

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

September/October 2001

ISSN 8756-1336

## *Service to God*

There has often been a tendency to think of service to God as necessarily entailing physical hardship and sacrifice. Although this is not really a scriptural idea, it has gained wide acceptance. It is easy to recall the saints who “climbed the steep ascent of heaven through peril, toil, and pain,” but the Bible also makes mention of Dorcas whose service to God was the making of little coats. (And who can tell what pain she knew that is not recorded? It is God who keeps tears in His bottle.)

When I lived with the Auca (now called Waorani) people of the eastern jungle of Ecuador (who had killed five missionaries, including my husband, thinking they were about to be eaten!) there were some who, from a long distance and with little idea of the actual situation, commended me for my “wonderful work, “ probably because they thought of it as difficult, isolated, dangerous, or even sacrificial (the truth is that I loved the two years I had with those dear people!). There were others who for the very same reason condemned me, for I had the audacity to take a three-year-old child into that setting. Some envied me, some pitied me. Some admired, some criticized. I could not help asking myself if perhaps I had been mistaken. Was I really obeying God, or had I merely obeyed some misguided impulse, some lust for distinction, some masochistic urge to bury myself in that forsaken place? There was no way of being sure what was in the murky reaches of my subconscious, but I was sure I had committed myself to God for His service, and I knew no other motivation. The opinions of others—whether they commended or condemned—

could not alter my duty, but their very diversity caused me to ponder carefully what that duty was.

And then, by contrast, I watched the Indians, doing things they understood, untroubled by questions of “service” to God or fellow-men (although they had served me in countless ways—and I thought of the King saying to them, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . ye have done it unto Me,” and of how surprised they would be if they knew), free of the pressures of competition or comparison. There was for me here a lesson in simplicity and acceptance of one’s place in life, which I, because I was a Christian, could take from the hand of God.

My duty was one thing, theirs another. My responsibility lay here, but the responsibility of some of my correspondents who gazed starry-eyed at my role lay perhaps in an office or a kitchen or the cockpit of an airplane. Who was to say which served on God’s right hand?

## *Children*

“Take no heavier lift of our children than your Lord alloweth. Give them room beside your heart, but not in the yoke of your heart, where Christ should be; for then they are your idols, not your bairns . . . Let Christ have a commanding power and King-throne in you.”

Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661)

## *Deliver Me, Jesus*

—from the desire to be praised, honored, glorified, preferred, consulted, or approved. Deliver me, Jesus, from the fear of being humiliated, criticized, forgotten, ridiculed, maltreated, and from the fear of what others will think. O Jesus, give me the grace to desire: that others would be loved and esteemed ahead of me, that in the eyes of the world they would increase while I decrease, and praised while I pass by unnoticed; that others would be preferred in all situations; that others would become more than myself—in order that I would be as holy as You want me to be.

Charles de Foucauld

## *The Complaint*

“At thirty a man suspects himself a fool;  
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;  
At fifty chides his infamous delay,  
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve;  
In all the magnanimity of thought  
Resolves; and re-resolves; then dies the same.”

Edward Young (1742-1745)

The Complaint: of Night Thoughts

## *God's Unchanging Word*

For feelings come and feelings go,  
And feelings are deceiving;  
My warrant is the Word of God,  
Naught else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned  
For want of some sweet token,  
There is One greater than my heart  
Whose word cannot be broken.  
I'll trust in God's unchanging word  
Till soul and body sever;  
For, though all things shall pass away,  
His word shall stand forever.

The Ten Commandments in Verse  
Above all else love God alone;  
Bow down to neither wood or stone.  
God's name refuse to take in vain;  
The Sabbath rest with care maintain.  
Respect your parents all your days;  
Hold sacred human life always.  
Be loyal to your chosen mate;  
Steal nothing neither small nor great.  
Report, with truth, your neighbor's deed;  
And rid your mind of selfish greed.”  
from the McGuffey Reader

## *Misunderstandings*

“Love is more effective than words. The only thing to do is to go on loving, to be patient, to suffer the misunderstanding. Explanations even of what can be explained seldom heal—and there is so much that cannot be explained. Even the presence of Christ in us does not do away with our own clumsiness, blindness, stupidity; indeed, sometimes because of our limitations, His light is a blinding light to us and we become, for a time, more dense than before. We shall be irritable, still make mistakes, and still very likely be unaware of how exasperating we are.

“Explanations, words, at this stage, may only wound, but love will be a bridge over which at last, in God's time, we shall cross to a better understanding.”

