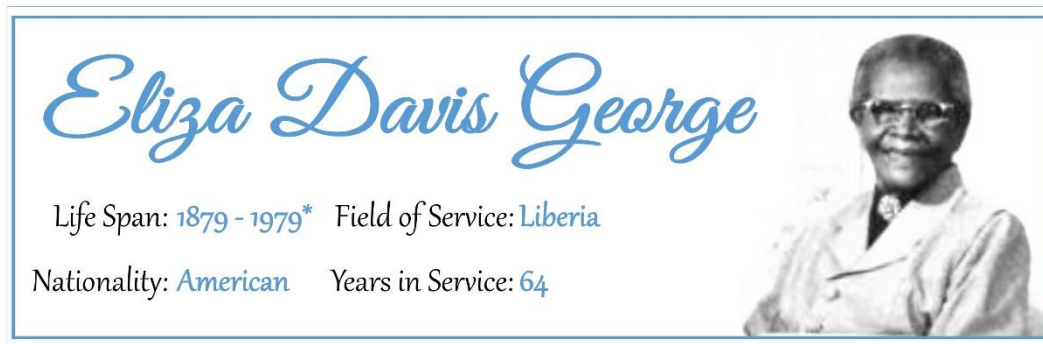


Her Story Silhouette by Shari House

www.sharihouse.com



Silhouette:

Eliza Davis, one of eleven siblings born to former slaves, was raised in the state of Texas. Although she was brought up in a Baptist church, it wasn't until the age of 16 that Eliza trusted Christ as her Saviour. She had the privilege of attending Central Texas College, and upon her graduation in 1911, she joined the teaching staff. It was during a prayer meeting held at the school for different regions and nations, that she felt a sure calling from the Lord to go to Africa. When she made her desire known, she faced opposition from all sides. People could not understand why she, a beautiful, educated woman, would want to leave her prestigious job to go to the mission field. Her response was, "My African brother is calling me; I hear his voice...Would you say stay when God says go?" Despite her best efforts, the mission board refused her request to be sent. She dedicated herself to prayer and fasting to see how the Lord would bring about His will. Many a time she refused to sleep and instead stayed up all night in prayer for the unsaved in Africa. These sleepless nights served to further strengthen her love for those in Africa and her determination to go. Finally, after two years, she was commissioned by the National Baptist Convention to go to Liberia as a missionary and establish a trade school.

On the 12th of December, 1913, Eliza Davis boarded a ship for Africa with six other missionaries. One year later on the 20th of January, 1914, she landed in Monrovia, Liberia. With the help of another single missionary, she set about to open a school and named it Bible Industrial Academy. Her hope was to teach children to read the Bible and to show them helpful life skills. Eliza's focus was always on the young people because she knew they were the future and hope of Liberia becoming a Christian nation. After only two years they had 50 children attending the academy and had seen more than 1,000 souls saved in the surrounding area. This proved to be only the beginning of what the Lord would accomplish through her dedicated life.



At first she focused her soul winning efforts in an area called Sinoe County. She began discipling and training the young Christians, who in turn started new ministries and churches. At the age of 40 she married a fellow missionary named C. Thompson George. After 20 years of marriage he passed away, and Eliza found herself once again on her own. Her indomitable spirit and incredible ability to endure, despite untold hardships, allowed her to continue branching further and further into the interior of Liberia until there were over 150 churches and



many schools established. Besides adopting her three children, Maude, Cecelia, and Cerella; she rescued many other little girls from arranged marriages by using part of her small salary to pay the girls' dowries. She became known as "Mother Eliza" by all who knew her and even the presidents of the country honored her for the work she did to help the Liberians.

The mission board tried to get her to retire several times, but she was undaunted, and her desire to reach one more village kept her in Liberia long after others had left. Ill in health, she finally returned to the States in 1972 turning over the last of her works to trained nationals. She continued to raise awareness and rally those who would listen to her concerning the needs of her beloved Liberia. Her 64 years of service left an indelible mark on the hearts of the ones she loved and gave her life for. Her last journey to Liberia was made in 1974 at the age of 95. It is said that on her 100th birthday, hundreds of Liberians paraded through the streets carrying banners reading, "Mother Eliza George, Great Daughter of America, Great Descendant of Africa, Great Saint and Missionary Mother." She is a true example of a lady of whom it can be said, "**She hath done what she could**"!

