



Surprised by Grace: A True Story of Relentless Love

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God intends fulfillment for us. Yet it's easy to forget that truth in our daily life. For fifty years, Elizabeth Sherrill cowrote life-changing books: *The Hiding Place*, *God's Smuggler*, and *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Now for the first time, in *Surprised by Grace*, she shares her personal discoveries of God's unfathomable love and strength while battling chronic depression and self-doubt. "When God created you, do you think He meant to make someone else?" a friend asks Sherrill. Faced with questions like these, she learns she's infinitely valued and cherished by God. In vivid episodes, Sherrill takes you through the three stages of her awakening joy, from the thirty-some years when the idea of God was elusive to the years since then when she's reveled in breathtaking moments in God's presence and to her inspiring vision of eternity. In *Surprised by Grace*, you'll discover that God loves you individually and infinitely. You can find real peace, for you are God's amazing creation. Let that truth echo forever in your own life.

Surprised by Grace: A True Story of Relentless Love Details

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From Reader Review Surprised by Grace: A True Story of Relentless Love for online ebook

Kathleen E. says

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Surprised by Grace: A True Story of Relentless Love by Elizabeth Sherrill, © 2014

This book was originally published as All the Way to Heaven. A longtime writer for Guideposts®, 'Tib' Sherrill says in her introduction:

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT DISCOVERY—the discovery of a secret. It's the story of how heaven, which I used to think of as an imaginary realm-in-the-sky, has become more real to me than the ground beneath my feet. Real in the past, real for the future, and best of all, real right now. And this book is also an invitation. An invitation to us all to look back, to look ahead, and to look around, and keep being surprised at what we see.

Lord, we pray that
your grace may always
precede and follow us.
Book of Common Prayer

It's in sharing our thoughts and lives with one another that we discover most clearly who we are.
--Surprised by Grace, 205

Tib Sherrill begins her story about how she met her husband, John, aboard ship on their way to Europe. They were married in Switzerland in 1947. Memories abound as she tells of adventures in interviewing for articles, helping her along in her spiritual journey and resting places.

You trace my journeys and my resting-places....
You press upon me behind and before....
Psalm 139:2, 4 (BCP)

One story I dearly loved was about talking with a wife in a Communist country for almost an hour, while bringing a message from her husband to her. When Tib and her husband were returning to their car, he asked her how they had found so much to talk about ~ especially since it sounded like German, which Tib did not understand nor speak? Tib said they talked about her children and the near family to relate back to her husband. Mothers' hearts knit together especially by God.

God knows our hearts and what we need. While searching for a church just right for them, they had voiced that they wanted to seek Him and not have others talk to them. That is exactly what happened. A new minister began that Sunday too, and asked the people to greet each other. They all stood there, with no response. The very thing Tib had voiced to her husband. In a previous church, the first Sunday, she had been asked to sew an item, which she could not do, and was frightened off.

One thing I haven't mentioned? The Sherrills were not believers when they began their writing stopgap (temporary filler, "only for a while") with Guideposts Magazine many years ago. John was told by the editor, that it didn't worry him ~ "If there's anything to the faith this magazine proclaims, belief will come in its own time." (page 62)

Tib shares their lives and experiences, and their love of Europe. A travelogue along life and love, guided by the One who loves us best.

Thank you to Litfuse Publicity for inviting me to review *Surprised by Grace* by Elizabeth Sherrill. This review was written in my own words. No other compensation was received.

Mazzou B says

Originally published as *All the Way to Heaven*, this newly-published work is by longtime Christian writer Elizabeth Sherrill. She explains, "this book is about discovery—the discovery of a secret. It's the story of how heaven, which I used to think of as an imaginary realm-in-the-sky, has become more real to me than the ground beneath my feet. Real in the past, real for the future, and best of all, real right now. And this book is also an invitation. An invitation to us all to look back, to look ahead, and to look around, and keep being surprised at what we see."

I thought that paragraph was beautiful. It definitely captures the essence of this book.

Although this book was slow at the start, I also found that it picked up speed rapidly until I was engrossed in Elizabeth's Sherrill's world. She tells of her childhood, of meeting her husband and of their marriage. Most importantly, the book tells of how she was found by Jesus.

You trace my journeys and my resting-places....

