



No Graven Image

Elisabeth Elliot

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First published in 1966, No Graven Image is the only novel of the best-selling author Elisabeth Elliot. Margaret, an intrepid twenty-five-year-old missionary, travels to the Andes Mountains of Ecuador to start her ministry. She sees little progress at first, but eventually gains a following and an enhanced reputation for her part in the safe and seemingly miraculous delivery of a breech baby. Things seem to be going well. She works on her translation of the Bible into the Indian language and befriends a native and his family. Then tragedy strikes, shaking Margaret's entire way of thinking. Full of excitement, human emotion, and exotic South American culture and color, No Graven Image is sure to captivate new readers everywhere.

No Graven Image Details

Date : Published September 1st 2004 by Fleming H. Revell Company (first published 1966)

ISBN : 9780800759926

Author : Elisabeth Elliot

Format : Paperback 267 pages

Genre : Fiction, Christian Fiction, Christian, Religion

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From Reader Review No Graven Image for online ebook

Sarah says

Beautiful story that strips the glamor off of the inflated views we too often cherish of a missionary calling and enables us to see the true beauty of simple trust and obedience.

Jeff Danhauer says

An excellent book. Elisabeth Elliot's only novel. She explodes the 'cookie cutter, slide-show presentation' image of long term missions with an undoubtably more nuanced and realistic view of a young woman's journey into missions.

Omar says

As a missionary serving outside my passport country, I loved this book! Although it was written as a "fictional novel," this is the most real, honest missionary biography I have read. I would venture to say that it has a lot less "fiction" than most "non-fiction" missionary biographies.

This book is so good, I'm ordering a second copy for my family!

I first heard of this book through an article in Christianity Today titled, "*Farewell to the Missionary Hero.*" <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2...>

David says

Definitely not the typical missionary story and that is a good thing (I think). Elliot uses a fictional story to portray the inner and external struggles a young missionary faces as she seeks to "reach" the Quichua Indians in Ecuador. Worthy to be read by young (and old) missionaries and those tempted to place those same missionaries on the proverbial pedestal.

Here are a couple of excerpts to give you an idea

"My life went on alongside the life of the Quichuas. I do not say with theirs for the two remained separate. All my efforts to make myself one with them ended at the brink of the great abyss--I was not an Indian." 180

"Harvey had not come to learn but to document what he had already assumed; his preconceptions governed his selection of picture subjects. Propaganda, I thought, demands simplification. . Choose the pictures which show the poverty and primitiveness of the Indian, the the successes of the missionary." 208

Mckenna Mathews says

Hands down the best Christian novel I have ever read. Elliot's brutal honesty is what makes the book so real, so true. She is not afraid of being criticized for her work, which she is, but is bold in the messages she shares in writing this book. Everyone should read this remarkable book!

Becky says

No Graven Image is set in Ecuador. It's narrated by an American missionary--a single woman--named Margaret. Ecuador is her first placement, and, it is without a doubt where she feels called by God to serve. She hopes to learn the language--Quichua--and eventually translate the Bible into the native language. She has learned Spanish. She's seeking someone who speaks Spanish and Quichua. About a third of the way through the novel, she meets Pedro. There are some barriers to their friendship--language, culture, social class--but eventually he becomes 'the one' to help her in her work. She will pay him to teach her the language. She will pay him to help her translate the Bible. Now you might think that was challenging enough, but no, before anyone can benefit from this new translation of the Bible, she will have to teach them to read their own native language, that it's worth the time and effort to learn to read. Before she can teach them--at least as she sees it--she has to show them that she's trustworthy and/or worthy of their respect and friendship. She has to overcome the 'who-does-she-think-she-is' and 'is-that-lady-crazy' viewpoint.

