

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

May/June 2003

ISSN 8756-1336

To a New Widow

Dearest one:

I know the proportion of that pain, and there is no minimizing it here and now. I also know the truth of 2 Corinthians 4:17, "These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain." The bigger our pain now, the bigger that "weight of glory" will be. It's mysterious, it's unimaginable, but it's going to *be*, and for that we give thanks.

You are alone now. You go to bed alone, you are having to learn to say "I" instead of "we," you find yourself catching your breath as you turn to say something to the man who isn't there, you put off a decision until he gets home to help you make it, and then you know, with a pang, that you'll have to make it by yourself. The children come with needs, needs that Daddy could meet, but Daddy won't be there—today or tomorrow, or ever again, so there you are. You open a drawer, and you find a book his hands have handled, you come across his handwriting (so very personal a sign of the man), you see his shoes with the shape of his feet which you know so well, and the sting of the arrow in your heart is not missed by Him who loves us as no one else ever has. He puts those tears into His bottle, for He gave you the love that brings those tears and He made you so you could cry, and you cast it all on the Rock that never moves. You find everything else shaken, tottering, the mountains moved into the midst of the sea, the earth "roaring," the things that seemed changeless all changed now, except for the Rock. He seems sometimes a very absent help in time of trouble, but He's there. Be still, know that He's still God, wait for Him.

I know how your memory goes over every inch

of his body, for you loved every inch of it, and you remember just how it felt and the smell of him and the sound of his breathing and his voice and the taste of him, and each day you find it a little bit harder to remember just *exactly* how it was and you know you have forgotten some of it, and this, too, is pain. You don't want anybody telling you that "time heals all things," for you don't in the least want to forget, not for a second.

People will be very kind for quite a long time. They will remember, and their hearts will go out to you and they will be utterly at a loss to know how to look at you, what to say, how to keep you from talking about your husband. They don't know how to cope with the emotion in themselves so they simply cannot imagine how you cope. They are not practiced in being open and honest with their true emotions, and at a time like this they are at a loss to know how to fake, although they feel that faking is what they ought to do. So you have to accept that and try to believe that all they want is to be kind, though they blunder at it most touchingly.

But after a while they will not remember much anymore, or they will assume you've "gotten over it," and you will become a worse threat to them because they won't know how in the world to fit you into their world. The couples who were your good friends will want to do things for you, but they won't know how to do things with you, and finally, although they would hardly admit this to themselves, you become a burden, a nuisance, and a dangerous person to have around susceptible husbands. (I write this not so much from personal experience, since most of my first widowhood was spent in relative isolation from the civilized social scene, but from talking with others, and from

observation.) You are a widow, a social misfit, not single, not married. You'll find it hard, I think, to relate to single women again, but you can't expect to be included in couples' groups again either. Perhaps it's cruel of me to tell you so much so soon, but then again perhaps, as it happens to you, it will be of some help to know that this is the way it is! And of course, to be able to accept things that can't be changed is a mark of maturity.

There will be those who can "explain" to you God's purposes in all of this. They'll "see" what it's supposed to mean for you. Don't worry about them. They are blind. No explanation this side of Heaven can *possibly* cover the data. It's imponderable, inexplicable, and far, far beyond any explanations. You have to cast all that nonsense on the Rock too.

Your ringing assertion of faith in God's sovereign design was a great encouragement to me. He's there, He's God, He's in charge, and we do not flounder around in a sea of pure chance. Our hope is "for that future day when God will resurrect his children. For on that day thorns and thistles, sin, death, and decay—the things that overcame the world against its will at God's command—will all disappear, and the world around us will share in the glorious freedom from sin which God's children enjoy" (Romans 8:19-20, Living Bible).

Ever so much love,
Elisabeth

Lean Hard

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22).

Child of My love, Lean Hard,
And let Me feel the pressure of thy care;
I know thy burden, child, I shaped it;
Poised it in My own hand, made no proportion in
its weight to thine unaided strength;
For even as I laid it on, I said,
I shall be near, and while he leans on Me,
This burden shall be Mine, not his;
So shall I keep My child within the circling arms
of My own love.

Here lay it down, nor fear to impose it on a shoulder
which upholds the government of worlds.
Yet closer come; Thou art not near enough;
I would embrace thy care so I might feel My child
reposing on My breast.
Thou lovest Me? I knew it. Doubt not then;
But loving Me, Lean Hard.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

May Prentiss Smith
(published as a tract by the Tract League,
Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Mere Openness

The "openness" that is often praised among Christians as a sign of true humility may sometimes be an oblique effort to prove that there is no such thing as a saint after all, and that those who believe that it is possible to live a holy life are only deceiving themselves.

When we enjoy listening to some Christian confess his weaknesses and failures, we may be eager only to convince ourselves that we are not so bad after all. We sit on the edge of our chairs waiting to grasp at an excuse for continuing to do what we have made up our minds long ago to do anyway.

The Lord is ready to forgive sin at any moment and to make strong servants out of the worst of us. But we must believe it; we must come to Him in faith for forgiveness and deliverance and then go out to do the work He has given us to do.