You press upon me behind and before....

Psalm 139:2, 4 (BCP)

Although I quite admire the work Elizabeth and her husband did, I don't agree with much of her theology. Content in an Episcopalian church, the Sherrills accept a variety of denominations as being the same way to God. This disappointed me. Elizabeth's faith is sincere, yet she seems to believe that doctrine isn't very important.

Lastly, I really enjoyed the artistic qualities of this newly-published book. The cover as well as the pages inside are all very appealing to the eye.

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for my honest review.

[read more reviews here](#)

Homeschoolmama says

I've been reading Elizabeth "Tib" Sherrill's writings since I was a little girl. She and her husband John wrote for the magazine *Guideposts* since the 1950's. When I happened upon this book by her, described as her memoir, I knew I'd want to read it. As another reviewer pointed out, *Surprised by Grace* begins with a narrative of Tib's life, but the second half of the book is more about Heaven. Her speculations are interesting to read, and though she is not a theologian, she has some very plausible arguments for why she envisions things as she does.

I was disappointed at the end, but only because I wanted to read more.

I wish Tib were younger. Because I want to read more of her writings. I wish she'd written more books like this. I've already read her other books, *The Hiding Place*, *God's Smuggler*, and *The Cross and the Switchblade*. And I'm not sure that at her age she'll be writing anything longer than the occasional article for *Guideposts*.

One more note I'll make: I think the title of the original publication of this book *All the Way to Heaven* was a more accurate description of the book's subject.

Deborah Wellum says

“All the way to heaven is heaven for he said I am the Way” Catherine of Siena —14th century. Elizabeth Sherrill does a masterful job of unpacking the meaning of this statement made by a Roman Catholic Saint for whom life when observed by an outsider would be described as anything but heaven but rather the contrary. The author seeks the heavenly experience in her own life and finds it in unlikely places and varied experiences. This gives any reader hope for discovering the same if only knowing where to look and how to think about heaven.

Joan says

Sherrill, who is behind some of the best known biographies of contemporary Christians, has finally written her own memoir. She weaves experiences from her own life with events from her writing career. I was surprised to find out that the Sherrills wrote for *Guideposts* for years before becoming Christians themselves. She notes that writing for a Christian journal was, in fact, a hindrance in their faith journey. She shares insights gleaned from various experiences in her life. While it is a good read, I would not classify it as a "page turner."

See my complete review at <http://bit.ly/1gjafuS>.

I received a complimentary digital copy of this book through Litfuse for the purpose of an independent and honest review.

Sarah says

This book was very interesting. I'm a huge fan of *Guidepost Magazine* and always cry when I read their stories so I was super honored when selected to review this book! I think the main thing I took away from Elizabeth's (Tib) Story and it's a very important lesson is that we all at times doubt God, wonder why we were created and yet throughout this book she eloquently and lovingly makes the reader understand that each person is created for a purpose. We are all created unique, he loves us individually and he loves us abundantly.

I feel like this book is written very authentically and is something each one of us can identify with in some way or another, whether it's through her friendship with Mea, dealing with poor self esteem, her childhood upbringing or relating to things in her marriage to John. You can relate to her in some way, which is why I loved this book.

In one chapter she talks about depression, she talks about the treadmill, saga and pilgrimage. Basically to sum it up, it's three different ways to look at life. Treadmill- meaningless, repeated over and over activity. Saga- people without purpose who are always coping or Pilgrimage- good, bad - past and present, but life is going somewhere. Life is a stepping stone to a destination. I just loved that. I'm not sure why, it just spoke to me, it's where I'm at right now in my life. "Whether my life is a treadmill, saga or pilgrimage depends not on where my feet are, but where my heart is."

This book is filled with endless tidbits, wisdom, quotes, scripture and neat poems. It's truly a gem. I loved reading her insight into daily struggles, daily prayer discipline, her and John's thoughts on Heaven and how the way God views us!

Great book all around! 4.5 stars for me. I'm giving it that review because it was hard for me to follow at times, but that is the only negative comment I can give it! I was not compensated for a positive review. The opinions expressed here are my own and I want to Thank Guideposts for the complimentary copy!

