

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

March/April 2001

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What Price Contentment?

Nothing so hinders us," said St. Francis de Sales, "as to be longing after something else." And that longing, that discontent, can be a contagious disease.

When my granddaughter Elisabeth was eleven years old she came to visit us in Massachusetts. Since she was being homeschooled at that time, her mother sent math lessons that I was to help her complete. I had promised to take her to the beach, and of course that was all she could think of that morning.

"Granny, can we go now?" she asked eagerly.

"No, we'll do the math lesson first and we'll have the afternoon free."

"Oh, but it's really nice outside," she suggested, "I can do my math this afternoon."

"Elisabeth, I want you to think about this," I said firmly, well aware of her ability to reason. "Wouldn't you be happier at the beach if your math were finished?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Yeah, I guess so," whereupon she sat down and completed that day's lesson and half of the next, muttering, "I don't see why I have to do this. What good is it going to do me?"

Complaining can have grave consequences. The Lord provided manna for the Israelites, and though it was free for the taking and tasted like butter-cakes, they were not satisfied. They wanted meat.

Remembering what others were enjoying, they pined for the good old days in Egypt—leeks and onions, garlic and fish. Finally the Lord tired of them and said they could have meat. Where was it to come from? Was the Lord's power limited?

"You will see this very day if my words come true," He said, and sent a wind to drive in quails,

enough to cover the ground for a full day's journey.

Eagerly the people gathered quails all day, all night, and all the next day. The man who got the least gathered about sixty bushels. Discontent and greed go hand in hand.

Life becomes boring. Nothing could be more boring than moaning about how boring everything is. Next comes self-pity, one of Satan's most powerful weapons.

A.W. Tozer said that the yearning after happiness, found so widely among Christians professing a superior degree of sanctity, is sufficient proof that such sanctity is not indeed present. The truly spiritual man knows that God will give abundance of joy after we have become able to receive it without injury to our souls, but he does not demand it at once (from *That Incredible Christian*, Christian Publications, Inc., Harrisburg, Pa.).

The Lord sent Isaiah "to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair" (Isaiah 61:2-3).

The Thread of Life

"I sometimes feel the thread of life is slender,
And soon with me the labor will be wrought;
Then grows my heart to other hearts more tender.
The time is short."

D.M. Craik

A Soul's Probation

Anyone who will try each day to live for the sake of others will grow more and more gracious in thought and bearing, however dull and even squalid may be the outward circumstances of his soul's probation.

Francis Paget (1851)

Amy Beth Larson

She is a remarkable single woman who daily lays down her life for the sake of disadvantaged children in Denver, Colorado. I have been receiving her unique and heartrending letters, *West Side Stories*:

"Consider Sarah, a third-grader. She is right in the middle of nine children, half of whom live with mom, the other four having been farmed out to relatives. Sarah is one of ours who truly lives in poverty. Many of our families struggle to put food on the table but still have big screen TV's, pagers, \$80 shoes and gold jewelry ... but not Sarah. She wears sandals that are at least three sizes too big, and her mom asked me last week if I could get them some underwear. The crumbling plaster walls in her home are held together with duct tape, and her front window is a piece of cardboard. I knocked on the door, and her drunk father nearly ran into me. Carefully moving past him I found Sarah's mom holding a baby in one hand and trying to cook with the other. She was frantic and agitated. Her movements were quick and careless. Words stumbled out of her mouth. She was angry, but still careful to apologize after every curse word.

"'God . . . I'm sorry. I know you're church people. It's just that this is who I am.

"I nodded, It's OK, be who you are.

"I'm just going crazy. He's drunk again . . again!"

"I sat down on a mismatched kitchen chair that was covered with a pile of laundry.

"Now, don't get me wrong, I'm no stranger to

the bottle. But when I drink, I just get loaded and pass out on the couch. I don't hurt nobody.'

"I listened, thinking about her four kids under the age of nine.

"'I don't hurt a soul ... unless I'm provoked. And that's really not the same thing.' She handed one of her young sons a cup of Jell-O, "'Baby, go find your dad and tell him to eat this.'" She had some strange notion that Jell-O reversed the effects of alcohol.

"'I can't talk about this no more. It just works me up. I'm a wreck. Why are you here?'

"I smiled and picked up her baby girl. 'To see if your kids want to go to summer club.'

"'Oh, they do, I'm sure. Let me get Sarah.' She turned around and yelled towards the back of the apartment. And then out of the back room came eight-year-old Sarah, dressed in a beautiful sundress..."

[Gifts for the work of Amy Beth Larson may be sent to The Third Story, Box 9575, Denver, CO 80209.]

