

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

September/October 1998

ISSN 8756-1336

Is He a God of Love?

This is an ancient question. Job said, “Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?” And the psalmist cried, “Has his unflinching love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all times? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”

Who of us has not at times wondered if anyone was Out There? Are we utterly at the mercy of mere chance? Is there, after all, no care, no order, no purpose, no meaning? Are we adrift in a sea of nothingness, at the mercy of chance, mishap, calamity, misfortune, disaster, catastrophe—undesigned and unintended?

Surely such agonizing thoughts must have plagued Joseph as he lay for years in prison. What was God up to all that time? Did Joseph question His wisdom, His love, His very existence? Did he ask God why He had permitted his brothers to hate him? They had planned to murder him, then, finding they could make some money, sold him into slavery. A faithful servant, he was lied about by an adulterous woman and because of her went to prison. His fellow prisoners promised to put in a good word for him, but forgot. But when the great famine came Joseph had by then been released and elevated to the position of prime minister and was therefore able to save his hateful brothers and his old father from starvation. What a strange concatenation of events!

Have you ever thought about the fact that the birth of Jesus led to the slaughter of countless baby boys? That Jesus prayed all night before choosing the disciples—and Judas was one of His choices? That Peter’s deliverance from prison led to the guard’s death? That Elymas’s opposition to Paul led to his own blindness—but *then* to the proconsul’s salvation?

God does indeed move in mysterious ways. The results can sometimes bewilder us, but we can rest assured that *everything* that happens fits into God’s pattern for good, to those who love God. That pattern is in process, every minute of every day. Romans 8:28 and 29 answer our desperate questions and make God’s purpose as clear as it can be to us mortals. He is shaping us into the image of Christ. What does it take to make an image? Michelangelo made it sound quite simple: take a block of marble and knock off whatever doesn’t look like David. God’s shaping process cannot be painless, for it takes the powerful blows of a hammer, the careful chip-pings of a chisel, and the patient rasping of a file. Most of us have known some hammer blows in our lifetime, some lesser treatments we could call chip-pings, and probably nearly every day the rasping of that file which is meant to smooth off the rough corners and edges. It is a loving Father who shapes us, and only He knows precisely what is needed to conform each individual into the image of His beloved Son. May He make us teachable!

The Weaver

My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me,
I cannot choose the colors—
He worketh steadily.

Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow,
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I, the underside.

Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.
Grant Colfax Tullar

Don't Do It

Today's so-called freedom of choice often leads not to freedom but to crushing bondage. Take, for example, the freedom the world offers in its motto JUST DO IT! A radio listener wrote of her own devastating experience of those shackles, and begged me to pass on her story.

"At seventeen years of age I chose to rebel against God and entered a relationship with my boyfriend that delivered not happiness but guilt and grief. I 'fell in love' and rather than trust God, I went after the object of my desire with all the wiles and passions of a teen-age romantic. At first what we did 'felt good'—for the moment. I tried pushing my guilt into a closet and shutting the door, but kept on doing what came naturally. I remember thinking even then, 'What will you say to your daughter some day if she asks "Were you a virgin when you got married?" 'Over the years that question has come to mind time and time again.

"The day before the wedding my fiance forced himself on me, and never having said NO before, I felt helpless to stop him. All these years later I still feel the hurt and violation of that moment. There was no tenderness, no love, only desire, lust, passion.

"How could I have known the repercussions through the years of that one decision on my part to have my own way and not God's? I realize what a precious, holy gift we so thoughtlessly threw away in our youth. And now I have had to ask my daughter, 'Are you pregnant?' and hear her tearful reply 'Yes.' I cannot express in words the deep wound to my soul this has caused. Although I did not make her decisions for her, I see that by my actions and choices so many years ago I left her spiritually vulnerable to Satan's onslaught.

"If only I could look each teen-age girl in the eye and tell her, 'There are consequences to every moral decision you make, there are repercussions

that will follow you the rest of your life and into the next generation!'

"How I yearn to look each teenage boy in the eye and tell him 'Be strong. Be a real man. Trust God's word, discipline yourself, don't give in to youthful lust and trade your birthright of godly love for a mess of pottage that will turn to ashes in your heart.'

"I have learned too late the truth I heard a man of God say: 'Love can always wait to give. Lust can never wait to get.'

"And you know—it's funny (*sad*) not a single time did those stolen moments of passion and lust bring real pleasure to me, either physically or emotionally."

The Bible is perfectly clear on this matter. God has given the guidelines which lead to true fulfillment and joy.

"Brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.... God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit" (1 Thesalonians 4:1-8).

The Better Way

"I have been dating a wonderful man for about three months. We read most of *Quest for Love* together, and were continually amazed at the examples of

Up to 100 copies of an article may be made for private distribution but not for resale. Please cite full credit as given below. For permission to make more than 100 copies of an article, please write to the newsletter.

