negative feelings toward others and selfish desires for praise and recognition to get in the way of Kingdom work. These types of attitudes, thoughts, and feelings are not of God and are designed by the enemy to disarm followers of Christ and cause discord, chaos, and sin.

If time permits, ask the group if anyone can relate to Rachel or Elisabeth's experience. A fantastic resource for anyone struggling with jealousy, in need of help, or on the receiving end of a jealous friend or co-worker, is 'Seeing Green' by Tilly Dillehay.

## 9

Q. Eventually, some members of the Auca tribe came to have faith in Jesus, but this did not happen according to Jim and Elisabeth's plans and took much longer than anticipated. The journey was often disheartening, frustrating and confusing for Elisabeth, yet all was within God's sovereign will. Discuss.

## TALKING POINTS

"For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are high than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts" – Isaiah 55:9

Elisabeth herself said, "Cause and effect are in God's hands. Is it not part of the faith simply to let them rest there? God is God. I dethrone Him in my heart if I demand that He act in ways that satisfy my idea of justice... For us widows the question as to why the men who had trusted God to be both shield and defender should be allowed to be speared to death was not one that could easily or smoothly be answered in 1956, nor yet silence [later]... I believe with all my heart that God's story has a happy ending.... But not yet" (p260).

Kneeling to God's sovereign will (whether we believe God ordains, allows or sends trials and suffering), gives us a song of praise to sing that our circumstances can't change. It provides us with comfort and peace, and reassures our weary and lamenting hearts that ALL wrongs will be made right in the second coming and judgement of Jesus. The song on Elisabeth's lips for the duration of her life was one of rejoicing in God's goodness and great love. This didn't mean that Elisabeth didn't experience seasons of doubt, loneliness, depression and deep heartache, but during these dark seasons, she could "Do the next thing" with her hope of heaven encouraging her to put one foot in front of another.

# 10

Q. How did martyr Betty Scott's prayer (on page 30) make you feel?

## TALKING POINTS

"Lord,  
I give up all my plans and purposes,  
All my own desires and hopes,  
And accept Thy will for my life.  
I give myself, my life, my all,  
Utterly to thee, to be Thine forever!  
Fill me and seal me with Thy Holy Spirit.  
Use me as Thou will,  
Send me where Thou will,  
And work out Thy whole will in my life,  
At any cost, now and forever!"

Betty's prayer is courageous. It may have encouraged us or made some of us feel uncomfortable, disheartened, or scared at the thought of committing so fully to God. As you close the meeting in prayer, pray this prayer altogether. Pray with boldness, hope, and faithfulness, believing that the Holy Spirit – the perfecter of our faith – would make these words true in our hearts and rid us of fear and disobedience.



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