

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

November/December 2000

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An Assigned Portion

As we near the end of another year we may take heart, remembering the psalmist's words, "Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure" (Psalm 16:5, NIV).

Nothing brings greater security and quietness to the soul than the assurance that *in everything* "God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This is the indestructible foundation of our faith. No matter how monstrous an evil may have been perpetrated against us, both by intention and act (think of Joseph's brothers' treatment of him!) it is mysteriously transformable into great good by Him who is Lord of the Universe and my Redeemer. It took Joseph's suffering to accomplish God's will for Israel. The sufferer himself became the redeemer for his father and his hateful brothers. They meant it for evil. God meant it for good.

The portion assigned to me each day is precisely measured by God, not only for my good (although it may appear quite the contrary) but also—let me not forget—for the good of all the others whose portions He is allotting. We are not solitary individuals, but the children of a family, cherished and tenderly cared for by a perfect Father. He has *all* of us in mind.

My cup may have a bitter taste. Shall I suppose, then, that my Father either has had nothing to do with choosing my portion, or that He is not dealing with me in mercy and grace? Such thoughts are from our ancient foe who seeks to work us woe! It is the Lover of Souls who hands me the cup of suffering, giving me the priceless privilege of learning a fellowship with Him which can be learned in no other way.

The words of a chapel speaker when I was a student at Wheaton College have rung in my mind for fifty-two years: "If your life is broken when given to Jesus, it may be because pieces will feed a multitude, when a loaf would satisfy only a little lad."

What Sir Thomas Brown wrote in the seventeenth century I can attest to in the twentieth (and twenty-first): "When I survey the occurrences of my life, and call into account the finger of God, I can perceive nothing but an abyss and mass of mercies."

Not Angry at God

The May/June issue quoted a letter I had received from a reader who was angry at God. In response, Betty Jo Mathis, who reads this newsletter, wrote to me of a family named Yuill whose children were traveling in a school bus last January when a snow plow, loaded with sand, was making its way north through the hills of Wyoming. Neither driver, each with impeccable driving records, could swerve on the black ice to avoid the horrific collision that sheared off most of the passenger side of the bus. Two of the four Yuill children were killed.

Well-meaning friends suggested that the parents receive counseling "for their anger." Dear, simple, trusting folks as the Yuills are, they could not help being surprised that anyone should suggest such a thing. "Angry? How can we be angry?" they said. "Sure, we don't have our children, but we're not angry. *For this we have Jesus.*"

After the committal, the Yuills graciously greeted friends and family. They showed no bitterness, no angry lashing out at God, just quiet submission to the Father whose ways and thoughts are higher than ours. The world at large doesn't understand such submission; they don't know that God not only dwells in the high and holy place, but also with him who has a humble spirit; it is to them that God gives grace.

Life must go on. Relatives went home. Brenda Yuill set about the bitter-sweet task of putting away her

children's things. One older brother went back to school, another returned to his ship off the east coast. Carl Yuill drove his old red pickup into town as usual and helped pick up the town rubbish. Brenda resumed her job at the post office.

On Sundays, you find the Yuills driving forty miles on country roads as they have for thirteen years, to minister to a loving church family. On the wall of the tiny chapel the attendance record will now read 18 instead of 20. Things will never be the same—but *for this they have Jesus*.

Receive Affliction with Courtesy

Count each affliction, whether light or grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee; do thou
With courtesy receive him; rise and bow;
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold, crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave;
Then lay before him all thou hast; allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,
Or mar thy hospitality; no wave
Of mortal tumult to obliterate
Thy soul's marmoreal calmness. Grief should be
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate;
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free;
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to
the end.

Aubrey Thomas de Vere, 1814-1902

On Being Single, Part 2

In the May/June Newsletter you found an article about a contented single woman. I asked for more details, and she wrote, "I was courted by a wonderful young man during my college days. He possessed all of the qualities of the husband I wished for. All we needed was the go-ahead that this was God's plan for our lives. For three years we heard God saying *wait*. Then the answer was clear: *no*. It was not only clear, it was final. I knew I had to 'get a life.' God would help me but He would not drop it into my lap. I bought a house, opened a small business. I had a gift for homemaking, rented three extra

rooms to Christian single women who filled my home with life, prayer, and activity. Together we prayed, shared, gardened, and decorated 'our' home. When each married and moved on, my house became 'home' to a multitude of children, neighbors, and church friends. About every third weekend different friends' children come to stay while the parents get away for marriage renewal time.

