

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

May/June 2000

ISSN 8756-1336

Angry at God?

My faith has been challenged, there has been bitterness in my heart toward God, I have been angry at Him for withholding this blessing from me.”

The mail brings me many variations on this theme. Occasionally I am asked if I have ever been bitter or angry toward God because He took from me two much-loved husbands (He has mercifully given me yet a third—none of them sought after). Unless my memory completely forsakes me I believe I can honestly answer *no*. Our adversary the devil has tempted me in many ways, but I don't think anger at God is one of them. I will try to explain why.

1. God is my heavenly *Father*. He loves me with an everlasting love. The proof of that is the Cross. First John 3:16 says, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.” As the hymn says, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

2. Our heavenly Father wants nothing but the best for any of us, and only *He* knows what that is, for He is the All-wise, the Omniscient. Even an earthly father wants the best for his child, but does not always know what that is.

3. God knows not only what we need but *when* we need it. When He withholds from us the one thing we feel sure would make us happy, it is well to remember His promise that He will meet *all* our needs, “according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). In other words, if we don't have it, we don't need it—*now*. Perhaps He will give it next week, but that does not indicate indifference, forgetfulness, or poor timing. His timing is always perfect.

4. Resentment makes us vulnerable to Satan, who is called the Destroyer. Think what a dangerous position we put ourselves in when we choose to be angry at God. Is there anywhere else for us to turn? In all the

vast span of heaven or earth *there is no other refuge*. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear” (Psalm 46:1,2). He is the Ruler of all. He's got the whole world in His hands. Shall we deliberately reject such a Refuge? Think of the danger in which we then place ourselves.

5. We have only this present moment. God does not usually give us previews of coming attractions. I can look back over many decades, remembering how worried I sometimes was, how bewildered at things God had permitted to happen, but now I see them all as a golden chain of mercies, gifts from a merciful Father who, like the father Jesus described, would never give his son a snake if he asked for a fish. What looks to us like a good thing might actually ruin us. How thankful I am for God's withholdings, for His unfailing faithfulness. Now, as I look forward to what may be left of my future, I think of John Greenleaf Whittier's beautiful lines:

“I know not what the future hath of marvel or
surprise,
Assured alone that life and death His mercy
underlies.
And if my heart and flesh are weak to bear the
untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break, but strength-
en and sustain.
No offering of my own I have, nor works my faith
to prove;
I can but give the gifts He gave, and plead His love
for love.
And so beside the silent sea I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me on ocean or
on shore.
I know not where His islands lift their fronded
palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift beyond His love and
care.”

Surely I never want to miss “islands” whose beauty I never dreamed of in those anxious times. I want to be able honestly to say, *Father, I trust You. Forgive me for being so foolish as to imagine that You have made a mistake. Help me to receive grace to keep a quiet heart, sure that I am, in this very moment, held in the Everlasting Arms.*

Opportunities for Patience

“The exercise of patience involves a continual practice of the presence of God; for we may be come upon at any moment for an almost heroic display of good temper, and it is a short road to unselfishness, for nothing is left to self; all that seems to belong most intimately to self, to be self’s private property, such as time, home, and rest, are invaded by these continual trials of patience. The family is full of such opportunities.”

F.W. Faber

On Being Single

Several years ago at a convention I fell into conversation with a radiantly lovely single woman—clearly a woman of God. I asked her to jot down some thoughts on her life as a single.

“I am very rich. I often describe myself as a mouse sitting in the middle of a cheesecake. I don’t know where to bite next. I was very frightened about where I should live and what I would do. I had always imagined I would marry before college was over but that was not to be. When I expressed my concern to my father he had me sit down and list priorities for my life after college. It was a big decision to move to Minnesota while my parents were in Florida, but a very wise one as I have found a richer life than I could imagine. Now on being single:

“We should offer the Lord the sacrifice of Abel. Let it be a sacrifice of young, unblemished flesh, the best of the flock, of a healthy and holy flesh: a sacrifice of hearts that have one love alone: You, my God. Let it be a sacrifice of minds that have been shaped through deep study and will surrender to Your wisdom; of

childlike souls who will think only of pleasing You’ (*The Forge*, J. Escriva).

“As single people we must be willing to offer these younger years of ours to the Lord, not waiting for our life circumstances to change. We may be more free now than we will ever be in active service for God. If He chooses to have us married some day that is His business. Ours is to look to Him and serve Him now. He can use our youth to reach an increasingly more spiritually needy teenage and preteen world. We can give hope to the elderly who see very little evidence of faith around them. We can serve our family and friends by lightening their loads. The example we give of competent work will help others to improve their own work. Our profession will become a pedestal for Christ so that He can be seen even by those who are far away. We can also take this time to prepare ourselves to be brides—if not earthly brides, heavenly ones.

“When people ask if my biological clock is not ticking now that I am twenty-nine, I laugh. Four of my best friends have nineteen children collectively. I have four godchildren and many other children at church and in my neighborhood—many opportunities to ‘mother.’ Last Saturday I had twelve children overnight at my house. Between midnight, two a.m. and five a.m. feedings of the babies, and quieting and caring for the older ones, I couldn’t have heard any biological clock ticking even if there was one!

“My encouragement to singles who want to marry: Invest in the marriages of others. Lighten their load. Cook meals for new mothers. Take the children on special outings so parents can have time together. Serve and you won’t have time for discontent. Love and your heart will be filled with the love of others. ‘Give and it will be given to you, pressed down and running over.’ With great joy in Jesus, Michelle L. Chynoweth.”

