

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

May/June 2001

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A Strange Peace

Shortly before my daughter Valerie, my only child, went off to college as a freshman, a “sudden tide” came over me one morning as I was working in the kitchen. She had been the great joy of my life for seventeen years. When she was about eleven or twelve, friends heard me speak of what seemed to me a near-perfect mother-daughter relationship.

“Oh, but wait till she’s a teenager!” they warned, “then you’ll have some rough times.” I was still waiting. I could not conceive of life without her.

“She has grown up,” I told myself. “My job is finished, the job I loved more than anything else I have ever done. The nest is about to empty.”

Overcome with sadness, I sat down at the wicker table, picked up the phone, and dialed Van, who is the sort of friend you don’t have to explain things to. Tears came as soon as I tried to talk.

“It’s O.K., Bet,” she said quietly. “It’ll be O.K.”

She did not need to explain to me what she meant. She knew I understood. We believe the same things—things like Julian of Norwich’s “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” But I needed to hear her say it. I needed to have the Word made flesh for me in her voice. Van’s simple word, “It’ll be O.K.,” encouraged me to trust and obey. I learned that in this renunciation I had what the seed has that falls into the ground—a new potential for life-giving. I would be lonely, but I now had something precious to offer in love to my Lord, which in turn would make something quite different out of my loneliness. In some mysterious way which I could not predict, that offering would bring forth

fruit. It would make a difference to the wholeness of the Body of which I was but a single member.

The way we respond to the “givens” in our daily experience determines our growth in holiness. When we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” God answers that prayer, measuring out just what we need for spiritual as well as physical growth.

Enough That Christ Knows All

Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this Thy grace must give.

If life be long, I will be glad
That I may long obey;
If short, why should I then be sad
To end my toilsome day?

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before;
He that unto God’s kingdom comes
Must enter by this door.

Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet
Thy blessed face to see;
For if Thy work on earth be sweet
What will Thy glory be!

My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But ‘tis enough that Christ knows all
And I shall be with Him.

Richard Baxter, 1681

A Christian on the Beach

It has been a good many years since I went to a public beach to swim and sun, but I have had glimpses from a distance of what goes on there. Honestly, I'm appalled. What ever happened to modesty—masculine or feminine? The Bible is crystal-clear regarding this crucial matter. Hear the Word of God, spoken through 1 Timothy 2:8-10:

“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.”

A brother in Christ writes, “Many men are wicked, and will lust after you in spite of anything you can do to prevent it. They have ‘eyes full of adultery,’ and ‘they never stop sinning’ (2 Peter 2:14). Should you therefore help them to sin? Should you put further temptation in their way? Will God excuse you if you do?”

“Other men, godly men, are not wicked but only weak. David was not wicked. He was a man after God's own heart. But in the presence of an unclothed woman, he was weak—and it would be a rare man who was not.”

This is a touchy subject. The newsletter has not room for more than these few lines. Men, put yourselves at God's disposal. Ask Him to show you His holy will. Women, examine your wardrobe. Ponder the effects of what you “innocently” display on the beach. The aforementioned brother reminds men that there is nothing wrong or evil about physical beauty. “It is the creation of God, and is therefore very good, designed by God for a specific purpose. The woman was made ‘for man’ (1 Corinthians 11:9). The perfectly obvious design of her beauty is to ravish and satisfy the heart of a man, but a man, not every man. If God has joined you to that one man, then by all means give that beauty to him with all your heart (see Song of

Solomon 8:14). Thus satisfied, he will be less susceptible to the beauty and charms of other women.”

Most earnestly I ask my readers to take these knotty questions to the foot of the Cross. Jim Elliot said, “Crucify doubt. It shall be shown thee what thou must do.”

What to Expect From Prayer

“We should pray by fixing our mind upon some pressing need, desiring it with all earnestness, and then exercise faith and confidence toward God in the matter, never doubting that we have been heard. St. Bernard said, ‘Dear brothers, you should never doubt your prayer, thinking that it might have been in vain, for I tell you truly that before you have the words, the prayer is already recorded in heaven. Therefore you should confidently expect from God one of two things: either that your prayer will be granted, or, that if it is not granted, the granting of it would not be good for you.’”