From start to finish, Margaret experiences troubles and frustration. Think of it like this: I'm a missionary, now what? Now that I'm actually here in a foreign country instead of back home training to be this missionary whom God will use...what do I do? How does a missionary do missions. Is being a missionary simply living in another country--having other people pay you to live in another country? How does one justify spending one's time when you're a missionary? Is it serving God to go to the marketplace and buy food from natives? Or is the only time that 'counts' the time you spend "sharing the gospel"?

The book has more questions than answers, in my opinion. Margaret wrestles with God quite a bit. Or perhaps I should rephrase that. She wrestles with her beliefs about God quite a bit. She definitely starts out with belief that she is doing God a favor by being a missionary and serving in Ecuador. She definitely believes that by being there and serving, she is doing "her part" to bring people to Christ, and, that God should honor that service by blessing her with definite converts. The issue she doesn't quite address straightforwardly is the idea that God is sovereign in missions--as He is sovereign over the whole universe--and that it is God who works in the heart, that salvation is all His from start to finish. Her efforts--no matter how mighty and fierce--cannot bring about results. She doesn't have anything to "prove" to God. I'm not sure if Margaret grasped these truths or not. And if Margaret's lacking was intentional on the part of the author, or, if Elliot herself struggled with God's sovereignty.

As a happy, comfy-cozy read, No Graven Image fails to satisfy. If you want to read a book about a woman struggling with living out her calling and wrestling out her doctrines about God in the real world, then this one is worth picking up and reading. Just know that it asks more questions than it answers. There is no tidy ending, no "aha" moment when everything clicks into place and her struggles with herself, with God, cease.

Rebekah Tooley says

I loved this book! My favourite parts are when she is learning and using Quichua words. A must read for all!

Mikejencostanzo says

I found myself eerily able to identify with Elisabeth Elliot's main character in the novel No Graven Image. In this, Elliot's only novel, we follow the experience of first-time missionary Margaret Sparhawk as she touches down on Ecuadorian soil for the first time, settles into her new home, tries to figure out how to meet the natives, and tries to make sense of her "calling." The story is told in an *embarrassingly honest* first-person style.

Embarrassingly honest. As in heart-revealing. Maybe this will help explain. You know how in Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*, we get to hear eyewitness accounts of Nathan Price's awkward attempts to convert and civilize the natives? Imagine reading a novel where Mr. Price *himself* is the narrator, and you are alternatively cringing at how horrible his approach is and shuddering at the voice in the back of your mind saying "Oh my gosh--I could totally see myself doing the same thing!"

So, very convicting for a missionary wanna-be. I come away with an overwhelming sense of having read something like the book of Job. Someone's trying to do the right thing. But things go obscenely wrong. And we question God. And God has been right the whole time. And somehow, we are wiser--sadder, but wiser in the end.

The edition I read also contains a bonus introductory essay by noted theologian J.I.Packer on the issue of Christian fiction. This essay alone is worth the cost of admission.

--Jen

Scott says

This is the story of a young missionary on her first mission to Ecuador. Her goal is to build relationships with the native Ecuadoreans, learn Quechua and translate the bible into Quechua. Your view of her is likely to be colored greatly by your view of western missionaries in third-world countries. Some might see her as privileged and condescending. I saw her more as naive and culturally insensitive, but earnest and caring.

She grapples with cultural difference and with her lack of confidence of whether she is following God's will. Generally, I didn't find her existential struggles to be very complex or compelling. Even a tragedy at the end did not seem to have much depth in its sorrow. I was expecting a more complex and challenging inner conflict in the main character.

Ashley says

Not greatly written, but does cause you to think about motivations for "serving Christ." I know I was

humbled after reading this book. I like this quote:

"I find that I can no longer arrange my life in an orderly succession of projects with realizable goals and demonstrable effects. I cannot designate this activity as "useful" and that one as "useless," for often the categories are reversed and even more often I am at a loss to apply either label, for the work, in the end, as well as the labeling, is God's" (Elliot, p. 266).

This book is an encouragement to sanctify the everyday, surrendering all to the worship of Christ!

