

THE POISE, GRACE, AND QUIET STRENGTH BEHIND THE CROWN

DUDLEY DELFFS

The Faith of Queen Elizabeth pulls back the royal curtain to reveal a compassionate heart dedicated to serving the King of Kings. Shared through the eyes of a gifted storyteller, this book will inspire you.

ROMA DOWNEY, actress, producer, and New York Times bestselling author

How I love this book! If you thought you knew all there was to know about one of the most recognizable women in the world, *The Faith of Queen Elizabeth* will surprise you and leave you in tears of gratitude that such a monarch exists.

JANE KIRKPATRICK, award-winning author of One More River to Cross

The faith of Her Majesty the Queen is the diamond in the crown: forged under extreme pressure, a "beacon of inspiration" the world over, reflecting the light of the Lord she serves. Delffs's book foregrounds this faith with fluency and respect: an absorbing read.

RIGHT REVEREND DR. JILL DUFF, bishop of Lancaster

This book is a wonderful tribute to the life of Queen Elizabeth II and to her devotion to the people of the UK, the Commonwealth, and the Church of England. It describes her clear and authentic Christian faith that has inspired me and many others in following Jesus's example.

ANDREW R. PRATT, bishop of Blackburn's interfaith advisor

I am grateful to Dudley Delffs for this much-needed record of a remarkable woman of faith. Queen Elizabeth is pivotal in the history of Britain and the world, and this book is a fitting tribute to her. It is well researched, perceptively observed, and compellingly written.

STEVE BELL, author and speaker

This book provides exceptional insight on the faith of Queen Elizabeth II, who has demonstrated this virtue exceptionally, not only in the UK but also across the Commonwealth and globally. In doing so, Her Majesty has shown humility and respect by reaching out to people from all walks of life regardless of their race, colour, creed, or faith.

GULAB SINGH, Member of the British Empire,
Deputy Lieutenant

The Faith of Queen Elizabeth interweaves brilliantly the examples of the total dedication and commitment of our Queen, founded on her Christian beliefs and values. As a British national and an East African Indian Hindu woman, I stand witness to our Queen living out the main tenets and values reflected in the text of the Bhagavad Gita: duty, action, and renunciation. These are amply depicted by our Queen's commitment to the benefit of all the people of the UK and the Commonwealth, whom she serves with selflessness, love, and steadfastness.

MRS. CHARU AINSCOUGH, Order of the British Empire, Justice of the Peace

The Faith of Queen Elizabeth reveals more than just this famous leader's public service for six decades—it points directly to her passionate commitment to Jesus Christ. Drawing on historical archives, royal biographies, and personal interviews, Dudley Delffs paints a vivid portrait of a believer answering God's call on her life and trusting him through every public triumph and personal trial. This book brings history alive in the best way, inspiring us through Queen Elizabeth's example to follow the King of Kings.

CRAIG GROESCHEL, pastor of Life.Church,

New York Times bestselling author

Delffs shows why Queen Elizabeth II is so admired, even by those who are skeptical of the monarchy itself. He argues that the Queen's deep and personal Christian faith accounts for her steadfast commitment to her role as Head of the Church and State in over six decades of duties and trials—including those of her own family. In what approaches a biography of the Queen (Anglophiles will quickly warm up to Delffs's love for all things British, not to mention his engaging style), he shows us the human Elizabeth beneath the royal trappings.

DR. WILLIAM KLEIN, professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary, author of *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*

Dudley Delffs has written an accessible, lively overview of Her Majesty's lifetime of achievements and challenges. Excellent research and knowledge of contemporary culture meld with personal anecdotes to reveal the Queen's deepest commitments to her family, nation, and the international community.

DR. PHYLLIS KLEIN, spiritual director and British literature specialist

ZONDERVAN

The Faith of Queen Elizabeth
Copyright © 2019 by Dudley Delffs

Requests for information should be addressed to: Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Zondervan titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fundraising, or promotional use. For information, please email SpecialMarkets@Zondervan.com.

ISBN 978-0-310-35697-4 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-35887-9 (international trade paper edition)

ISBN 978-0-310-35699-8 (audio)

ISBN 978-0-310-35698-1 (ebook)

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version. Public domain.

