

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

July/August 2000

ISSN 8756-1336

## As We Forgive Those

Two couples had gone together on vacation. What had been a happy friendship had somehow turned to bitterness. They had not spoken since. Several years later one of the women called me in distress, told me the sad story, and said she had now been asked to participate in the christening of her erstwhile friend's baby.

"Elisabeth!" she said, "Do I have to do that—after what she did to *me*?"

Of course I could not tell her that she must attend the christening, but I could tell her that she owed a long-belated apology for their estrangement. There was a pregnant pause on the phone.

"You mean *I'm* supposed to forgive *her*? She's not even sorry!"

"You know the prayer that begins with 'Our Father'?"

"Yes."

"Have you thought much about Jesus' words, 'Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those* who trespass against us'?"

My friend was silent. What measure of forgiveness would she be willing to offer? Who of us can plumb the depths of the Everlasting Love? We turn to the Cross, recognizing that it was our inborn sin and deliberate wickedness that put the Lord Jesus there. He bore all of our sins, carried all of our sorrows—"desperate tides of the whole world's anguish, forced through the channels of a single heart" is the way F.W.H. Meyers describes the sufferings of Christ in his beautiful poem "St. Paul."

"The true foundation of all spiritual life," wrote Fenelon, "is the knowledge of our own hopeless, incorrigible weakness, with unreserved confidence in God's power."

The prophet Isaiah wrote, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities: the punishment that brought us peace

was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.... Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.... He poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:4-5,10,12b).

Think of the limitless measure of forgiveness that Jesus offers to us. Think of His lovingkindness and tender mercy. Shall we continue to stand on our "rights," refusing to forgive? "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Colossians 3:12-14).

Baron Friedrich Von Hugel wrote, "The law of suffering and sacrifice is the one way to joy and possession."

Perhaps four things that have helped me when I have been hurt may be helpful to others:

1. Receive grace (see Matthew 18:1-35 and the passage above from Colossians).
2. Acknowledge the wrong. Make sure your judgment is based on the Word. Be straightforward with God (as Paul was: 2 Timothy 4:14).
3. Lay down all rights. Forgiveness is the unconditional laying down of the self (see 1 Corinthians 6). This includes the desire for vindication, pleasure at the other person's humiliation, keeping accounts of evil, the right to an apology, and bringing every thought under obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).
4. What to do for the one who has wronged you:
  - a. If he asks forgiveness, forgive (Matthew 6:12).
  - b. If he doesn't, forgive in a private transaction with God.
  - c. Pray for him.
  - d. Ask for grace to treat him as if nothing had ever come between you (see Psalm 119:78) and stand *with Christ for him*.

Dear old Corrie ten Boom reminded us that when God casts all our sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19), "He puts up a sign: NO FISHING!"

## *When the Music Stops*

There are sometimes spaces in our lives which seem empty and silent. Things grind to a halt for one reason or another. Not long ago, in the space of a few days, the “music” in my life seemed to stop because of a rejection, a loss, and what seemed to me at the time a monumental failure. I was feeling rather desolate when I came across a paragraph written more than a hundred years ago by the artist John Ruskin:

“There is no music in a rest, but there is making of music in it. In our whole life-melody, the music is broken off here and there by ‘rests,’ and we foolishly think we have come to the end of time. God sends a time of forced leisure—sickness, disappointed plans, frustrated efforts—and makes a sudden pause in the choral hymn of our lives and we lament that our voices must be silent, and our part missing in the music which ever goes up to the ear of the Creator. How does the musician read the rest? See him beat time with unvarying count and catch up the next note true and steady, as if no breaking place had come between. Not without design does God write the music of our lives. But be it ours to learn the time and not be dismayed at the ‘rests.’ They are not to be slurred over, nor to be omitted, nor to destroy the melody, nor to change the keynote. If we look up, God Himself will beat time for us. With the eye on Him we shall strike the next note full and clear.”