© 1998 by Elisabeth Elliot Gren

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter is published six times a year by Servant Publications. The cost is \$7.00 per year. Tax-deductible donations make it possible for those who are unable to pay to receive the letter free. Please send donations to: The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, P.O. Box 7711, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711. Foreign subscribers: Please send donations in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank.

couples who did things God's way, and the heart-break of the ones who didn't. Joel [not his real name] is a perfect example of a man who knows it is his God-given responsibility to be the initiator and pursue. He did not begin his pursuit until God said, 'Now's the time,' and then he sought me gently yet persistently. After many years of being the one to display my feelings first, and being the initiator, I cannot tell you the relief and the freedom that being pursued brought to me. I never realized that in doing the pursuing, I was really going against God's perfect plan. When Joel told me he loved me, he also told me he wanted to marry me. When he declared his love, I had no problem believing him because he had already demonstrated that love to me and proved to me his intent by his actions and his constant care and interest in my life. Elisabeth, there is certainly no better way, and I'm so thankful God brought Joel into my life. He is just what I've prayed for for many years.... Thank you for being bold and honest with your readers. Godly men really do need to rise to their duty and pursue godly women. This is God's perfect plan." (Gentlemen: *Selah!*)

Hymn of Love (1 Corinthians 13)

If I have the language ever so perfectly and speak like a pundit and have not love that grips the heart, I am nothing.

If I have decorations and diplomas and am proficient in up-to-date methods and have not the touch of understanding love, I am nothing.

If I am able to worst my opponents in argument so as to make fools of them, and have not the wooing note, I am nothing.

If I have all faith and great ideals and magnificent plans and wonderful visions, and have not the love that sweats and bleeds and weeps and prays and pleads, I am nothing.

If I surrender all prospects, and leaving home and friends and comforts, give myself to the showy sacrifice of a missionary career, and turn sour and selfish amid the daily annoyances and personal slights of a missionary life, and though I give my body to be consumed in the heat and sweat and mildew of India, but have not the love that yields its rights, its coveted leisure, its pet plans, I am nothing, NOTHING.

Virtue has ceased to go out of me.

If I can heal all manner of sickness and disease, but wound hearts and hurt feelings for want of love that is kind, I am nothing.

If I write books and publish articles that set the world agape, but fail to transcribe that word of the Cross in the language of love, I am nothing.

Worse, I may be competent, busy, fussy, punctilious, and well-equipped, but like the church at Laodicea—nauseating to Christ.

(By a missionary student in Indian language school. This is from *The Prairie Overcomer*, January, 1955. I was cut to the heart as I thought back over my own attitudes during my missionary work in Ecuador. God knows I needed the above reminder today and every day.)

Definition of Sin:

A consequence of our dissatisfaction with God's design for us. (R.C. Sproul)

Recommended Reading

Killing Fields, Living Fields, by Don Cormack—an unfinished portrait of the Cambodian Church, the church that would not die. This book stunned me. It is hard to know how to say anything at all about such heroism, such uncompromising faithfulness in the midst of unspeakable suffering. It was CBC's book of the Year, 1998, published by OMF International.

An Obscure Missionary Couple

Last April John Jauchen of Help for Christian Nationals, Inc. (972-780-5909) wrote, "I was nine years old in 1956 when Jim Elliot and his four missionary companions were ambushed in the jungles of Ecuador. The photos published in LIFE magazine that January became etched in my spirit. I was never the same after that! I wanted my life to be marked with the kind of dedication those missionaries had. On a recent trip to Peru I stayed in the home of Bert Elliot (Jim's older brother) and his wife Colleen.

They arrived in Peru by boat in 1948.... Whether in a well-publicized death (thousands of North American missionaries, motivated by the Auca Indian martyrs, have reproduced themselves around the world during these past forty years) or in a relatively unknown life (Bert and Colleen's work is not well known even in mission circles), God's work will move on. His church will be built. His Son's name will be exalted around the world.

"To be included in this unstoppable eternal enterprise—what more could anyone ask in this life? I returned home deeply grateful for God's careful leading in my life, and with a prayer that the joy so real after fifty years of serving Christ would daily be as obvious in me as it was in the Elliot home during my unforgettable days of ministry with them."

A Note From Lars

Are you in need of an arm extension to make normal print readable? Sorry, none available, at least from me. Magnifiers from the local Wal-Mart might be available. Now if it's large print for you or some old relative, I can help you. At least with Elisabeth's *A Path Through Suffering*. That's good news. Bad news: it sells for \$15, not counting postage and handling by the "Gopher." Good news: the Gopher will sell it for \$12, including postage and handling. His needs are modest and he has not heard of collective bargaining nor the 40-hour work week. If you care to order something from *him* (**not from the newsletter**) it's Lars Gren, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia, MA 01930.

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

Servant Ministries, Inc.
Post Office Box 7711
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Travel Schedule September - November 1998

September 19 Myrtle Beach, S.C., Grand Strand women's day, Ruth Walker, (803) 249-2312.

September 25-29 Toalmás, Hungary.

October 1-3 Kiev, Ukraine.

October 16 Grass Valley, Calif., Calvary Chapel, Vicki Sullivan, (916) 268-2539.

October 17 Diamond Bar, Calif., Calvary Chapel Golden Springs, (909) 396-1884.

November 3-5 Asheville, N.C., The Cove, (704) 298-2092.

November 7 Anderson, S.C., Family Life, Kit Coons, (864) 225-2456

Widow's Mite Mission

If you should find yourself wondering what to do with excess books, cassettes, clothing, shoes, housewares, blankets, bedding, sewing materials, seeds, tools, candles and holders, pots, pans, envelopes, stamps, toys, recipe books, S & H Green Stamps, Gold Bond and Blue Chip Stamps, or just about anything else (money is always nice, too)—I'd urge you to send it to Jim and Betsy Frazier who are doing a sacrificial and unsung work with Navajos and Sioux. Address: The Widow's Mite Mission, C-33 Box 432, Flagstaff, AZ 86004).

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 14
Ann Arbor, MI