Martin Luther

Boredom

In the book *A Sort of Life*, Graham Greene tells how he struggled, ever since he was very young, to fend off boredom. He once had a dentist extract (“but with ether”) a perfectly good tooth for no better reason than that he was bored and this seemed

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like an interesting diversion. He tried several times to commit suicide and six times played Russian roulette, using a revolver with six chambers—a dangerous game indeed, but certainly not boring.

A woman named Gert Behanna, very wealthy and very bored, came to know Christ late in life. The new Gert was totally changed. She believed that it is a sin to bore people. A riveting speaker, traveling widely to tell all who would listen, she proclaimed the message: GOD ISN'T DEAD! I almost memorized the recordings of her story, and one day, to my great joy, I actually received a phone call from her. "This is the gravelly voice of Gert Behanna!" We had a lovely chat. Not long after that she died, but thousands heard her far-from-boring message—Jesus is alive! He brought me out of the pit! He loves you!

What Will People Say?

Is there one of us who is not often troubled by that whisper, who is not tempted to allow it to control our decisions? It is a snare and a delusion. I do not mean that we should be heedless of the impression we may make on others who look to us as examples, or oblivious to godly warnings or advice. But when we have honestly sought to obey God and carefully searched His word for our cues, then we must not fear the consequences to our "image" or reputation. Turn all of that over to the only One "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid."

It is not the judgment of this world that finally counts. These words from Hebrews steady me: "Remember where you stand. You stand before Mt. Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, before myriads of angels, the full concourse and assembly of the first-born citizens of heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of good men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator.... The kingdom we are given is unshakable; let us

therefore give thanks to God, and so worship him as he would be worshipped, with reverence and awe; for our God is a devouring fire" (Hebrews 12:18, 22-24, 28, 29).

Strength and Weakness

"The realization that my Lord has enabled me to be a worker keeps me strong enough never to be weak. Conscious obtrusive weakness is natural unthankful strength, it means I refuse to be made strong by Him. When I say I am too weak it means I am too strong; and whenever I say 'I can't,' it means 'I won't.' When Jesus Christ enables me, I am omnipotently strong all the time."

Oswald Chambers

Carry Some Sunshine

"You don't get much sunshine in here, do you?" said a lady as she entered an elevator (in the long-gone days before automation). "Only what you folks bring in, ma'am," said the operator. "Some people carry enough sunshine with them to light others up a bit."

This reminded me of a song we sang in the beginners' class in Sunday school:

Jesus bids us shine with a clear, pure light,
Like a little candle, burning in the night.

Or, words I learned later in life from the hymn by Elizabeth Clephane:

Beneath the cross of Jesus I fain would take
my stand,
The shadow of a mighty rock within a weary
land;
A home within the wilderness, a rest upon
the way,

From the burning of the noontide heat, and
the burden of the day

I take, O Cross, thy shadow for my abiding
place.

I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of
His face,

Content to let the world go by, to know no
gain or loss,

My sinful self, my only shame; my glory all
the Cross.

Matthew 13:34; "The good will shine out like the
sun in their Father's kingdom."

Recommended Resources

Stepping Heavenward, a lovely book by Elizabeth
Prentiss, has been put on tape by my daughter
Valerie Shepard. It is available through Calvary
Press Publishing, 1-800-789-8175.

"Dating, Mating, or Waiting," a 16-page booklet
by Clay Sterrett, is available from CFC Literature,
P.O. Box 245, Staunton, VA 24402, \$1.50 each plus
20% for postage. A list of other booklets is avail-
able upon request.

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Travel Schedule May 2001–August 2001

May 12 Arlington Baptist Church Women's
Seminar, Baltimore, Md., (410)655-0991.

May 25-26 Biltmore Baptist Church,
Arden, N.C., JoAnne Lord, Women's Team,
(826)687-1111.

June 23 Southwest Women's Festival,
Albuquerque, N.M., Brenda Hughes,
(505)338-3664.

August 19 Christian Conference Center,
Alton Bay, N.H., (603)875-6161.

August 25-29 Family Reunion

The Joy of Music

The March/April newsletter mentioned a world
renowned organist, Diane Bish, who asked me to
talk about what hymns had meant in my life. She
played magnificently, chatted with me, then asked
me to play a hymn on the piano. The second video
is now available—\$30 plus shipping and handling.
Call Donna at the Joy of Music, 1-800-933-4844.

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