

## Life's Encounters

### Eve Axon

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*Life's Encounters is a swift memoir that preserves the experiences of a Christian missionary.*

Eve Axon's memoir, *Life's Encounters*, recounts her diverse globe-trotting missionary work with her husband.

Axon was born in England during World War II. This brief work begins by recalling her childhood, describing the hardships of the day, her father's return from the war, and her mother's factory work, though all are remembered without emotion. Axon remembers leaving school at fifteen to start working herself.

She married and divorced while still young and worked in an assisted living facility while taking care of her first child. It wasn't until her second marriage that she became involved in church ministries. Through the next twenty years of her life, Axon and her husband traveled from the United Kingdom to France, South Africa, Ecuador, and beyond as missionaries.

The book moves between many places, but they are not thoroughly described. Attention-grabbing scenes—as with congregants' healing experiences and accounts of people receiving the gospel—are few in number. There are some surprising incidents—a congregant with a brain tumor, for example—but generally, the book moves between scenes so quickly that it is difficult to keep up. The text is short on descriptions, and it does not engage its audience enough to convey its messages well.

Many characters appear; none are sufficiently developed. Enlivening observations are few, though personal photographs are included; they connect to discussed family members and make their stories more relatable. The book's primary focus is on tracing the couple's movement from one region to another as they preach, and it reads more like a list of experiences than a story. It moves forward in a logical way, following a linear timeline, but it still does not feel complete. Too much is left out.

The language is overly formal for the subject matter. There is little that is emotional or involving here. Some descriptions hold interest, as when Axon compares her first impressions of Nigeria with what she's used to back home, but they are few and far between. Though the book ends with a note about what Axon and her husband are up to today, as well as a summary of their missionary work, it reads as rushed and falls short when it comes to inspiration. In the end, it feels more like a personal scrapbook than a book written for outsiders.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (December 13, 2018)

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