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Cover photo: PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Interior design: Kait Lamphere

Printed in the United States of America

To Norma Delffs, my own Queen Mother

CONTENTS

Therefore I am sure that this, my Coronation, is not the symbol of a power and a splendor that are gone but a declaration of our hopes for the future, and for the years I may, by God's Grace and Mercy, be given to reign and serve you as your Queen.



—Coronation Day address, 1953

chapter one

DUTY and **DESIRE**

ANSWERING THE CALL TO SERVE

In many ways, it was a typical weekday in North London. The early December sky held the dull sheen of pewter and the moist scent of an afternoon shower. Office workers with coffee in hand or a takeaway lunch rushed back to their cubicles. Locals carrying umbrellas stopped to chat on sidewalks outside the shops. Pensioners and new moms with strollers sauntered toward Barnard Park or King Square Gardens. The usual number of tourists, perhaps lost or looking for Angel tube station or Caledonian Road, wandered about, pausing for the occasional selfie.

On a backstreet in a typically quiet neighborhood, however, a small crowd lined the curb near St. Mary's Islington, a steepled brick parish church dating to the eleventh century. A service of some kind was clearly about to begin, as smartly dressed couples and families mingled among enormous pillars before pouring through double doors. Within a few minutes, only a dozen or so formally dressed men and women, along

with a handful of clergy, lingered outside the main entrance. Then the crowd erupted as a police car turned on to the block, followed by a black SUV and another sleek dark vehicle bearing a small pennant on top.

Stopping directly in front of the church, the claret-red and black car, known as the Bentley State Limousine, discharged its only passenger as a dark-suited attendant opened the vehicle's rear door. The smiling woman who emerged electrified the crowd filling the sidewalk only a few feet away as a royal guard in full dress uniform greeted her with a small nod and a proper handshake. Dressed in a bright fuchsia coat over a pink and red dress with a matching pink hat adorned with red feathers, the woman stepped up onto the open-air portico to be welcomed by the attendant clergy. On her left arm hung an iconic black Launer handbag.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had arrived.



Compared with most official royal arrivals, the Queen's entrance at St. Mary's Islington was rather quiet. While a dozen or so paparazzi flashed cameras and captured video footage, the event promised no other celebrities to capture popular attention on social media or in the evening paper. The Queen was not speaking, presenting honors, or serving as the center of attention. If she had her way, Her Majesty might likely have slipped in just as the service was starting, unannounced and unnoticed, just as she and members of the Royal Family have been known to do when attending concerts, operas, and other public performances.

She had no obligation to attend, and likely no one would

have noticed if she had chosen not to be there. The event, however, was one the Queen would not have missed. At the small neighborhood church where no monarch had set foot for over a thousand years, this service celebrated the 150th anniversary of Scripture Union, an international, interdenominational, evangelical charity founded to help children and young people grow in their faith and relationship with God. The organization's first official meeting had been held in the same neighborhood a century and a half ago, and now St. Mary's welcomed the opportunity to commemorate the contribution Scripture Union had made in Great Britain and—through international chapters in over 120 countries—around the world.

Unable to attend less conspicuously, Queen Elizabeth sat at the front of the church with other distinguished guests and service participants. She bowed in prayer, sang hymns she knew by heart, and beamed at the performance by a children's choir from St. Mary's Primary School. As a new hymn, "God of Unchanging Grace" by Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith, rang through the church to commemorate the Scripture Union Jubilee, Her Majesty subtly nodded her approval.

While she serves as patron to more than six hundred charities, Queen Elizabeth seems especially dedicated to Scripture Union. As Reverend Tim Hastie-Smith, Scripture Union's national director, explained, "We were thrilled that Her Majesty the Queen chose to join us as we celebrated 150 years of sharing the good news and love of Jesus Christ with the children and young people of this nation. For so many young people, it is the faithful and gently inspiring witness of parents, grandparents and great-grandparents that testifies most powerfully to God's enduring love. Her Majesty embodies this witness, and just as she seeks to serve all people

of this nation regardless of race or religion, so SU seeks to testify to the abiding presence of a life-transforming loving God, whose love is for all, and is found freely in His world."