Her Story/My Story:

Eliza was known by one of two names, Mother Eliza or the God Woman. Everyone that came in contact with her was soon aware that she knew God and that she knew how to get her prayers answered. One of the many hardships Eliza faced during her time on the field was lack of financial support from the churches back in America. With the folding of her mission board at one point, the death of her husband, and the general economy of the country, it was a daunting task to provide the funds needed to keep everything going and to continue to grow the ministry. Time and again her life as a prayer warrior showed through as the Lord heard and answered her prayers. One time she and two of her orphan boys traveled over 200 miles on foot just to collect a money order for \$200 that had been sent from America. It took them days to get there traveling through rain, rivers, and jungle. Upon arriving she found she was too late and the money order had been returned to the States. This setback did not dampen her spirit as she knew God had a purpose for their trip and that He would provide for their needs in another way. Her willingness to endure hardship and yet keep her loving servant's heart for year after year when others had long come and gone was a living testimony to the Liberians. It was only one of the many reasons a young Liberian had cause to say, "**Her life was the best commentary of the Bible we have ever read.**"

This idea of our lives being a "commentary" of the Bible to those we come in contact with, and especially to those we minister to, lines up with II Corinthians 3:2 which says, "**Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:**" Although I had read this verse in passing many times before, it was shocking the first time I linked it directly to my life. I remember thinking, "Oh my word, MY LIFE is an epistle that is known and read of all men? What in the world kind of "letter" am I representing to those I'm ministering to?" In that moment I realized that I may be the only "Bible" that those who cross my path might read that day or any day, and it was overwhelming to think what the pages of my life were saying. We have the opportunity to affect the lives of those the Lord brings across our path, and we have the responsibility that that affect is for their good.

This truth was driven home to me on one particular occasion about 10 years ago where I had the opportunity to see just how a moment in time on two different random days of my life had affected others.

It was the second night of a missions conference at a large church in Schaumburg, Illinois where there were over 75 missionaries present. As it happened I had actually attended this church as a child for about 6 years until my family moved away. As I was standing beside my display table greeting people and answering questions, I saw a guy that looked so familiar to me, but I couldn't quite place his face. I finally recognized him as having been one of my high school students from my first year of teaching. I hadn't seen "Jim" for over 12 years, and he was now married with three kids. I had heard that he was working as an assistant pastor in Michigan, so I was surprised to see him there and found out that he and his family now lived in Schaumburg and attended this church. He seemed excited to see me, and went to get his wife and family so I could meet them. "Jim" also brought one of his best friends and his wife along, too. When he arrived back at the table he introduced me to his family and friends quite emphatically in this way – "This is Miss Shari House, the teacher who gave me the only demerits I ever received. It was my last year, my last week, and she gave me a detention ruining my perfect record." Needless to say, I was shocked. I didn't remember the situation at all, but believe me, he did. I was so surprised, and I asked him if he remembered what he got the demerits for. Of course, he did. He said that I told him he was speaking condescendingly to me. My first thought was, "He probably was. He was such a bright kid, but he thought he knew everything." My second thought was, "After these many years, that is all he remembers about me." I can't even remember what I said to him after his introduction, but probably, he will continue to remember me as the lady who ruined his perfect record.

Since I was speaking to the missionary ladies the next morning about the topic of being a vessel of honour and using our lives to affect the lives of others in a positive way, the idea was on my mind and I thought to myself, "I wonder if he truly deserved those demerits, or if I was just having a bad day, or if I let my pride get in the way and chose not to live as a 'vessel of honour' that day." I didn't have too much time for reflection for not even five minutes later an older gentleman came rushing up to me, shook my hand, and said, "Are you Shari House?" I nodded in the affirmative, and he said, "I've been waiting 25 years to meet you." I was dumbfounded. All I could say was, "Who are you?" He said, "Just a minute," and ran to get his wife and came back shaking my hand over and over and saying, "This is Shari House, this is Shari House." Again, I asked, "Who are you?" His name was "Mr. Smith." He had a son named "Bill Smith." Still, I was confused. He went on to explain that Bill and I had been in the 8th grade together at a Christian school in Cincinnati. He showed me a recent picture of Bill, but I didn't recognize him and my mind was fuzzy trying to put a face with the name. As the story came out Mr. Smith revealed that at sometime during that 8th grade school year, I talked to Bill about the church there in Schaumburg. Whatever I said to him about the church left a good impression on Bill's mind. The next year, I transferred to a different school, and Bill's family happened to move to the Schaumburg area. He told them of this church and that I had only good things to say about it, and they decided to try it out. At the time of the conference they had been members of that church for over 25 years, and they had always wanted to thank that young girl who had told their son of this great church. Hmmm, I thought, "That day, so many years ago, during my conversation with Bill, I had chosen to be a vessel of honor." The "pages" of my life had spoken good things.

