

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

January/February 1996

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## *The Story of a Courtship*

In 1992 I received a letter from Robert, who wondered if God might be asking him to lay down his love for Amy in order to serve as a missionary. I wrote, "I am praying for you and Amy on this gray, rather wintry spring day in Massachusetts.... Go on doing the things you know God is calling you to do today, and in His time He will make crystal clear the decision about marriage."

Robert and Amy had offered their love for each other as Abraham had offered Isaac, laying him on the altar, trusting God to do with the sacrifice as He saw fit. At Christmas, 1994, they felt Him "breathing life into our relationship once again." Robert took Amy to hear a visiting speaker in a church. "I wanted to show her the letter that lady had written to me, and of course I wanted to bring Amy up to talk to her afterwards. I had no idea, however, what was about to happen."

He was exhausted that night and heard little of the talk on Simplicity. But God seemed to make every word "come alive" in Amy's heart.

"You gave short, sharp answers to difficult questions, but I was so thankful to hear you untangle the complications and point out the simplicity of the answer. Robert and I still talk about 'doing the next thing,' and 'getting up early begins the night before.'"

Robert's version of that evening:

"Here Amy and I are, waiting in line where people had their books for Elisabeth to autograph. We had no book and I had not brought the letter she wrote me, so I wasn't exactly sure what we were going to say to her.

"I spoke first. 'Mrs. Elliot, I wanted to thank you for your ministry and the books you have written because several years ago, you wrote me a letter about a girl I was seeing, and she is here tonight.'

"Mrs. Elliot smiled, 'Oh, really? Where is she?'

"'Right here.' Amy came and knelt beside me.

"'Are you married yet?' Elisabeth said, looking pleasantly at the two of us.

"'Well, uh, not yet,' I replied, rather embarrassed, 'but I believe God will be faithful.'

"'What are you waiting for?' Elisabeth looked at me.

"I had no answer.

"She repeated her question, 'Well, what are you waiting for?'

"I knew the time was right. Right there, on our knees before the premier counselor on Christian relationships [alas—EE can't measure up to *that* title!], the woman who had directly related her life experience to Amy and me, there in the presence of Elisabeth Elliot and God's sovereign smile, I asked Amy to marry me. It was wonderful. God is wonderful. Amy is wonderful, and that was just the confirmation I needed to marry her."

Weeks went by. One day I said to Lars, "I wonder what ever happened to that sweet couple we met in Arkansas—remember the man who proposed in the foyer of the church? I *do* hope they got married!"

It was only a day or two later that we received a letter from Amy, enclosing the above account from Robert. "He loves to tell this story," she wrote. "I want to thank you for prompting Robert to propose to me. I have never seen him so happy. He is still giddy at the thought of becoming my husband, and I cannot express to you how much I love him and want to be his helpmate. I will soon send you an invitation to our wedding. I hope it will bring a smile to your face as it has to ours."

It did. It also sent a huge surge of thanksgiving through my whole soul. Our God is the Wonderful Counsellor, able and more than able to bring a man and woman together in His time, in His often mysterious and astonishing ways.

## *Planning a Wedding?*

A very attractive man we know was given an elegant thirtieth birthday party. The hostess, a strikingly beautiful girl, was also a friend of ours. We had been praying for these two, that God might bring them together if this would best glorify Him. Lars fell into conversation with Meirwyn and, I think,

dealt rather less than delicately with him because he did not seem to us to be moving as swiftly as he might to secure Nina's affections.

"Whattaya got—rocks in your head?" said Lars.

When the invitation to the wedding of Meirwyn Walters and Nina Lataif came we accepted with alacrity.

The groom, whose heritage is that of the great Welsh hymnwriters, wrote the following lovely wedding hymn, sung by all who attended the wedding, to G.W. Warren's tune "National Hymn," to which we often sing "God of Our Fathers." Meirwyn has given me permission to offer his hymn here.

Thou hast ordained that two shall turn to one.  
With Adam's rib Creation's work was done.  
In holy awe, we live a mystery,  
Bound by love's chains, we are most truly free.

Husband and wife reflect a glorious sight;  
Christ leading Church from darkness into light.  
He vanquished sin; Earth's Prince would be denied.  
Now with scarred hands, He beckons to His Bride.