The contrast between that humble service and the pomp and circumstance of the one that launched Queen Elizabeth's reign could not be sharper. More than sixty years earlier, Her Majesty had attended another historic church, but at this one she could not escape being the center of attention. After all, her coronation in Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953, was the first televised installation of a British monarch, with an estimated audience of more than twenty-five million viewers.²

Although Elizabeth was the star participant, she resisted televising her coronation at first. Her father had not allowed cameras into the abbey in 1937 for his coronation, which she had witnessed as an eleven-year-old princess, and she had chosen not to broadcast her wedding to Prince Philip in 1947. Apparently, she feared misspeaking or making some mistake in the nearly three-hour ceremony that would not only be televised to millions around the world but would be recorded for posterity.³ In addition, the Queen considered parts of the service deeply personal and sacred, particularly Holy Communion and the part of the service known as "the anointing."

When the decision not to televise the coronation was announced, however, public outcry prevailed. Elizabeth remained uneasy but compromised, allowing the service to be broadcast live but without close-ups of Her Majesty's face. It was also agreed that cameras would pan away during communion and the anointing.

The live broadcast united public support for this new sovereign. The young Queen offered the promise of a new beginning, a fresh start. World War II had ended only a few years prior, and hope for establishing a new normalcy blossomed amid the rations and ravages of wartime. The three previous monarchs had been male, with George V and George VI sandwiched around the abdication of Edward VIII.

In contrast, Queen Elizabeth II provided the promise of stability, vibrancy, and a reminder of past beloved queens such as Victoria and Elizabeth I, who enjoyed long, popular reigns.

Filled with pomp and cir-

cumstance dating back many centuries, the service order had changed little since the coronation of William the Conqueror, the first monarch to be crowned in Westminster Abbey, back in 1066 after his victory over the Saxons at the Battle of Hastings. For the coronation of Queen



Queen Elizabeth II taking her vows during her coronation, June 2, 1953. Universal History Archive/Getty Images

Elizabeth II, Westminster Abbey was closed for six months before the big event in order to prepare. Railway track was installed leading directly into the ancient church to transport the tons of wood and metal required to construct new stadiumstyle seating. With capacity stretched from two thousand to eight thousand guests, there was nowhere to go but up!

Most of us born after this event have likely never witnessed anything comparable. Queen Elizabeth's coronation

combined the history, tradition, and romanticism seen in the royal weddings of Charles and Diana, William and Catherine, and Harry and Meghan with the preparation, nationalism, and grandeur of an international Olympics. In addition, it combined the glamor of a Hollywood film premier with the community spirit of a neighborhood block party. The Queen's coronation pulled out all the stops and spared no expense. The abbey, packed to the rafters with witnesses and fragrant with fresh flowers from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, became the meeting place of heaven and earth.

Almost thirty thousand soldiers from countries throughout the British Empire marched, paraded, and guarded the safety of the more than three million spectators camped out on the streets of London along the five-mile procession. The Queen rode in a solid gold carriage—dating back to King George III and exceeding anything Disney ever imagined for a princess—drawn by a team of eight gray geldings. While the weather delivered overcast skies and sporadic showers, no amount of rain could dampen the jubilant spirits celebrating Coronation Day.



Less than six months earlier, the new Queen had delivered her first Christmas address, a tradition started by her grandfather, King George V. In her address she anticipated the sacred vows she would be taking during her coronation. "I want to ask you all," she said, "whatever your religion may be, to pray for me on that day—to pray that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises

I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life."⁴

Her request, and the prayers of her many subjects and admirers, apparently was answered. The service consisted of five parts—recognition, oath, anointing, crowning, and homage. However, the sacred centerpiece of the ceremony was her anointing with holy oil, a mixture of sesame seed and olive oil, perfume with roses, orange flowers, jasmine, musk, civet, and ambergris. Shielded by a canopy directly above Her Majesty, the archbishop of Canterbury poured oil from the ampulla, the solid gold vessel in the shape of an eagle used only for coronations, into the spatula-shaped spoon, another priceless artifact set apart for use only on this occasion.