Bible Study: God's Two Love Letters

First of all, what is the purpose of an epistle or a letter? I could come up with about four reasons, although there may be more.

1. To inform or announce
2. To bring comfort or encouragement
3. To bring rebuke
4. To gossip or slander

God's 1st Love Letter is His Word.

I think we would all agree that the first three purposes for a letter would definitely line up with God's purpose in giving us His Word or His "love letter," and that the fourth would bear no resemblance. Knowing our human frailty and desire for physical contact, He gave us Himself in word form.

If I want to know who God is...if I want to know how God will respond to me...if I want to know how to please Him...if I want to know why He loves me....I don't have to look any further than the words on the pages of His love letter to me.

Do you ever take out a note from someone you love and read it over and over? Is it worn from the many times you've unfolded it, read the contents again, refolded it, and put it somewhere safe? God's Word is His love letter to us. We should read and reread it until we know every word it says and the pages are worn with our cherishing of it.

I challenge myself when reading the Bible to make special note of the things God says about me so that when I need some encouragement in a particular area or with a specific situation, I know where to find it.

Here are just a few verses I have found of what God writes to me in His love letter:

- A. Genesis 1:27 – God created me to be like Him.
- B. Psalm 34:18 – God is near when I'm brokenhearted.
- C. Psalm 71:6 – God controlled my birth.
- D. Psalm 139:1 – God knows me.
- E. Psalm 139:2 – God understands me.
- F. Psalm 139:3 – God compasseth my path.
- G. Psalm 139:13 – God possesseth my reins.
- H. Psalm 139:15 & 16 – God knew me before I was formed.
- I. Isaiah 40:11 – God gathers me in his arms.
- J. Jeremiah 1:4-5 – God sanctified me and ordained me.
- K. Jeremiah 29:11 – God thinks about me and has a plan for me.
- L. Jeremiah 32:41 – God rejoices over me when I do good.

M. Jeremiah 33:3 – God hears me when I call and He answers.
N. Matthew 6:32 God knows of my needs of food and clothing.
O. Matthew 7:11 – God gives me gifts that I ask for.
P. Matthew 10: 31 – God knows the hairs on my head.
Q. Romans 8:31 – God is for me.
R. Romans 8:39 – God will not let me be separate from Him.
S. John 3:16 – God loves me enough to sacrifice the thing most precious to Him.
T. II Corinthians 1:4 – God comforts me in tribulation.
U. II Corinthians 5:18-19 – God has reconciled me to Himself.
V. Ephesians 1:11 – God has given me an inheritance.
W. II Thessalonians 2:16 – 17 – God has given me consolation and hope.
X. Revelation 21:4 – God will wipe away my tears.

God's 2nd Love Letter is Us.

Yes, the Bible is God's love letter to Christians, His children. It shows us His **love**, **mercy**, and **grace**. But what about those who will never read the Bible or don't have a Bible in their language. How do they learn of God's love, mercy, and grace? I believe we, as Christians, are God's "love letter" to the world. For what other purpose does God leave us here on earth once we are saved if not to show others Himself through our lives.

When we look back at the four purposes for writing a letter, I would love to say that the "letter" of my life has stuck mainly to the first two reasons, but I'm afraid that more often than I'd like to admit it has included #3 and sometimes even #4, as well. When I view my life as a parallel "epistle" that God wants to use to show Himself to others, I have to wonder if when people read the "pages" of my life, I read more like a letter of rebuke than I do a letter of comfort and encouragement.

We should endeavor to be those things to the world around us that God is to us, and we should make sure the "epistle" of our life is something worth reading and contains only those elements that God would want us to say.

Each day we bear the responsibility to ask ourselves if it can be said of us, as that young Liberian said of Eliza, **"Her life was the best commentary of the Bible we have ever read."**

* Some accounts give her death year as 1979 and some 1980.

Resources & Book List:

Born to Lose, Bound to Win: The Amazing Journey of Mother Eliza George, 1980, Lorry Lutz
When God Says Go: The Amazing Journey of a Slave's Daughter, October 1, 2002, Lorry Lutz (Revised edition of Born to Lose, Bound to Win.)