Barbara Shelton says

Upon reading excellent reviews already written and published about Elizabeth Sherrill's *Surprised by Grace*, I pondered about what I could add sufficiently unique to draw reader interest. When I received the query to read and review Elizabeth Sherrill's biography, I excitedly recalled her authoring a favorite story I read years ago about David Wilkerson; and subsequently seeing her book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, made into a movie starring Pat Boone as David Wilkerson, a young Assemblies of God minister moved to action when he witnessed the devastating effects of delinquency and drugs on teenagers in New York City. Hence, this story was about the ministry of Teen Challenge, born in 1958 in the heart of David Wilkerson. My love and devotion to this organization resides deep in my heart, as it was through Teen Challenge that my daughter found her life once more.

The above paragraph is merely mentioned in passing, as my reaction to Ms. Sherrill's beautiful testimony hit so deeply in my emotions, that I am again reading her book to reap further joy and knowledge. The preface and the forward so impressed me that I decided to share parts of those. It is a small novel; however seems to grow broader in wisdom by the wonderful stories and tid bits Elizabeth Sherrill shares about her life, marriage, and deep faith in God. Her catchy titles before each chapter were captivating to my interests and followed by words sensitively respective of the memories she wrote about. One of the intimate facts I learned - Elizabeth has a nickname – Tibby.

It seems Ms. Sherrill had repeatedly refused Van Varner, a Guideposts editor's suggestion to write a book telling her own story. She felt her faith was a private matter. "I know now that my emphatic "Never" to Van was part of the door between me and the world that I write about in *Surprised by Grace*. My whole world was constructed on the insistence that I was different. Since I "wasn't like others," how could my experience interest anyone else?" It wasn't Van, however, who'd finally changed my mind, but people I'd never met. Over the years I'd written, always reluctantly, three or four short articles about my own life. To my surprise, the articles drew responses from readers, 'You've written my story!' the letters said, over and over. The article that brought the most mail was about my struggle with depression. All of us, apparently, in the black pit of that blackest place, had felt that no one else had ever experienced what we did. And the relief that these correspondents felt in recognizing themselves in my story was stunningly evident." Ms. Sherrill received two letters ten days apart relating to the help others had received from her Guidepost articles. It was then she

went into action and allowed her word processor to put the words in order that produced this wonderful story. Elizabeth “Tib” Sherrill said her book is about the discovery of a secret. It’s the story of how heaven, which I used to think of as an imaginary realm-in-the-sky, has become more real to me than the ground beneath my feet. Real in the past, real for the future, and best of all, real right now. And this book is also an invitation. An invitation to us all to look back, to look ahead, and to look around, and keep being surprised at what we see.

“She is a writer of extraordinary gifts who truly practices what she preaches. With honesty and unflinching self-examination, Tibby peels back the layers of her life to reveal an astonishing journey of faith, from nonbeliever to believer, from itinerant journalist to the influence behind some of the greatest inspirational writing of our time.” Edward Grinnan, Guideposts Magazine Editor-in-Chief Now, dear reader, you can get this fantastic little book for yourself and I know you will be as impressed as I am with this enduring and lovely lady writer. God bless you, Tibby!

This book was sent to me free of charge for my honest review from Litfuse Publicity.

Jalynn Patterson says

About the Book:

Renowned writer Elizabeth “Tib” Sherrill shares her own faith journey in *Surprised by Grace*. Embrace this page-turner and discover God at work in your own life every day!

Tib has written for Guideposts magazine for over sixty years, contributed to Daily Guideposts for over twenty-five, and coauthored the best-selling, inspirational adventures of all time, including: *The Hiding Place*, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, *God’s Smuggler* and *Return from Tomorrow*. Yet Tib’s most powerful story ever is this beautifully written, exhilarating memoir. In it, you’ll discover how God’s love transformed her life—and find inspiration, hope, and strength for your own journey.

See how Tib detects meaning in everything from an unhappy childhood to John’s surprising marriage proposal; from her oldest friend, Mea, to her beloved father-in-law who “saw” her perfectly even though he was blind. Enjoy touching stories about Tib’s family, and travel with her to fascinating places across the United States and around the world. Find out how she overcame her poor self-image after a stunning encounter with her Creator. Elizabeth Sherrill’s superb storytelling brings you into every scene, making you laugh and cry many times over. You’ll be reminded that God intends freedom and joy for you. You’ll also find wonderful insight and encouragement in the uplifting foreword by Guideposts Editor-in-Chief Edward Grinnan.