Dipping his finger in the holy oil, the archbishop made a cross on Elizabeth's hands, then her heart, before concluding, "Be thy head anointed with holy oil, as kings, priests and prophets were anointed. . . . As Solomon was anointed king by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, so be thou anointed, blessed and consecrated Queen over the peoples whom the Lord thy God has given thee to rule and govern."

His words came from the precedent set by the earliest known coronation as recorded in the Old Testament (1 Kings 1:38–50) and consummated the intimate bond between sovereign and God, the King of Kings—and in this case, Queens. The anointing conveys the holy seal of God empowering the monarch, a meeting and mingling of the sacred and sacrificial, the eternal and the temporal, the divine and the mortal. It is simply "magic," as the duke of Windsor declares in Peter Morgan's version of events in the "Smoke and Mirrors" episode of *The Crown*.

Divinely appointed or humanly anointed, monarchs seem

to have always embodied the divine for their subjects, either as a self-proclaimed deity or as a specially chosen representative for God or gods. In the Hebrew history recorded in the Old Testament, leadership almost always involved God in some dramatic way. Generally, either kings and queens were anointed and chosen by God directly and accepted as such by those around them, or they were rebellious leaders set up to suffer the consequences of shirking their faith as well as their duty to lead by example for God's people.

We see this dichotomy in the life of Saul, who was chosen by God as the first king of Israel, signaling the transition from twelve tribes to one nation. God's prophet Samuel found Saul and informed him of God's decision, and King Saul led the people of Israel effectively until he began to disobey God and make his own decisions. This led to God's Spirit departing from Saul, which in turn ignited an ongoing depression in the king.

Then there's David, the young, plucky shepherd boy whom God chose to replace Saul, once again via a visit from the prophet Samuel. In hindsight, David's life may have been messier than Saul's, with one crucial difference: David remained a man after God's own heart. For all his mistakes—pride, adultery, murder, and abuse of royal power, to name a few—David never closed his heart to his need for God, and his willingness to serve God never waned.

The sovereign, then and thereafter in most monarchies, embodied an incarnational role as God's chosen representative to lead—and to serve—God's people. This divine responsibility precedes Queen Elizabeth's other duties to this day, as reflected in the first question asked by the archbishop of Canterbury during the oath on Coronation Day: "Will you

to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel?"⁶ Commitments of intent regarding her leadership of the Church of England and the government formed by the United Kingdom's constitutional monarchy followed *after* her vow to uphold God's laws and to profess the gospel of Christ.

Such emphasis, along with her affirmation, could easily have evolved into just another perfunctory part of an ancient and arcane ceremony for British monarchs in the twentieth century. But Elizabeth's firm "I will" before her faithful subjects and the eyes of the world resounded with sincerity and humility. Her response echoed the willingness apparent in the speech she had given on her twenty-first birthday:

I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong. But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do: I know that your support will be unfailingly given. God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.⁷



When she arrived into this world on April 21, 1926, Elizabeth was the firstborn of the Duke and Duchess of York and the third grandchild of the reigning monarch, King George V, who reportedly delighted in the thoughtful, well-behaved child whispering secrets to him at family holiday celebrations and informal gatherings.

That Elizabeth, or Lilibet as she was known then, would live a life of royal privilege was a given. Like her younger sister, Margaret Rose, and cousins on her father's side, she would



The Duchess of York looking at her newborn daughter, Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor, May 1926. Speaight/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

enjoy a life of leisure framed by public service. But then something most unexpected forever changed the trajectory of Elizabeth's life.

Rather than basking in country life, young Lilibet quickly became a princess traversing the dark woods of the abdication crisis on an epic journey toward the light of Buckingham Palace via Westminster Abbey. Perhaps more like Odysseus than Sleeping Beauty, she faced her own internal fears as much as her

external circumstances on this extended quest. Did she have what it takes to wear the crown? And what kind of person would she become while wearing it?