So the Lord brought to me precisely the word I needed at the moment: there was ‘the making of music’ in what seemed a hollow emptiness. It’s His song, not mine, that I’m here to sing. It’s His will, not mine, that I’m here to do. Let me focus my vision unwaveringly on Him who alone knows the complete score, “and in the night His song shall be with me” (Psalm 42:8).

The following was given to me many years ago by my dear Aunt Anne Howard. I wish I knew the author:

Help me to live this day quietly, easily;  
To lean upon Thy great strength trustfully, rest-  
fully;  
To meet others peacefully, joyously;  
To face tomorrow confidently, courageously.

## *Letter From a Missionary*

“I hate to admit it because altruistic missionary doctors shouldn’t be prejudiced. But the fact is my heart sank when I saw the tiny figure. At least her cataracts kept her from seeing the dismay my face must have registered at the appearance of yet another Little Old Quechua Lady that morning. As she stood in the doorway and clapped her hands to announce her presence, it wasn’t just my preference for pediatrics and obstetrics versus geriatrics that made me sigh. I dreaded the difficulty we would have communicating. She would not speak one word of Spanish and her Quechua words would be blurred by not having any teeth left. She would likely be deaf and my shouted replies would serve only to entertain the listeners in the waiting room. I guessed that whatever problem she had was not likely to be amenable to any therapy I could offer. Probably it was advanced osteo-arthritis of her knees from chasing goats over the mountains for seventy years; or loss of hearing and vision; or weakness from not being able to chew nutritious food for lack of teeth; or chronic constipation from Chagas’ disease and binding her abdomen with petticoats. Finally, if I did have some medicine to offer her, she was not likely to have any money to pay for it. Suppressing a fleeting thought of escape through the open window, I beckoned her in.

“She entered with a bent-over, painful gait, leaning on a stick. Over her shoulder was a blanket hand-woven of black wool, carrying a branch she had collected on the way for her evening cook fire. Her face was deeply seamed, the eyes rheumy, the fingers that grasped her stick were twisted sideways. Her fedora hat had years since lost its shape; her skirt announced that it had been lived and slept in for days unnumbered. Encased in rubber sandals her dusty feet were callused, the nails thickened. But she had not completely neglected her appearance: her two braids (which are a Quechua woman’s pride) were short,

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thin, and gray, but I noticed she had augmented them with black yarn.

“She didn’t know her age so I put it down as seventy-five. All my Little Quechua Ladies are recorded as seventy-five. She was a widow and lived alone as her children had long since left the mountains for the city. She had many aches and pains and as I cradled her knee in my hands I could feel the crepitations when she moved her leg. As I examined her I remembered how in the elderly, long after vision and hearing have been lost, the sense of touch is preserved, and I hoped that something of the love of God could flow through my palms to warm the worn-out joint beneath.

“I was right about her not having any money to pay for the analgesics I gave her, and she had many questions about what foods she should and shouldn’t eat and whether or not it was OK to touch water. I finally brought the interview to a close, anxious to get on to the next person waiting. She was not through, however, and I paced impatiently as she unspined the knot of the blanket on her back and began unfolding it, every movement painstakingly slow and deliberate. She reached into the depths and withdrew two small eggs, which she pressed into my hand—her widow’s mite. Then she made her way cautiously out, leaning on her stick, leaving me with an epiphany: ‘Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles’ (James 1:27).” (From Dr. Steve Hawthorne, of Potosi, Bolivia. [He is a nephew of Jim Elliot.]

## *Continue On*

A woman once fretted over the usefulness of her life. She feared she was wasting her potential being a devoted wife and mother. She wondered if the time and energy she invested in her husband and children would make a difference. At times she got discouraged because so much of what she did seemed to go unnoticed and unappreciated. “Is it worth it?” she often wondered. “Is there something better that I could be doing with my time?”