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May God use Michelle's example to deliver others (not by any means necessarily singles) from self-pity, and to remind them of the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 25:40—"Inasmuch as you have done it for one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it for me." Ask Him. He will show you what to do.

Notes From the Jungle

From time to time I am asked about those years with the Auca (now called Waorani) Indians, the tribe who, in 1956, had killed my husband Jim Elliot and four other men. The first year is described in my book *The Savage My Kinsman*, but perhaps some readers would like a glimpse into the second year. One day in August of 1958 I settled down with my notebook to do some linguistic work with a woman named Dayuma who spoke Quichua and Auca. I could converse with her in Quichua, the tribe in which I had formerly lived, but my Auca was not fluent. Here's an excerpt from my journal:

"The work which goes into this sort of thing is just gigantic, for one so dull of hearing as I discover myself to be. Last week I made forty minutes' worth of tape. It took me from Monday afternoon till Friday night to transcribe without Dayuma's help. This morning I had a couple of hours with her. In that time we got through about five minutes of tape recording. Her attention is drawn to the fish that is smoking over the fire, or the stable fly that is biting Mintaka's derriere. So I play it again, make another stab at transcribing it. If the word I am trying to get happens to be one which Mintaka or Mankamu just said, I ask Dayuma what it means, but nine times out of ten, before she can give me a translation, she has to consult them. It goes something like this:

I: What does *uwiyeki* mean?

D.: (knitting her brow): *Uwiyeki. Uwiyeki.* Mintaka! There's a fly biting your ankle! Get it! No, there. Yes—oh, it got away . . . Uh, what did you say?

I: What does *uwiyeki* mean?

D.: *Uwiyeki.* Mankamu, what did you say about *uwiyeki*?

Mankam says nothing. Mintaka answers: "We were all in the yucca patch, hiding from Muipa and his bunch. It was raining and my sister was lying in a hammock with a leaf over the baby. The water was dripping *pita pita pita pita* under the hammock. Unime always said it was better to lie in a hammock, even if you got wet. Snakes couldn't bite you there at night. So while we were there in the yucca patch Dabu arrived. He said that he had come over the hill, and the others came by way of the river.

D.: (translates all of the above into Quichua for me, with a few interpolations of her own—none of it relevant to my question!)

I: Yes. Thank you. And what did you say *uwiyeki* means?

D.: *Uwiyeki. Uwiyeki.* Mintaka! Did you say Dabu came over the hill or went by the river?

M.: Nimonga and his bunch went by the river.

D.: It was Dabu who came over the hill.

I: Oh. And—*uwiyeki*? What does that mean?

D.: It means up and around and through the forest and over the hill, instead of through the river or by the beaches.

I: (groan, sigh) Oh.

So all *that* was what *uwiyeki* meant? To others was given the privilege over the following decades to translate the New Testament for that tribe. When Lars and I visited them in 1996 they were pleased to show us their copies.

Perfect Peace

Amy Carmichael gives a beautiful illustration from nature of perfect peace. The sun bird, one of the tiniest of birds, a native of India, builds a pendant nest, hanging it by four frail threads, generally from a spray of *valaris*. It is a delicate work of art, with its roof and tiny porch, which a splash of water or a child's touch might destroy. She tells how she saw a little sun bird building such a nest just before the monsoon season, and felt that for once bird wisdom had failed—for how could such a delicate structure, in such an exposed situation, weather the winds and the torrential rains? The monsoon broke, and from her window she

watched the nest swaying with the branches in the wind. Then she perceived that the nest had been so placed that the leaves immediately above it formed little gutters which carried the water away from the nest. There sat the sun bird, with its tiny head resting on her little porch, and whenever a drop of water fell on her long, curved beak, she sucked it in as if it were nectar. The storms raged furiously, but the sun bird sat, quiet and unafraid, hatching her tiny eggs.

“We have a more substantial rest for head and heart than the sun bird’s porch! We have the promises of God. They are enough, however terrifying the storm.”

Old Age

“An acrobat named Franks was beginning to feel or to fancy his strength and elasticity not quite what they had been. The first suspicion of the approach of old age, and the beginning of that weakness whose end is sure, may well be a startling one. The man has begun to be a nobody in the world’s race—is henceforth himself but the course of the race between age and death—a race in which the victor is known ere the start. Life with its self-discipline withdraws itself thenceforth more to the inside, and goes on with greater vigor. The man has now to trust and yield constantly. He is coming to know the fact that he was never his own strength, had never the smallest power in himself at his strongest. But he is learning also that he is as safe as ever in the time when he gloried in his might—yes, as safe as then he imagined himself on his false foun-

Travel Schedule May–June 2000

May 17 Liberty Corner, N.J., Fellowship Deaconry Inc., Sr. Rita Krohn, (908)647-1777.

May 18 New York, Walter Hoving Home, Beth Zielinski, (914)424-3674.

June 26-30 Okinawa, Japan Evangelical Missionary Association, Tokyo. Don Wright, 3363-2-909 Sashiogi, Omiya City, 331-0047 JAPAN.

dation. He lays hold of the true strength, makes it his by laying hold of it. He trusts in the unchangeable thing at the root of all his strength, which gave it all the truth it had—a truth far deeper than he knew, a reality unfathomable, though not of the nature he then fancied. Strength has ever to be made perfect in weakness, and old age is one of the weaknesses in which it is perfected.”

George MacDonald, *Weighed and Wanting*

Now that I have reached seventy-three I echo the psalmist’s plea, “Show me, O Lord, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath” (Psalm 39:4, 5).

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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711

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