It did not take long to find out. When her grandfather began suffering more acutely from chronic pulmonary disease, the wheels of historic change began to turn. After King George V received a fatal injection of morphine and cocaine from the royal physician and died on January 20, 1936,8 Elizabeth's uncle, known by the family as David and to the public as the Prince of Wales, became his father's successor, King Edward VIII—at least for most of 1936.

The less-than-a-year reign and abdication of Edward

VIII remains a fascinating pivot in British history. Forced to choose between his duty as king and his love for the American divorcée Wallis Simpson, he followed his heart and gave up the crown to be with the woman he loved. Whether viewed as a tragic, romantic sacrifice or a selfish, foolhardy mistake, Edward's abdication brought the conflict between a monarch's personal desire and public duty to a head.

His abdication also symbolizes the social, cultural, and institutional changes of his day in ways unique from any of his royal predecessors. In a post-Victorian, newly-industrial, post-war kingdom, the crisis precipitated by Edward VIII gave expression to so many timely conflicts: between church and state, public appearance and private intention, individual and institution, freedom of choice and obligation of status, ambition and aristocracy.

These tensions voiced the growing pains of a modern world.

World War I introduced a new kind of warfare that was no longer limited to remote battlefields and military chess games. The power of the church declined, while social morals loosened personal behavior from the corseted conservatism of the Victorian age. And forms and styles of art and literature evolved from what experts deemed worthy to an emphasis on individual forms of expression.

Traditional realism and naturalism shifted to more innovative, subjective styles and forms of expression. While Victorians valued conformity, consistency, and symmetry, Modern artists created unique, unexpected, unpredictable forms. It's the difference between a painting by John Everett Millais and one by Henri Matisse, between a novel by Charles Dickens and one by James Joyce.

What does all this have to do with the faith of Queen Elizabeth? Everything! Because among the tensions inherent in this cultural shift, we find a knotted conflict between personal freedom and the pull of precedent, between desire to live as one pleases and duty to live in the role prescribed for you.



If the abdication crisis epitomizes the symbolic shift of society and culture from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, it ultimately remains a struggle between head and heart, duty and desire. Coincidentally, this battle of individual wills just happened to carry national, international, and historic consequences. In his pursuit of the personal fulfillment offered by love and marriage, King Edward VIII quickly reached an impasse of epic proportions.

In January 1936, when George V died and the Prince of Wales assumed the crown, Mrs. Wallis Simpson was still married to Ernest Simpson, a London-based shipping executive. She had met the Prince of Wales in 1931 and had become his constant companion by 1935, when the two enjoyed a holiday in Europe together, among other public appearances and private testimonials. Wildly in love with the outgoing American socialite, the new King continued their affair with abandon, intending to marry Mrs. Simpson once she divorced her husband.

During this ten-month interval, the British press did not directly address this rather delicate situation out of respect for the monarchy, which in turn kept it discreetly out of the public eye. Once Mrs. Simpson filed for divorce in October, however, the blinders were removed. King Edward's affair

with her had already been reported in numerous papers and periodicals overseas, and numerous British subjects living abroad often shared their clippings back home. Perhaps the tipping point occurred when Edward informed Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin that he would be marrying Mrs. Simpson as soon as her divorce became final. Appalled by the idea, Baldwin adamantly insisted that she, as a twice-divorced American with a scandalous reputation, would never be accepted as queen. Both men refused to back down.

About two weeks after this stalemate between the King and PM Baldwin, however, a clergyman inadvertently lit the fuse on this slow-burning bombshell. Alfred Blunt, the bishop of Bradford, delivered an address at a conference in his diocese anticipating the upcoming coronation, scheduled for May the following year (1937). Calling into question the new king's moral character and personal faith, Blunt said:

On this occasion the King holds an avowedly representative position. His personal views and opinions are his own, and as an individual he has the right of us all to be the keeper of his own private conscience. But in his public capacity at his Coronation, he stands for the English people's idea of kingship. It has for long centuries been, and I hope still is, an essential part of that idea that the King needs the grace of God for his office.