It was during one of these moments of questioning that she heard the still small voice of her heavenly Father speak to her heart. “You are a wife and mother because that is what I have called you to be. Much of

what you do is hidden from the public eye. But I notice. Most of what you give is done without remuneration. But I am your reward. Your husband cannot be the man I have called him to be without your support. Your influence upon him is greater than you think and more powerful than you will ever know. I bless him through your service and honor him through your love. Your children are precious to Me. Even more precious than they are to you. I have entrusted them to your care to raise for Me. What you invest in them is an offering to Me. You may never be in the public spotlight. But your obedience shines as a bright light before me. Continue on. Remember you are My servant. Do all to please Me.” (Roy Lessin, author of *The Calvary Road*)

## *Prayer*

I earnestly pray Thee, comfort those who have lost their children, giving mothers grace to be comforted though they are not; and grant us all faith to yield our dearest treasures unto Thee with joy and thanksgiving, that where with thee our treasure is, there our hearts may be also. Thus may we look for and hasten unto the day of union with Thee, and of reunion. Amen.

*Great Souls at Prayer*

## *Letter From a Radio Listener*

“Hello. I often enjoy your show in Albuquerque.... I particularly enjoyed what I heard on your ‘Me? Obey Him?’ series. I am an unmarried man and many of the women I encounter seem so combative and competitive, it seems to me that marriage to one of them would be hell on earth. I’ve known several who have had the word ‘obey’ taken out of their marriage vows. I know several good men who have simply given up finding a woman willing to be a partner rather than a competitor and nag. Yours is a refreshing point of view and I hope God will show me a woman who shares it. Thanks.” (My advice: Pray. Keep your eyes open. Ask an old couple if they have a suggestion and would be willing to introduce you to a godly woman they know. That’s how my parents found each other. And remember, no matter how well you think you

know someone, there will be astonishing surprises *after* the wedding. I know: God has given me three very different husbands!)

## *Travels*

Lars and I are given far more privileges and blessings than we could ever dream of, not the least of which are our travels overseas: Madagascar in January, thanks to a dear young American missionary couple, Todd and Patsy McGregor, who, with their two charming girls, entertained us in their home, arranged speaking engagements, and took us to a fascinating rain forest where we saw exotic flora and fauna, butterflies, insects, crocodiles, and—most charming and friendly—lemurs! In February it was Izmir, Turkey (I confess I was not sure just where Turkey was, alas—never did well in geography). Several hundred American women of the U.S. military called PWOC (Protestant Women of the Chapel) had gathered in a hotel eager, earnest, and—it seemed to me—hungry. Buses took us to Ephesus, not far from our hotel. I was totally unprepared to see how vast were the ruins and how marvelously well preserved. We stood in the street, imagining the tremendous riot caused by the apostle Paul when he “convinced and led astray large numbers of people in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia,” infuriating the silversmiths by telling them that manmade gods are no gods at all. “The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there,” according to Acts 19:32. We visited The Theatre, astonishingly

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Travel Schedule September–October 2000

**September** Book tour in Germany

**October 5** Irvington, N.J., Gateway Pregnancy Centers, (973)399-8378.

**October 7, 8** New York City, Times Square Church, Lisa McLaughlin, (212)541-6300.

well preserved, which accommodated 25,000 people. Asked to speak briefly, I stood at the bottom (the “stage,” as it were) and read a few verses about the apostle Paul’s godless background, and then his magnificent passage in Ephesians 1:3-10. Lars, at the very top of The Theatre, said he heard every word. Think of it! No sound engineers needed, no earsplitting decibel levels, no thundering beat!

## *A Note From Lars*

Should anyone be thinking of a trip to Bermuda at the end of November, may I suggest Willowbank, a beautiful place, wonderful beach, nice accommodations, and very good food—run by Christians. For information: Phone: (441)234-1616; Fax: (441)234-3373, Address: P.O. Box MA 296 Sandys MA-BX, Bermuda. I am not trying to get up a tour group but we will be there November 25-December 2.

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