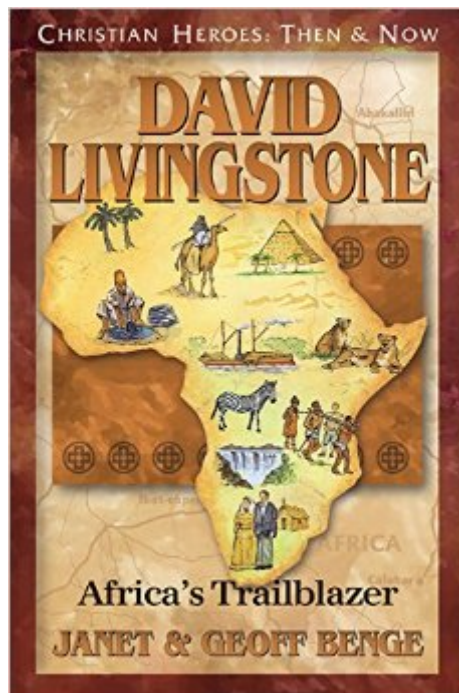


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# David Livingstone: Africa's Trailblazer (Christian Heroes: Then & Now)



## Synopsis

The lion's jaws gripped David Livingstone's arm. Razor-sharp teeth pierced his flesh as the lion savagely shook David in the air like a rag doll. A gunshot rang out. "God help us," David moaned, as the lion dropped him and turned to charge David's friend Mebalwe. With the heart of an explorer and the passion of an evangelist, David Livingstone mapped vast, unexplored areas of Africa, sharing the gospel with whomever he encountered. His stamina, perseverance, and dogged determination created the legacy of a trailblazing explorer with an undying hunger to make Christ known wherever his steps led him. David Livingstone's captivating adventures and tireless zeal continue to inspire countless men and women to bring the gospel message of God's love to those souls who have never heard.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

I thought the book was well written and covered the highlights of Dr. Livingstone's life. After reading the book, I had no major questions that were left unanswered. But, while doing other research on the life of Dr. Livingstone, I found out there were a few other events that probably should have been included. David was mostly blinded in one eye through an accident. This could have been said in the book without taking up too much space and seems to have been an important event. I agree with

another reviewer in that David was probably not the best role model for how missions should be done today and for how to treat a family. But one thing that needs to be remembered is that his life was not too different from many missionaries of the time. It was not unusual to send (or leave) the children back home for years at a time to be raised in a boarding school. Thankfully, as missionaries, we don't need to do that anymore. He lived in a very different time than we live in today and the fact that there are many great ministries in Africa today can be traced back to the pioneering work done by Dr. Livingstone. A well written book, even if you don't agree with the life of Dr. Livingstone.

This was the first book of this Christian Heroes series I read to my kids (6 and 9), and it definitely held their attention. It was quite good talking about Livingstone's early life. Maybe that's the part that is most interesting to kids, I don't know. As an adult, I was a little disappointed that this book did not explain more the significance of David Livingstone's life. I had to fill in some details from what I remembered in school about his amazing last journey (after he died). I think it does not portray just how much his African companions loved him, and how deep his influence among the Africans was (and how much of a contrast it was to the other explorers/conquerors who gave the Europeans a bad name). It did not say much about Livingstone's far-reaching influence on his countrymen, either--rethinking the white man's burden, his passion to end slavery, and his ideas about how opening up the areas to trade could help wipe it out. It may have mentioned these things in passing, but these things were so important in his life. Nor did it talk much about his uneasy relationship with the slavers themselves when he got in trouble on his missions, and I think it downplays his failures. In fact, all of his later years in this book are mostly a blur (this is often true of most of the books in this series, even when the later years were extremely important; it feels like the authors just got tired, and realized they had to end soon). As I said, though, it certainly held my kids' attention, and I'm not at all sorry I bought it. I'm not aware of anything else that's better, especially for the intended audience.

After reading 5 other books in the Christian Heroes Then & Now series and liking them all, I have to say that this was a huge disappointment. I bought this book for my sons to read thinking that it could give them a great role model and hero. In my opinion, David Livingstone was neither of these. Not only did he marry when he knew he wouldn't stay in one place too long but he also left his kids, five or six of them, with his wife or grandparents for years and years at a time without any contact. For years he wouldn't even know where his kids were or who was taking care of them, or even if they

were dead or alive. He never even met his youngest child, a daughter, until she was five years old, even then it was only for a brief time before he was off seeking adventure in Africa and never again laid eyes on her or his other children. This book was not about the great missionary and role model I had hoped for, instead it was about a dead beat dad. I was very unimpressed by his life choices, it seems that his priority was adventure not family. The other thing that bothered me while reading this book was that it mentioned time and time again that David Livingstone was the first white man to do this or that. After reading this book I felt his goal was to explore and be the first white man to accomplish many things but not necessarily to minister to the tribes or be a good husband and father.

Throughout his life, David sacrificed all: his family, creature comforts, and his own health to open Africa to future missions. I suppose the reason others were disappointed in this book is because David was not a traditional missionary. However, God called him and he obeyed. David's missions were a huge success in my mind. The Kalahari, treacherous rivers, bug infested jungles, and mud swamps were not going to stop him!! He travelled where no white man had travelled before, was a kind man, and embraced the Africans. This was a monumental step in keeping communication open to future missionaries and opening up unexplored areas where new mission stations could later be established. He planted the seed of missions in Africa, if you will. It parallels the thought that as we share the gospel with others, we could simply be planting seeds and then others will come along behind and help that planted seed to sprout. We won't always see the fruit of our labors, and although David saw some fruit, he had just begun the task of introducing Africans to God. After he passed on, it became the job of other missionaries to go in behind him to help the seeds to sprout. I also see him not as a deadbeat dad, but as a man sold out to God. He and his children sacrificed in order that he may obey God. What more of a testimony to his children could he have given? After all, God doesn't say to obey only after the kids are grown and gone. We are to obey all the time no matter what. I was truly humbled by David's life and sacrifices and cried as the book came to a close.

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