At the back of the book find “Conversation Starters,” particularly useful for Bible studies, book clubs and home groups.

About the Author:

Elizabeth Sherrill is the author behind the classic best sellers *The Hiding Place* about Corrie ten Boom, *The Cross and the Switchblade* about David Wilkerson, and *God’s Smuggler* about Brother Andrew. She also is a longtime contributor to America’s best-loved inspirational magazine Guideposts, and best-selling devotional,

Daily Guideposts. Visit her at ElizabethSherrill.com.

My Review:

Elizabeth Sherrill is well known for her writings for Guideposts magazine but also for her other writings she has become quite popular for as well--one of the most notable especially in the homeschool world is, God's Smuggler. She decided after a lot of thinking on the subject to finally write a memoir letting the public into her world to see how she came to follow God and live for Him. For a very inspiring and touching story of the women known to many as "Tib"---she will take you on quite the adventure in the hopes she can also cause you to come nearer to Christ.

As we are reminded in my most favorite Bible verse, Jeremiah 29:11 God only wants the best for us and He does not choose things that will harm us, but chooses things for us that will give us hope, (my paraphrase). Her wish for her readers is inspiration with some encouragement&enlightenment.

****Disclosure**** This book was sent to me free of charge for my honest review from Litfuse Publicity.

Julie says

Loved it. It was very deep and I could barely read through one whole chapter without wanting to put it down to think on what I'd just read and not lose it by moving forward. I may need to read it through again, this time taking notes! But I absolutely loved it! I very rarely find someone who understands or craves the depth to knowing and walking with God that I do (most people seem content to just wade in the shallows), but it is a rare blessing to find someone who does and Elizabeth Sherrill made me feel and know I'm not walking that deeper road alone. If you hunger for deeper spiritual things of God, you should read this book!

Margaret Fraleigh says

This was an amazing book - the author Elizabeth Sherrill shared her journey of realizing grace. She has an amazing story - this is sort of a biography, but so much more. The front of the book says "A True Story of Relentless Love. She is also a coauthor of the Hiding Place, The Cross and the Switchblade and God's Smuggler. I am definitely going to re-read the Hiding Place and the Cross and the Switchblade. I had read them years ago. I will also look for God's Smuggler. Thank you Elizabeth for sharing your story.

Sue says

So many, many insights! Loved how she organized this book into short 1-2 page entries! I had a difficult time getting into the first part of the book, but after about the first 20 pages, it is really gripping! The last 10 entries or so are simply superb! Definitely a book to pick up again and again! I especially liked the quote of St Francis of Assisi---"Holiness is not a personal achievement. It is an emptiness you discover in yourself. Instead of resenting it, you accept it and it becomes the free space where

the Lord can create anew. To cry out, 'You alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord', that is what it means to be pure of heart."

I would like to read her book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

She is the one who helped Corrie ten Boom write *The Hiding Place*.

Jennifer Smith says

From the information provided on the book jacket, I thought "Surprised by Grace" was going to be about the author's journey to God. Though she includes that experience in this book, the major theme seems to be heaven. The author talks about her past, present, and future, and she uses heaven as a sort of metaphor for God's hand in her life in all these regards.

I enjoyed the transparency and thoughtfulness the author put into her story. This book is an inspirational and interesting read. There were many heartbreaking and heartwarming stories in its pages. In some places, the book reminded me of how while we're all unique, we're still so very much alike—and it forced me to see beyond myself. I enjoyed the stories and the beautiful, poetic writing.

While reading *Surprised by Grace*, I got to thinking—

There's a trend I've noticed in Christian nonfiction lately: While there's a lot of emphasis put on heaven being real and on the intense, amazing love that God has for us, I'm not reading much about the intense, amazing love we can have for God. I don't believe that when we get to heaven we will be concerned with being bored for all eternity, with whether or not our deceased pets are there, or with whether or not we can continue to enjoy the hobbies and gifts there that we enjoy here on earth. (These possibilities about heaven were broached in the book.)

This eternal place of beauty that God is preparing for those who know Him will be like nothing anyone has ever been able to imagine. GOD, the God, the Creator of the entire Universe will be there, and that will be enough!