First, on the faith, prayer, and self-dedication of the King himself; and on that it would be improper for me to say anything except to commend him to God's grace, which he will so abundantly need, as we all need it—for the King is a man like ourselves—if he is to do his duty faithfully. We hope that he is aware of

his need. Some of us wish that he gave more positive signs of such awareness.⁹

Before taking the throne, the Prince of Wales, as Elizabeth's Uncle David was known, had been quite the playboy. Unmarried, he enjoyed the company of women and frequented social events high and low, from aristocratic balls to basement jazz clubs. He was the first Royal to be photographed while smoking a cigarette. He chatted with reporters and photographers and charmed virtually everyone he met.

Bishop Blunt, totally unaware—along with the vast majority of British subjects—of the King's involvement with the married Mrs. Simpson, intended only to call the sovereign to a higher standard. If nothing else, the King could at least go through the motions of having a Christian faith that included regular church attendance. For the Head of the Church and Defender of the Faith, it came with the job.

But Blunt's speech ignited the powder keg of public exposure.

A reporter named Ronald Harker, from the local West Yorkshire newspaper *Telegraph & Argus*, heard Blunt and wrote up a report for the national Press Association. London reporters had played nice until then, feeling gagged by tradition, historical precedent, and British reserve. Blunt's speech was the opening they needed, enabling them to address the King's behavior without starting the conversation.

The story of the King's involvement with Mrs. Simpson broke in papers across Great Britain the following morning. Roughly half the population supported their King's rebellion against the rules of Parliament and the Church, agreeing that he had the right to marry the woman he loved regardless.

The other half, including most aristocrats and power brokers, expressed contempt at their sovereign's unwillingness to play by the rules.

Victorian duty had collided head-on with Modern desire. There was no turning back.



When Edward maintained his commitment to marry his beloved Mrs. Simpson, Prime Minister Baldwin warned the King that such action would result in the resignation of all Parliament members, guaranteeing unprecedented governmental chaos. As if to up the ante in this high-stakes game of poker, Edward threatened to abdicate. He dug in and may have expected to get what he wanted. Or, as some royal historians have speculated, his love for Wallis Simpson provided a legitimate reason to excuse himself from a job with responsibilities and obligations he found too confining.

Whatever the tangled skein of emotions might have been, Edward's insistence on pulling the thread of personal passion threatened to unravel the royal security blanket of the monarchy.

But political consultations with leaders in dominions of the British Empire—including the Irish Free State, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa—clipped this loose thread before it went any further. Leaders of Parliament as well as their counterparts in the Commonwealth would accept no scenario involving Edward's marriage to Mrs. Simpson. As long as Wallis was his betrothed, Edward would have to choose between wearing the crown and wearing a wedding ring.

By choosing to abdicate, Edward began the process of

redefining the British monarchy, a project his niece continues to this day. As her father acceded to the throne as King George VI, Elizabeth saw firsthand and up close the steep personal price required to wear the crown. Her uncle's decision had fractured the monarchy, and now she watched her father try to repair the damage amid the turmoil of the Second World War. King George VI's reign lasted only sixteen years, his life cut short by lung cancer, as well as the stress of his responsibilities during wartime.



These variables, historical as well as personal, factored into how Elizabeth approached the call to serve. Now, after surpassing Queen Victoria as the longest-reigning British monarch, Queen Elizabeth has redefined the institution and its relevancy for our twenty-first century, tech-driven global culture. In fact, she has lived most of her life in the ever-expanding public eye, filmed on television and now featured in social media. Arguably the most famous woman in the world, she is undoubtedly the most photographed, an iconic figure for more than seven decades.

Queen Elizabeth is the only British monarch that the vast majority of people in the world, let alone the United Kingdom, have known in their lifetime. Today more articles, documentaries, and programs (including *The Crown* on Netflix and the Academy Award–winning film *The Queen*) scrutinize her and the Royal Family than ever before. But what fuels this surge of popularity and public interest?

Numerous factors contribute, including Her Majesty's intelligence, humility, humor, poise, and grace under pressure.

She is authentically herself. The Queen exudes the kind of confidence that cannot be contrived. In addition, she has sustained that poise for over seven decades and through numerous crises, both personal and political. At the heart of this confidence, we glimpse Her Majesty's personal faith in God.