Lend us Thy grace to live each day with love,  
Tending with care this union from above.  
While we have breath, grant us Thy name to praise,  
Till on that day our mortal flesh Thou raise.

## *A Hard Decision, a Hard Discipline*

Both Meirwyn and Robert had faced hard decisions, the latter involving marriage or singleness for the sake of the gospel. They waited. They prayed. God answered.

When Moses, that sorely tried man, was approached by the daughters of Zelophehad (in Numbers 27) I wonder if he was tempted to say to himself, "Now what do these women want?" It was a hard case. Their father had died (because of his own sins), he had left no son, and the women wanted property among his relatives in order that his name not disappear from the clan.

When faced with hard decisions, do what Moses did. "Moses brought their case before the Lord." What a difference it makes when one lays the difficulty immediately before God. God answers.

When there is perplexity there is always guid-

ance—not always at the moment we ask, but in good time, which is God's time. There is no need to fret and stew.

This was the last decision Moses had to make before God's revelation to him of his own and his brother Aaron's death. Did he breathe a sigh of relief that his responsibility was finished? Did he flinch at the realization that his life was over? There was no complaint, only the question as to who would take the leadership of the flock. (Sometimes we worry about decisions which are not ours to make.) Moses knew where to take that concern.

"May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." In spite of all the trials those people had put him through, Moses never said, "I've *had* it." He continued to shepherd them, carrying them on his heart for God's very best.

Decision-making always puts our faith on trial. Is our life our own or does it belong to Another? Will the Lord show us the way? Will we follow where He leads? Are we meek enough to be instructed? We are told that Moses—a powerful leader, God's choice to deliver Israel—was the meekest of men. But he had had long years of training—in the care of sheep and goats!—the best training, no doubt, for dealing with a rebellious people.

Yet at the end of his life he faced perhaps the hardest discipline ever required of him. He was not to be allowed to enter the promised land because he had dishonored God before the people. When told to speak to the rock he had struck it in anger and impatience. For that he was barred from the fulfillment of his cherished dream to reach Canaan, to which he had long looked forward.

Moses was now redundant—a blow that crushes many a man—but he accepted this meekly and quietly. What a lesson for all of us.

When faced with a hard decision, go to God first of all. When assigned a hard discipline, accept it.

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"Do thy first duty," said Thomas Carlyle. "Thy second will become clear."

## *Prayer for the Hill Family*

To my consternation I received several letters from Newsletter readers who supposed that my request for prayer for Paul Hill (the man who shot an abortion doctor) signified sympathy and perhaps support for his action. It meant neither. I receive many letters from prisoners, some on Death Row, who listen to *Gateway to Joy*. I pray for every one of them. Jesus prayed for those who crucified Him. Surely we would not take His prayer as a divine endorsement.

Some asked what to pray for Paul. I know very little of the needs of most of the people on my daily prayer list. I simply lift them up to God for His blessing and the working of His will in their lives. May we not also ask this for the Hill family?

## *The Sufferings of a Housewife*

A young mother asked how on earth she is to learn to love the Lord, grow in grace, and be truly holy in the midst of general chaos—hard work, very limited means, little chance for fellowship, and her own children disobeying, screaming and fighting.

It is tempting to imagine that, given a different lot in life, circumstances other than those in which we find ourselves, we would make much greater strides in holiness. The truth is that the place where we *are* is God's schoolroom, not somewhere else. *Here* we may be conformed to the likeness of Christ.

It takes adversity of one kind or another. There is no other way. "It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for Him" (Phil. 1:29). This dear woman had not thought of the word "suffering." To her it was just the awful "dailyness" of husband and children, the same dishes and clothes to be washed, the house to be cleaned a thousand times, the monotonous repetition of "Do this," "Don't do that," the sheer unmanageability of it all.

"God is asking you simply to be what you are," I told her—mother of a family—and to be just that with love, with her heart's acceptance, and without fretting. How comforting to know that the Lord who made us never forgets that we are *dust!* Our love will fail, our hearts will balk, we will fret. But our very powerlessness is the place where *His* power is manifested, His all-sufficient grace given.

The trivial round, the common task,  
Will furnish all we ought to ask—  
Room to deny ourselves, a road  
To bring us daily nearer God.