"I have four godchildren now. They are the love of my life. Any ticking of a biological clock I might have had was silenced years ago by their love and affection. I am very glad now at age thirty that I did not wait around till I was married to 'get a life.' Life has been happening all around me these past years and many of my greatest experiences have been entering deeply into life with others. Here is a favorite quote: 'The pathway to holiness is located right where you are. In those circumstances, in those relationships, in that tiredness, in that challenge. The grace of God to make you holy is right there.'" (Michelle Chynoweth, 110 Crusader Ave. W., West St. Paul, MN 55118)

My Standard Is Too High?

Last June, Lars and I were in Japan and Okinawa for a large conference on Reconciliation and Forgiveness. Some of those who attended had harbored bitterness because of things which took place in World War II, which had never been adequately dealt with.

We were simply charmed by the loving reception we received in both places. Such kindness, such grace, such beautiful manners! (We were never quite sure just when to bow or how far to bend, but they were perfectly tactful to us!)

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Some young people had written to me in advance to ask questions about “relationships.” It seems that there is as much bewilderment in this matter in Japan as in the U.S. (Of course these were questions that required careful answers. I give short parts here).

“Your standard is too high for most of us to attain,” wrote one. “It can be discouraging, an obstacle to know God’s love, especially for weak Christians, or seekers and believers who failed their relationships in the past.”

My reply in part: “In Luke 8:11-15 Jesus made His standard very clear and very high. I dare not try to make it easier than He did.”

Question: “How can we, single or married, find healthy, balanced, biblical models of femininity, relating to partnership with men in general?”

“Read Genesis 24, noting the servant’s prayer and Rebekah’s graciousness. Study Mary the mother of Jesus. She put herself totally at God’s disposal. ‘Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Be it unto me according to *Thy* word.’ Eve, on the other hand, said in effect, ‘Be it unto me according to *my* word.’ She proceeded to do what she wanted to do, regardless of God’s warnings.

“A woman is to be a responder, maintaining a certain distance, while the man is the initiator, accepting the possibility of being rejected. When a woman initiates by avowing her love she thereby casts forever away her ‘enhancing inaccessibility.’

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

Self-Offering

Take, O Lord, all my liberty. Receive my memory, my understanding, and my will. You have given me all that I am and all that I possess. I return it to You and surrender it to the guidance of Your will. Give me only Your love and grace. With these I am rich enough and ask nothing more. Amen.

St. Ignatius of Loyola

A Note From Lars

Over the years it has been fun to keep track of some of the different identities that Elisabeth and I have acquired. As most of you know, in everyday life Elisabeth Elliot is Elisabeth Gren. No hyphens. However, this has made it difficult for people to know what to call me. Some think Jim is still around, so I get called Mr. Elliot.

Elisabeth’s second husband was Addison Leitch. Once a letter came to Lars Leitch. (Had that been my last name, Lars in all probability would not have been the first one.) Then I get variations on my own name such as Lary Grun, Lars Bryn, Larry Grinn, Mr. Lois Gren. One confused soul began his letter with “Dear Person.” At least he couldn’t be mistaken.

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter is mailed from Ann Arbor, Michigan. A letter once arrived that began, "Dear Mrs. Arbor." Another time, I overheard one woman telling another that Elisabeth had been married to Hudson Taylor. (No, I did not try to correct it. I was pretty sure it would go no further.) The best one came from an editor of a British publishing house who gave notice that two of Elisabeth's books were out of print. He followed with, "It appears that we have allowed too long a time to elapse with regard to other titles by your late wife." This was back in '94. I wonder if I should send a note saying E. is back.

Lately we've done a few marriage seminars. I find that I am far from what I should be and wonder if Elisabeth does not long wistfully for the easygoing Addison Leitch. If so, then I must echo Winston Churchill who said, "My most brilliant achievement was my ability to be able to persuade my wife to marry me."

It's fun to remember the light moments but what is uppermost in our memories is our privilege of being with so many of you. We haven't met all of you, but we've met some of you readers at least once and others more often. We have received from you beyond measure of hospitality and kindness. May the Lord in turn bless you.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Travel Schedule November 2000–February 2001

November 25- December 2 Willowbank,
Bermuda, (441) 234-1616.

January 25-28 Birmingham, Ala., Briarwood
Presbyterian Church, (205) 978-1322.

February 1-3 Vision New England, Stephen A.
Macchia, (978) 929-9800.

February 10 Moody Founders' Week, Chicago,
(313) 329-4000.

February 16-17 Aiken, S.C., First Baptist
Church, (803) 648-5476.

Recommended Reading

The Innkeeper. "So quickly do we pass over the Christmas words, 'Herod ... slew all the male children two years old and under.' You'll be stunned, as I was, at John Piper's story (Crossway Books, 1300 Crescent St., Wheaton, IL 60187).

The Christmas Miracle of Mr. Jonathan Toomey— A beautiful story for children by Susan Wojciechowski (Candlewick Press, 2067 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140).

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