More than the product of polite deference to historical tradition, the Queen's faith transcends her inherited responsibility and the theology of the Anglican Church. The faith of Queen Elizabeth shines with the luster of a lifetime serving others, refined by the fires of deep-seated struggles and polished by her humor and humility. Such an authentic faith could not be merely academic, political, or social but is undoubtedly personal, visceral, and deeply intimate.

Perhaps the Queen's faith began, as it did for many of us, as an obligation, a product of family custom and cultural tradition. Parents have been passing down their views on God, religion, and the meaning of life to their children since Adam and Eve exited Eden. Part of being human means wrestling with the existence of God, the nature of suffering, and the overall spiritual dimension to life, even if one decides not to believe any of it.

For centuries, generations around the world have been seeking a way to know God or a higher power and purpose for their lives. People used to rely on the priest, bishop, pope, and religious hierarchy to take care of their business with God. Perhaps some still do.

Historically, subjects of the Crown could also rely on the fact that the monarch, as head of state and Head of the Church, maintained the only direct relationship with God they might require. Like children resting in the comfort of their parents' provisions of food and shelter, they did not

have to worry about such lofty matters as personal salvation and discovering a meaningful, transcendent purpose in life.

Martin Luther, among other Reformers, changed all that. The church no longer needed a hierarchy of gatekeepers. Clearly, personal desire could change the course of one's public duty. Although religious hierarchies certainly continued to exist then as they do now, an emphasis on one's personal relationship to God continued to grow. Individuals no longer had to trust their understanding of God, as well as their communication with him, to a special delegate, prophet, priest, or monarch.

Nevertheless, we are social creatures living in various intersecting networks of relationships. Even today most people still shape their personal faith and spirituality with input from others, especially authoritative figures who lead churches, both locally and nationally, as well as clergy, pastors, theologians, mystics, mentors, and gurus, not to mention those from history. While we have evolved in our reliance on the spiritual leadership of others to a more democratic, consumer-based approach, we still consider the ways we see other prominent people living their faith and allow them to influence our own spiritual life.

Granted, not all spiritual heroes or role models are equal, and some have even turned their influence toward accumulating personal wealth, adoration, and attention. At their worst, they become dangerous cult leaders and con artists. At their best, they restore our hope and inspire us to become better people, drawing us back again and again to God's grace, Christ's love, and the Spirit's presence in and among us.

Discerning the difference can be challenging at times. A person's faith is the most intimate aspect of a person's

being, and to talk about someone else's faith seems incredibly presumptuous, potentially disrespectful, and particularly dangerous. One can never know what is in the heart of someone else, which is why such matters are indeed better left to God. Aristotle said one's character must be defined by one's actions, not one's motives or intentions. Nonetheless, we are influenced by one another's acts of faith, both within our families and communities but also historically and personally.

We admire, revere, and emulate the faith of martyrs, heroes, and underdogs of the faith such as William Wilberforce, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Mother Teresa. But what if some heroes of the faith are called to a different kind of sacrifice, a faithful dedication to service no less challenging than working with the poor of Calcutta or trying to overturn generations of social attitudes about race?

Queen Elizabeth II did not choose her role, nor did she refuse it. And she has never used her royal position as a pedestal for self-aggrandizement, self-indulgence, or self-congratulations. Instead, she has accepted her position as queen, Head of the Church of England, and Defender of the Faith solemnly and soberly. But it clearly is not duty alone driving Her Majesty's seven decades of service. Something in the fiber of her faith is clearly informed by her personal relationship with God.

Surprising as it may be to some, even as it is assumed by others, Queen Elizabeth II has much to teach us about living out our faith and following the example set by Jesus Christ. Early on she accepted the call placed on her life, yet she made that role uniquely her own by the way she has lived, served, and reigned. She discovered how to navigate safe passage between the Scylla of duty and the Charybdis of desire.

The only way to wear the royal grandeur of the monarchy was to remain clothed in her humanity. And her Christian faith remains the thread stitching person and personage, duty and desire, together.



