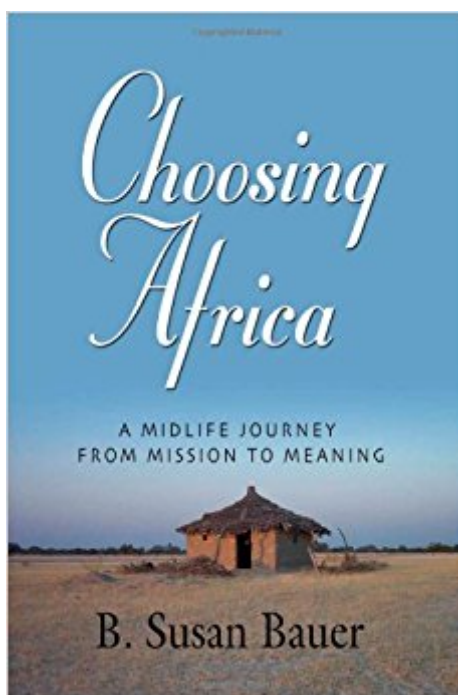


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# CHOOSING AFRICA: A Midlife Journey From Mission To Meaning



## Synopsis

Meet an American woman who moves to Africa for six years to teach English to young adults in post-Apartheid Namibia. Trek across the Kalahari. Venture inside primitive African villages. Choosing Africa's cast of characters will capture your heart.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Until recently, I only knew Susan Bauer as a teacher held in high regard by her students and former students of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Duke University. Now my best recollection of her is as author of the brilliantly crafted book, *Choosing Africa*. I am uncertain as to whether it was the author's intent, but her readers will find the experience much like mine, as a phantom observer of a husband-wife team who strove as practitioners in kindness and competence as faculty members and administrators at a seminary, attended by African students in Windhoek, Namibia. Parts of the book kept me spellbound as the author and her husband, Lutheran minister Lou Bauer, coped with one crisis after another in working with students whose lives were shaped in large measure by the effects of apartheid, both direct and lingering. And I am sure others will read with intense interest, as did I, about the Bauers' interactions with colleagues--black and white--in dealing with the sometimes irreconcilable different strategies for addressing common problems: differences in tribal characteristics; staggering limitations in institutional and student resources; deceit across lines of age, gender and ethnicity; and individual levels of tolerance. Ms. Bauer masterfully weaves in strands of humor with descriptions of the daily life and work in Africa while keeping fingers on the pulse of life in America. But against this background, there were numerous instances of gratification,

particularly in student achievement and personal development. I found Choosing Africa instructive, and the reading enjoyable. I am confident that you will validate my appraisal by choosing it to read yourself. --Dr. Walter M. Brown, Dean of Education (Ret'd.), North Carolina Central University

Prior to Susan Bauer's African adventures, she was the administrator of a research ethics board for the University of North Carolina's School of Medicine. The author lived and taught in the southern African country of Namibia for six years. She returned to the USA in 2003 and continues to stay in touch with some of her special African friends the reader meets in Choosing Africa. Her nonfiction has appeared in magazines, literary journals, and anthologies.

This book would be of most interest to those in the Christian missionary field, sociology, expats, and to those interested in how a seminary in Namibia, Africa is experienced by two American educators, taking on special roles as missionaries: Roles this couple greatly enjoyed and respected. Namibia is located just above South Africa, and the seminary is in Windhoek, Namibia. This mission was made available to the Bauers by the Division for Global Mission in Chicago, IL. The Bauers had made short visits to Africa prior and always wanted to go back for longer lengths of time. So when this opportunity came available, and with family approval, Lou and Susan became missionaries who were to teach at the seminary. Susan must have created this book by devouring their daily events in detail, for which she shared the love of environment. Lou, a Lutheran pastor, and Susan, an English teacher, also fit the shoes of attending to student and administrative responsibilities. In fact they both took on additional liabilities of those boarding there and with some living in the area. Others boarding there beside the students were other expats teachers, along with staff and the on and off visitors. Pastor Lou and Susan fell in love with this African seminary school and village. As well as teaching, they would (when they could) make special trips during holiday breaks. One standing out especially for me was their holiday in South Africa, a country with history still being lived. As time went on, Lou and Susan fell more in love with the countries they had visited, but as well...they had fallen in love with being missionaries. So there was a great sense of wanting to retreat into these roles rather than stepping out of them to resume living their lives as they had, back in America. With that said, once their time was running out in Namibia, they were again offered missionary roles in the country of Ghana. They snagged the offer! I don't know how their time in Ghana turned out for them so I am hoping that Susan will write us a book about their experiences there. I learned a lot from this book and was greatly satisfied with it. If they are still doing missionary work in Africa, I wish them all the best!

"Choosing Africa" offers ring-true reflections of what it's like to nurture and pursue a meaningful dream, then face the reality behind the idealistic glow. This self-published account is at once journalistic and philosophical, whimsical and painful as B. Susan Bauer, the wife of a Lutheran minister, struggles and revels in their adventure and despairs at the human nature that can foil well-intentioned dreams. As Susan's cousin and a longtime reporter myself, I can testify to the earnestness and honesty of this account, because it stitches together the anecdotes, ruminations and confessions contained in her letters from Namibia over the years. Even a noncousin can admire the dedication that has Susan's clergyman husband Lou repairing plumbing as well as training African wannabe ministers...and that has Susan learning to be a meeting organizer, hostess and marketer when she expected to be teaching English. Their generosity to students needing financial and spiritual help is entirely admirable. But this is no self-glorifying or proselytizing tract. It is full of self-doubt, frustration and occasional flashes of both anger and gentle humor. Susan critiques her own perspective as well as that of the Africans whom she encounters. And sometimes she critiques her own critique, reminding herself of the differences between herself and those she so longs to help. The book, entirely text, could benefit from photos and maps to guide the reader through unfamiliar names and territory. And a bit more personal background could provide helpful context for the Bauers' attitudes and actions as the story unfolds. Nevertheless, "Choosing Africa" offers an unvarnished glimpse of a course most of us will never undertake. It could help anyone thinking about a similar venture overseas. ~Dan Wascoe

My friend is the author!

Great book written from the authors own experiences while living in Africa. I enjoyed every page and finished it in two days. Could not put it down. If you like stories that are the true experiences of the author and not fiction, you will enjoy this. I felt that I came to know Susan by the end of the book. Great read.

Just loved this book. I know the author from high school and was amazed at the journey she and her husband went on. Informative & inspiring. We all don't have to go to Africa but we should follow our passions and our dreams.

I could not have done what Susan Bauer did. I always suspected such but it was not until I read

Choosing Africa that I knew for certain. This is a lovely book and the tale told from the Author's own life. This is real life and not in another century - the here and now. The people you will meet on the pages are intriguing - the scenery is mindboggling and it is not all pastoral or beautiful. I am not religious - so why would I want to read about modern day missionaries? I never imagined missionaries still existed. I thought they were a thing of a generation or two past. How wrong I was on that score. My idea of camping is a cheap motel with a black and white TV, not to mention running water. How Susan and her husband Lou lived for many years in conditions I would have found intolerable after a few days is truly an amazing thing. This book is not preachy - it is an accounting of a very personal journey. Meet the people Susan met - live the experience from your favorite chair and your favorite drink in hand. You will not be disappointed.

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