All in all, "Surprised by Grace" made for a beautiful read.

In compliance with FTC regulations: I was given a complimentary copy of this book by the publicist on behalf of the author and publisher in exchange for this honest review. No compensation was received for this review. All opinions expressed are my own.

Alicia Ruggieri says

A mixture of autobiography, memoir, and anecdotes, this book refreshed my hope of heaven. Elizabeth Sherrill takes the quote of Catherine of Siena ("All the way to heaven is heaven.") and uses it as a springboard to show that all of life is, indeed, grace ... as C.S. Lewis says, when we get to heaven, we will find that we have never been anywhere but there.

Not heavy reading at all, I found myself fascinated with the author herself, who details her deep, seemingly inexplicable depression during her early adulthood and how she found her worth in Christ alone. While I feel

uneasy with Sherrill's reliance on psychology at times to figure out why she had the depressions, etc., I loved the way the author continued to bring the problem and solution back to Christ Jesus, finding in Him all that she needed.

The writing is very clear, sharp, and consistent without being overly intellectual or overly simplified. Creative metaphors, right-on-the-mark illustrations, and quotes in context heightened my enjoyment of this book. As the author is a ghostwriter for many famous Christians, she sprinkles little-known tidbits about them throughout the book, which really added to it.

The only thing I wasn't fond of? The way Sherrill seems to skip around the issue of a real hell; she doesn't seem to want to focus on it or draw any strong conclusions about it from Scripture. While I appreciate her loving attitude and her desire that none be lost, I think this shying away from a very real part of Scripture is dangerous for any reader who is not a Christian or who is but doesn't know their Bible very well.

Overall, I really enjoyed it and would definitely recommend it with the reservations mentioned above.

I received this book as part of a Goodreads giveaway and was under no obligation to give a favorable review.

Gail Pallotta says

All the Way to Heaven is Elizabeth Sherrill's journey from an agnostic childhood to devout Christianity. In her autobiography she combines her personal life with quotes from the Bible and literature along with stories about people she met in her travels and those she interviewed as a writer and editor for "Guideposts Magazine."

Each chapter of the book can stand alone and could be read as a daily devotional as well as part of the whole. Ms. Sherrill manages to bring a nugget of truth out of every experience. Since she wasn't raised as a Christian, she examined it first as an outsider. Seeing people she came in contact with through her work at "Guideposts" cling to it, she tried to make sense of it. After discovering that she could believe bits and pieces of the faith, she finally accepted it in its entirety in the quiet of a church sanctuary, where no one pressured her to do so. Since then she has delved into the depths of what it means to be a Christian with thorough study and understanding that can benefit all who want to know more about the religion. By weaving Christianity into a day to day existence and combining it with words of great writers and poets as well as everyday people she makes us see Christianity as an integral part of our lives rather than a belief set apart.

In one story she tells about a piece of cloth carried by Corrie ten Boom. "It was a scrap of cloth, embroidered with multicolored threads--red, purple, black, metallic gold. Displaying it before an audience..." Corrie "...would explain that it represented the glorious life awaiting us in the next world. Puzzled faces would look back at her. The cloth showed only an untidy tangle of snarls and loose threads." But then, Ms. Sherrill tells us that Corrie would exclaim. "You're seeing it from the wrong side!" After Corrie turned the cloth over it revealed "a magnificent crown, the design God was weaving for eternity with the seemingly mismatched threads of an earthly lifetime."

Ms. Sherrill's writing is moving and introspective. I recommend this book for anyone who enjoys well written literature and fascinating stories, and especially for those looking for insight into Christianity.

Amanda says

In this lovely book, Elizabeth Sherrill writes about her own experiences writing for Guidepost magazine, along with her husband John. She shares memories from her childhood on up and how they formed her into a person who didn't believe in heaven or God. When she starts to work for Guidepost, neither her nor her husband thought that church was important. After battling depression, she and John decide to experiment going to church. I won't share all of the details, but I will say that this book is amazing! I feel in love with her writing, she truly is a master at it. A lot of bloggers turned authors could learn a lot from her. ;) She weaves her story along with wonderful quotes and stories of those she has interviewed over the years. This is the best book I have read in a long time!