Prayer

"O my Lord, in Thine arms I am safe; keep me, and I have nothing to fear; give me up, and I have nothing to hope for. I know nothing about the future, but I rely upon Thee. I pray Thee to give me what is good for me; I pray Thee to take from me whatever may imperil my salvation. I leave it all to Thee, because Thou knowest and I do not. If Thou bringest pain or sorrow on me, give me grace to bear it well, keep me from fretfulness and selfishness. If Thou givest me health and strength and success in this world, keep me ever on my guard

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lest these great gifts carry me away from Thee. Give me to know thee, to believe on Thee, to love Thee, to serve Thee, to live to and for Thee. Give me to die just at that time and in that way which is most for Thy glory. Amen.

John Henry Newman

A Poor Scottish Farmer

His name was Fleming. One day, while trying to make a living for his family, he heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He dropped his tools and ran to the bog. There, mired to his waist in black mulch, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fleming saved the lad from what could have been a slow and terrifying death.

The next day a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotsman's sparse surroundings. An elegantly dressed nobleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy Farmer Fleming had saved. "I want to repay you," said the nobleman. "You saved my son's life."

"No, I can't accept payment for what I did," the Scottish farmer replied, waving off the offer.

At that moment, the farmer's own son came to the door of the family hovel.

"Is that your son?" the nobleman asked.

"Yes," the farmer replied proudly.

"I'll make you a deal. Let me take him and give him a good education. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll grow to be a man you can be proud of."

And that he did. In time, Fleming's son graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, and went on to become known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin.

Years afterward, the nobleman's son was stricken with pneumonia. What saved him? Penicillin. The name of the nobleman? Lord Randolph Churchill. His son's name? Sir Winston Churchill.

Grow Old Along With Me

My father often quoted Robert Browning's poem to my mother, who lived many more years than he did. I have to remind myself repeatedly that I am one of the Old Folks. If there happens to be a mirror nearby, the truth cannot be ignored!

"Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.
Our times are in His hand Who saith, 'A whole I
planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be
afraid!'"

Holy Children

"Let those parents that desire Holy Children learn to make them possessors of Heaven and Earth betimes," wrote Traherne, "to remove silly objects from before them, to magnify nothing but what is great indeed, and to talk of God to them, and of His works and ways before they can either speak or go [walk]."

Holy Children. That describes what Amy Carmichael desired as a mother from the very beginning of the children's work. Many of those children are old women now, living quietly in the red brick bungalows of Dohnavur after years of self-giving. "Be the first," their Amma had told them, "wherever there is a sacrifice to be made, a self-denial practiced, or an impetus to be given." It was no empty pedantry. Her own life made the truth visible to her children. The word became flesh and lived with them.

Excerpt from my book *A Chance to Die*

Greeting Cards

Through 2001, Lars will have a supply of the Dayspring Elisabeth Elliot All-Occasion greeting cards available in sets of three for \$6.00 (retail \$8.75). Order from Lars Green, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia, MA 01930.

Broken Nests

A farmer who saw a bird building its nest in a heap of branches reluctantly destroyed the work of the industrious bird. The next day the bird tried hard to build again, and for the second time the farmer broke it up. On the third day, the bird built her nest on a limb near the kitchen door, and the farmer smiled and let it remain.

Long before the eggs were hatched the pile of branches from which the bird had twice been driven was burned. Like the lowly bird, we may sometimes wonder why God would break up our nest. Were we able to see as God does, we would know that our heavenly Father has kept us from destruction that will burn the nests of all who abide not in Christ.

Author unknown

Spiritual Growth

It is when the death of winter has done its work that the sun can draw out in each plant its own individuality, and make its existence full and fragrant. Spiritual growth means something more than the sweeping away of the old leaves of sin—it means the life of the Lord Jesus developed in us.

Lilias Trotter

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Travel Schedule March 2001–April 2001

March 16-17 Raleigh, N.C., Emmanuel Baptist Church, (919)834-3417.

March 24 Marlboro, Mass., Greater Grace Christian Fellowship, Sarah Daigle, (508)845-2327.

April 6-8 Asheville, N.C., The Cove, Scott Holmquist, (828)298-2092.

April 20-21 Vista, Calif., Calvary Chapel, Denise Salvato, (760)726-4224.

April 21 Murrieta, Calif., Calvary Chapel, Kelly Dall, (909)677-5667.

April 22 Fallbrook, Calif., Calvary Chapel., Ruby Phillips, (760)728-9138.

The Joy of Music

Last year I was amazed when Diane Bish, world renowned organist, asked me to join her at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale. She played some of my favorite hymns on the magnificent organ and then asked me to talk about what hymns had meant in my life. She even persuaded me to play a hymn or two. A one-hour video tape is \$30 plus shipping and handling. Call Donna at the Joy of Music, 1-800-933-4844.

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