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“Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity” (1 Corinthians 13:6, KJV). Let us be willing to call iniquity what is really iniquity, rather than to call it weakness, temperament, failure, hang-ups, or to fall back on the tired excuse, “It’s just the way I am; at least I’m open about it.”

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.

PSALM 51:10, KJV

Magnolias in Magnolia

We used to have a magnolia (also called a tulip) tree on our front lawn. The velvety buds would be there all winter and suddenly, one spring day, they would burst into bloom. There was not a leaf on the tree yet, only hundreds of lovely, tall, pink and white, tulip-shaped cups. I would drink in its beauty from the window, knowing that it would be very short-lived. Sure enough, in two or three days, the green lawn would be littered with pink scraps.

Why this waste? Why, when things seemed so promising?

All that is given is meant to be poured forth. The flower pours forth its sweetness, the tree its blossom and fruit, its powers of purification, its shade, its wood. In the words of Ugo Bassi, “Measure thy life by loss and not by gain; not by the wine drunk but by the wine poured forth.”

It is a merciful Father who strips us when we need to be stripped, as the tree needs to be stripped of its blossoms. He is not finished with us yet, whatever the loss we suffer, for as we loose our hold on visible things, the invisible become more precious—where our treasure is, there will our hearts be.

He may be asking us to sell a much-loved house, to part with material things we no longer need, to retire from a position in which we feel ourselves irreplaceable, to turn over to Him fears which hold us in bondage, forms of self-improvement or recreation or social life which hinder obedience.

Does all this seem hard? Being ordinary mortals, we would rather live in continual springtime, truth be told. Of course it is right to be glad for spring sunshine. But it was achieved through the long relinquishments of winter. All of it is from His hand.

Close to Your Heart

“The things that are closest to our hearts are the things we talk about, and if God is close to your heart, you will talk about Him.”

A.W. Tozer

Lars’ Ramblings—from the Cove

In the photograph, he is a handsome man with a mustache, well-set eyes, an earnest look, and a good head of wavy hair, dressed in coat and tie with the shirt collar straight up around the neck, the type used in 1898. Beside him is a beautiful young lady in her white blouse and dark, probably black, dress. My guess—their wedding portrait.

Another picture shows the two of them standing together. His 6-foot-plus frame is erect, head held high, with coat and tie, the shirt collar down as it would be today, hair still wavy and dark. His wife is by his side, a bit thick through the middle, having had four children, still with a warm beautiful face, and with graying hair. But in this picture there is a small fellow holding the hand of the man’s wife.

A third picture is of the man, sitting on a chair on the lawn of the old folks’ home on a pretty summer day. Near ninety-one, yet with a full head of white wavy hair, still a good face, blue eyes that held you, but alone since his wife had died 14 years before.

He was Syvert Mosby from Kristiansand, Norway. For a period of ten years I had, by the grace and providence of God, the privilege of living under his roof and calling him *Far*, Father we would say, though he was my *morfar*, translated “my mother’s father,” or as we say, Grandfather. It

is I in the picture holding his wife's hand, and she was to me, *Mor*. I was for a short time the son of his old age.

Perhaps it is natural that he had the greatest influence in setting the course of my early life as well as today, some sixty-five-plus years later.

I have two keepsakes from Far. One is a small New Testament left by someone in the church we attended. The owner could not be found, and so it came to me. I look at my penciled name written in the beginners' style of the European script. No, it has not been used much in the past forty years, since I tend toward reading English, but I remember what Far said to me "les Biblen Lars, der finner du livets ansvar" i.e., "read the Bible Lars, there you will find life's answer's." On board ship in the Navy it was with me and has moved as I have moved. Yes, to have paid more attention to Far's admonition, for its use could have prevented some of my "if onlies."

The other is also pocket-size, its red cover creased and worn with use and age. Pressed into the cover is "Hynderosten" ("The Shepherd's Voice"), a songbook for Sunday school and junior workers containing psalms and hymns, or "songs," as they were called (not choruses as we think of them). It came to me in the same way as did the New Testament, but in this one is written in Far's neat, mature hand, "Tilhörer Lars Gren." "Syng Lars, det letter livets tunge gang," i.e., "Belongs to Lars Gren." "Sing Lars, it lifts life's heavy burdens." What a

message! How many would put that inscription into the songbook of a young fellow who was just old enough to be allowed to wear long pants. But I think there has never been a year that has gone by that I don't often say those words, and Elisabeth can attest to that for the past twenty-five years. Most every day at home I use that little songbook. No, I don't sing them, since it is without notes, but I read them as prayers or just an audible, sensible word to the Lord and a comfort and assurance to myself. "Sing—it does lift life's heavy burdens."

Much more could be said about the man in the pictures. But for now I'll say, "that's it from the Cove."

Summer 2003 Travel Schedule

May 9-11 Asheville, N.C., The Cove, Billy Graham Training Center. For reservations, call 1-800-950-2092.

August 24 Alton Bay, N.H., Alton Bay Christian Conference Center. For information, call (603)875-6161 or write info@abccc.org.

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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711

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