John Keble, 1822

Hannah Whitall Smith said, "He does not need to transplant us into a different field.... He transforms the very things that were before our greatest hindrances, into the chiefest and most blessed means of our growth. No difficulties in your case can baffle Him.... Put yourself absolutely into His hands, and let Him have His own way with you."

## *Husband #2*

You've heard things about Jim Elliot, Husband #1, and Lars Gren, #3, whose musings appear now and then in these pages. I thought you might enjoy a little taste of the mind of Addison Leitch, to whom I was married from New Year's Day, 1969 until he died of cancer in September 1973. (Lars is not only not threatened by reminiscences of #1 and #2, he *asks* for them!) Those who read *Christianity Today* may be interested to know that Add was the writer of two regular columns in that magazine: "Current Religious Life and Thought," and "Eutychus II." Here's a tidbit from the latter column that's right down my alley:

"I have had a long and running fight with the language of public relations experts. I know they are trying to be polite, but I keep seeing them sitting around a conference table grinding out the awful word they finally choose. This is not to say that I could think of better ones, but I must say that I am getting sick of 'motion sickness' for whatever it is that afflicts me in a plane, and 'turbulence' for what makes us go ups-a-daisy, and 'custom-coach' for what I know is cheaper seating, strictly second-class.

"Should the pressure system malfunction...?' Who dreamed up that word 'malfunction'? I do wish air hostesses would quit telling me they were glad to have me aboard, which in many cases they definitely were not. And closing off our trip with 'good-bye now'—that extra word 'now' bothers me for the next hour. One bright young thing said, 'Bye-bye, now,' and we had reached the end of the line."

Add would be tied in knots if he could hear them now: "Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. *Hopefully* [which everybody now thinks means "we hope that," but it doesn't!] we'll be taking off *momentarily*," which is really bad news for the

passengers, since it means not *in* a moment but *for*!

I have many of Add's books, including Dorothy Sayers' *Unpopular Opinions*, in which she writes, "I have heard it twice over—from two independent producers of two separate plays—the exact same warning in almost identical words: 'Well, now, ladies and gentlemen, I think there's only one thing I have to say before we start reading through. Although this is a play about—er—angels and God and Christ and so on, you don't want to go extra slow, or put on a special tone of voice or anything. Just treat it as you would an ordinary play. Speak the lines quite naturally and play it straight.'"

I'm always delighted to come across Add's marginal notes in books. Below Sayers' essay he added, "To be religious: walk on tiptoe and speak in King James English."

## Prayer

O Lord, whose way is perfect, help us, I pray Thee, always to trust in Thy goodness: that walking with Thee and following Thee in all simplicity, we may possess quiet and contented minds; and may cast all our care on Thee, for Thou carest for us.

Christina Rosetti

### Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? *Don't forget to send us your change of address.* The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. *Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to: The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7711.*

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Travel Schedule January–April 1996

**January 3-11** Ecuador, South America.

**January 14** Hamilton Mass., Christ Church, (508) 468-4461.

**January 19, 20** Boston, Mass., EANE Congress, Andrew Accardy, (617)229-1990.

**January 26, 27** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

**February 2-4** Houston, Tex., Texas Women's Retreat, (713)780-1571 or -8563.

**February 22** Wake Forest, N.C., Southeastern Baptist Seminary, Mrs. Dorothy Patterson, (919)556-3101, Ext. 344.

**February 23, 24** Lexington, S.C., Lexington Presbyterian Church, (803)359-9501.

**February 25** Athens, Ga., Prince Avenue Baptist Church, Mrs. Judy Carter, (706)353-1985.

**March 9** Waterloo, Ia., KNWS Radio, Betty Brandhorst, (319)296-1975.

**March 12** Simi Valley, Calif., Calvary Chapel, Pamela Lee, (805)527-0199.

**March 14** Grass Valley, Calif., Calvary Chapel, Vicki Sullivan, (916)272-1308.

**March 16** Marin County, Calif., Kathy Lewis, (415)479-5837.

**March 23** Norwell, Mass., Calvary Chapel and Boston Women's Luncheon. Preregistration required. For information call Mary Marley, (617) 335-4672.

**March 29, 30** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

**April 7** EASTER

**April 13** Montreal, Que., Associated Gospel Churches, Russell Fisher, (514)769-2693.

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