Bethany says

4.5 stars. I was really excited about reading this book, since Elizabeth Elliot is a very well known Christian, and the description sounded like a book I'd enjoy. My only fear was that since Elizabeth mainly writes non-fiction which doesn't require descriptive words to help you form an image in your mind, that the story wouldn't be descriptive and would leave all the imaging to your brain, but it didn't! I was very pleased with how it was written and it definitely went over my expectations!

I love how encouraging this book was. It is about a lady named Margaret who goes to be a missionary in Ecuador, and I just loved how the story shows the details of missionary life. One part I really liked, was where Elizabeth went to detail to show how not everyone is perfect. In the story, Margaret has times where she grows discouraged and there are times she says things she regrets, and it helped me to see that no matter who you are, everyone has faults.

I really think this story helped open my eyes to missionary life. Since Elizabeth has been a missionary, you know that how she displays Margaret missionary life is a lot like how a missionary would live in present day, since the writer has been there. In this story, everything doesn't always go as planned, sometimes things don't work out as you'd like them to when you witness. The story ended quite sad, but I think Elizabeth chose it to end like that to make the point, that everything isn't always rosy as novels make it out to be. Though it is a fiction story, it had a very real feeling to it. Overall I loved this book and would definitely recommend it to ladies that like inspiration fiction that gets you to thinking!

Natalie Vellacott says

This is Elisabeth Elliot's only work of fiction. The writing isn't brilliant but the story is compelling. The main character sets out for the mission field full of expectation and idealism. She is swiftly brought back down to earth by the realities of missionary life. The clash of cultures and the different ways that other missionaries on her field respond leads to healthy debate. She slowly finds her own path realising that God leads each person as an individual and that the work is about Him and isn't dependent on her efforts. That success cannot be measured in terms of numbers of conversions...

This novel is refreshingly real and must be based on true experiences to some extent. I especially liked the chapter detailing a rather pompous photographer that appeared to document the work and report to those back at home. He basically trod all over the work that was being done, made the missionary feel like a failure, ignored cultural etiquette and bumbled away after a day or two to report back. Unfortunately, there are people that do this frequently. They fail to recognise the experience and years of labour that the

missionary has invested, not to mention the love that they obviously have for the people they are serving.

I wanted to give this a higher rating. It will make people think and help them to understand missionary life from an honest missionary's perspective. It will help people to know how to pray for, support and encourage their missionaries and how not to inadvertently discourage or bring them down.

However, I couldn't really believe it but there were several instances of blasphemy in the first few chapters of the book. Even for a non-fiction book, I would have been astounded to see it in one of Elliot's works. But this is fiction so it's not even representative of something that was actually said!! There is little violence and no sexual content. I would still recommend this book but beware the blasphemy....

<http://christianmissionaryuk.blogspot...>

Loretta says

This book was very insightful into many of the struggles and dynamics of missionary life and ministry. The author obviously has personal experience and unusual discernment of these topics, here put into a very engaging storyline.

Andrea says

Any one who has ever determined to follow God and do great things for Him and ended up with the unexpected will understand why Elisabeth Elliot wrote this book.

Kristen says

I started reading this book sometime last year. It was in a pile of free-for-all books left for the Redeemer staff to pick through. I have been a big Elisabeth Elliot fan since the big P and P. But this was a novel! OOOOh...exciting. This novel about a young missionary woman called to the Indians of Ecuador started slow like molasses and I was actually going to call it quits. I changed my mind when Pastor Keller referenced the book in one of his sermons on suffering (which included him spoiling the ending). Within the frame he gave, I was intrigued to finish it and did just that last night. It does not have a happy ending. It in no way glamorizes mission work. But in an odd way, it's lack of a tidy ending brings great comfort and truth. I'm happy to share it if someone wants to borrow.... When I told Tim I had been reading it (thanking him for giving away the big finish) he was shocked I had found it. I guess it's been out of print for years.