The Reed of God, Caryll Houslander,  
Christian Classics,  
Westminster, Maryland, 1990

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## *A Grateful Wife*

She had written to say that she had read Elizabeth Rice Handford's little book, *Me, Obey Him?*, and asked God to speak to her. She felt that her husband wanted her out, so she left for two months, wounded in spirit. Realizing she was in rebellion and disobedience toward her husband, and had cut herself off from the Lord, she repented.

“What do I do now, Lord?”

“Ask your husband for forgiveness, since you had hurt him, rebelled, and disobeyed.”

She asked for words and the opportunity to “walk out” what she had learned. God's response was immediate. She talked with her husband from the heart, with God's help. She did not ask to come home, but he invited her home, missed her, forgave her. “God had met me and prepared my husband to be receptive to me,” she wrote. “I am blessed beyond measure. I feel complete again with my husband. As you said, men do not always do as they should according to God's word, but that was none of my business. I was to love him as Christ does, laying all my desires, expectations, disappointments, etc. at the foot of the cross.

“I have a new love for my husband that I have not known for some time, and am trying to focus on his good qualities.”

## *Nothing Between*

“How many things there are in our daily life that often come between the soul and God! . . . It may be care or anxiety. It may be our business or even the work of the Lord itself . . . or we may let some form of Christian experience, which we are seeking to realize, come between our souls and God. Whatever it is it must GO, so that there may be nothing between our souls and the Glory of God.”

from Broken Bread, Oct. 4

## *Martin Luther To One Who Has Just Had an Operation*

“I seemed to spend all night writing to you. The loving Lord rest you now, and refresh and strengthen you. I shut the doors of my mind when thoughts came about what the days just after the operation must have been. I can't bear to think of them. I have never had a major operation in my life, but have often nursed those who have had one, so I know what these days can be. I shall not be easy till I hear the next news.

“These may be very tired days. It isn't easy to pick up after such doings. But take the resting verses such as Zephaniah 3:17 and John 15 ('continue ye in My love,' abide there, like a child at home) and those psalms and verses in the Gospels which show that side of life. 'Return unto thy rest, O my soul.' 'come unto Me and I will give you rest.' 'My God shall supply all your need.' There are hundreds such; take them as yours in a special way just now, and don't tire your spirit and retard your recovery by pressing against the limitations which for the present are your fence of feathers. 'With His feathers has He made a fence for thee' is a lovely rendering of Psalm 91:4. Nestle under those feathers (He shall cover thee with His feathers), and when you are tempted to press against the fence of feathers—soft and down, and yet strong as the feathers of great birds are. May those feathers be very comforting to you through these days.”

Amy Carmichael, *Candles in the Dark*  
(a Dohnavur book, SPCK, 1981)

## *Note from Lars*

Some folks would call this “a long shot” or a “shot in the dark” and it is. In the month of May, a letter was sent to Elisabeth from a lady whom I believe lived near New York city. She

wrote to her about the end of Gateway to Joy, also mentioning her husband's work with web-sites, things which are as great a mystery to me as is the identity of the letter-writer. If in reading this you exclaim "ah, it was I" then please drop a card to: Lars Gren, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia, MA 01930. All this would not be necessary had I not let the letter vanish traveling from my office to Elisabeth's study—a mere distance of 252 inches.

## *The Shaping of a Christian Family*

We six Howard children were very greatly blessed in having parents who loved us enough to have "family prayers," as they called them. Every morning after breakfast we were herded into the living room where either father or mother sat down to the piano and we would all join in the singing of a hymn (not a song or chorus, but a true hymn). We sang all the verses, skipping none. In this way we learned theology quite painlessly. Then our father read the Bible, usually Hurlbut's Story of the Bible for the benefit of the younger ones (I was number two of six). Probably we often paid little attention, but it is amazing how much sinks in by osmosis! Following the reading, we knelt by our chairs as

## Travel Schedule September-November 2001

**September 19-29** Romania & Hungary.

**October 5-7** Ridgehaven, N.C. with Valerie, Trig Penland, (803)648-2232.

**October 11** Reno, Nevada, Crisis Pregnancy Center, (775)826-5144.

**October 12, 13** Reno Christian Fellowship Women's Ministry, Bonnie Harry and Sue Hunter, (775)825-0718, (775)853-4234.

**October 20** Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, David Horn, (978)468-7111.

**October 27** Marblehead, Mass., First Baptist Church, Pam Derringer, (781)631-5386.

**November 2** New Haven, Conn., Teen Challenge, Rev. Floyd Miles III, (203)789-6172.

Daddy prayed for us, each one by name, and then led us in reciting The Lord's Prayer.

How we thank God for such an upbringing!

My book called *The Shaping of a Christian Family* has been reprinted by Revell. We will be offering it starting in this month for subscribers who renew with a donation of \$20 or more.

It is my hope that this book will be useful for many Christian families.

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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711

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