When I began researching the Christian faith of Queen Elizabeth II, I appreciated the complexity, or near impossibility, of such a daunting quest. Nonetheless, I determined to examine the events, words, and deeds of the "world's most famous woman," as she's often called, and glean what they reveal of her faith, and what that faith has to say to us today. Also, as a fan of Peter Morgan's award-winning film *The Queen* as well as his popular, critically acclaimed Netflix series *The Crown*, I wanted to know more about Her Majesty's life and faith in order to separate fact from fiction.

A key part of my research involved spending a few weeks in the United Kingdom, not only visiting libraries, palaces, and historical sites but also talking with a handful of experts as well as many more citizens in casual settings: pubs and cafés, coffee fellowship after a church service, tourist sites, a village Christmas festival, and train rides. My findings there confirmed and enhanced my other research, and you will find these personal stories at the end of each chapter.

Without a doubt, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is more popular than ever, both as an ambassador of cultural history and an emblem of national pride but also as a role model, philanthropist, iconic leader, and Christian. As one gentleman in a West End pub told me over pints at the bar one afternoon, "Her Majesty the Queen has nothing left

to prove! She's the real deal, and now everyone knows it. There will never be another like her." A retired civil servant from the northern London suburb of Finchley, this man was enjoying a Guinness while waiting on his wife to finish her shopping.

He was intrigued that I would choose to focus exclusively on Queen Elizabeth's personal faith, considering it simply "part of who she is." He also confessed that he and his wife no longer attended church, except occasionally at Christmas or Easter, but that he had fond boyhood memories of visiting his grandparents in Yorkshire and attending church with them there. "My mother's parents were younger than Her Majesty, but they were from that same generation. You worked hard—not to make a lot of quid but because it was the right thing to do. It was one's duty. Today . . . well, there's a bit of slack with me kids and grandkids . . ." He shrugged, sipped his pint, and asked whether I had children.

After confirming that I do and sharing the ages and whereabouts of all three, I gently directed our conversation back to Queen Elizabeth. "I admire her faith," my new friend said, "I do. Her Christmas broadcasts always move me—silly, isn't it?—but I believe she means what she says. And then into each new year, at least for a bit, I try to be just a little kinder, more patient, a good bloke."

As our impromptu conversation ended and I thanked him for our chat, I considered his final point. It resonated with me and my desire to explore the faith of Queen Elizabeth and to shine a spotlight on what we can all learn from her example. Because at the heart of looking at someone else's faith, you often discover what it is that you yourself believe and how you also want to live out those beliefs.

I cannot lead you into battle. I do not give you laws or administer justice, but I can do something else. I can give you my heart and my devotion to these old islands and to all the peoples of our brotherhood of nations.



—annual Christmas broadcast, 1957

chapter two

COMMITMENT and CONVICTION

ALIGNING BEHAVIOR WITH BELIEFS

In the episode "Scientia Potentia Est" of The Crown, a young Elizabeth sits thoughtfully at a desk in a cavernous classroom as a black raven dances among piles of books stacked on his master's desk at the front. She is the only pupil, and her teacher, Henry Marten, is the vice-provost of Eton College and expert on constitutional history.

"There are two elements of the Constitution," he states, "the *efficient* and the *dignified*. Which is the monarch?"

His student hesitates, distracted by the black bird.

"Your Royal Highness?" he asks, gently commanding the princess's attention.

"The dignified," she answers.

"Very good," Professor Marten confirms. "The efficient has the power to make and execute policy and is answerable to the electorate. 'What touches all should be approved by

The Poise, Grace, and Quiet Strength Behind the Crown

By Dudley Delffs

Discover the inspiring spiritual legacy of Queen Elizabeth II, the longest reigning monarch in British history. Sharing a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the life of this notoriously private monarch, *The Faith of Queen Elizabeth* features intimate stories and inspiring reflections on the personal faith behind the Crown. With testimonies from historic figures such as Winston Churchill, Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, and Margaret Thatcher, this magnificent tribute explores the faith of the world's most famous Queen — and the King she serves.

"Shared through the eyes of a gifted storyteller, this book will inspire you."

—ROMA DOWNEY, actress, author, and producer

Available at major retailers including:

