

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

January/February 1997

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## Shoes of Iron

Just before his death Moses blessed the twelve Tribes of Israel. To Asher he said, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25, KJV). How deeply the Lord set that promise into my heart on New Year's Day, 1973. My husband, Addison Leitch, was to report on January 2 to the radiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. His worst fear had come upon him. His first wife had died of cancer, his father had died of prostate cancer. Add had been diagnosed in October not only with cancer of the prostate but also with an unrelated but virulent cancer of the lip. As we came from the doctor's office on that day in 1972, he quoted Gray's *Elegy*: "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day."

New Year's Day is a good time to fix one's eyes on the only One who knows what the year is to hold. What is going to happen? What shall we do? Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* has a lovely story about a monk who was anxious about his salvation. Christ spoke to him from the Cross: "If you knew that all was well, what would you today *do*, or *stop doing*? When you have found the answer, do it, or stop doing it." One must always get back to the practical and definite.

There is something marvelously sustaining about the knowledge that Thomas à Kempis and Samuel Rutherford and Amy Carmichael and Moses and the people of Israel and Mary and Joseph and countless hosts of others have suffered and feared and trusted and been carried through in the same Everlasting Arms that hold us. And so, on that New Year's Day as I was imagining what that year might hold, I took that promise of "shoes of iron."

We shall be given shoes of iron. We shall find the unendurable endurable, the impossible possible. The natural processes of change and decay may be unexpectedly retarded to enable us to travel where

no roads are visible, no replenishing available. The Lord is the one who travels every mile of the wilderness way as our leader, cheering us, supporting and supplying and fortifying us. Not all God's children, I suppose, have iron shoes—only the ones who need them! Lord, Thou knowest what we need.

I prayed then for four things: healing for Add, peace of heart for both of us, grace to help in time of need, and a fixed trust in God. The answer to the first was No. To the second it was, far more than I had had faith to expect, Yes. Grace and trust were always given according to my willingness to receive. There were many times "when my heart was grieved," as the psalmist wrote (Psalm 73). "I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

My goal is God Himself—not joy, nor peace  
Nor even blessing, but Himself, my God.  
'Tis His to lead me there, not mine, but His—  
"At any cost, dear Lord, by any road!"

So faith bounds forward to its goal in God  
And love can trust her Lord to lead her there;  
Upheld by Him, my soul is following hard,  
Till God hath *full fulfilled* my deepest prayer.

No matter if the way be sometimes dark,  
No matter though the cost be oft-times great,  
He knoweth how I best shall reach the mark—  
The way that leads to Him must needs be strait.

One thing I know, I cannot say Him nay;  
One thing I do, I press towards my Lord:  
My God my glory here from day to day,  
And in the glory there my Great Reward.

(Source unknown)

To reread a journal that one wrote decades ago is a surprisingly faith-strengthening experience. There, amid all the exigencies and vicissitudes of life, one can trace the unbroken thread of the utter faithfulness of God—the measure of grace to help in time of need, the unexpected kindness and help of many whom one hardly knew, the physical strength needed to do what needed to be done, the spiritual renewal that came with the Father's continual pouring out of those mercies which He promised "endure forever," great mercies, and also some so small, so heartbreakingly sweet—my brother Tom coming often to sit with Add or to talk with me; Betty Lee sending me a bottle of bubble bath ("You must be tired—have a long, leisurely soak"); my dear friend Van calling to say, "It'll be all right, Bet. It'll be O.K." (a contemporary version of Julian of Norwich: *All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well*). C.S. Lewis speaks of being *happy* when his wife Joy was desperately ill and he himself *screaming* with the pain of osteoporosis—evidence that a brooding Providence is keeping all things under His control, as Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote in "The Golden Echo": "far with a fonder care kept than we could have kept it."

If some reader today looks into 1997 with deep forebodings, let him remember the God of Elisha. The king of Aram sent horses and chariots and a strong force to Dothan to capture him. Elisha's servant saw the king's chariots and horses surrounding the city and wailed, "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?"

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then he prayed, asking God to open the eyes of the servant. "He looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

Ours is the same God. There is in Him no variability or even a shadow caused by turning. If it's iron shoes we need, they will be provided. If it's a touch, a word, a gift from a friend, it will be given. If God sees that the mountain should be filled with horses and chariots, He'll fill it. Ask Him to open your eyes to His lovingkindness and tender mercies. Ask Him to help you to trust Him for tomorrow.

## *What's Good for Us*

"The Lord shall give that which is good" is the promise of Psalm 85:12. We can believe that sometimes—but...!

How loving I could be if there were fewer sore-heads around.

How joyful I could be if I were (married, unmarried, richer, younger, healthier, or...?).

How peaceful I could be if life did not hold such uncertainties.

How patient I could be if things worked according to my time schedule.

How kind I could be if people noticed and appreciated my kindness.

How good I could be if my neighbors were more considerate.

How faithful I could be if my faith were not so severely tried.

How gentle I could be if So-and-So were a bit gentler.

How remarkably self-controlled I could be if only God would deign to control the things which upset me and the folks who cross me.

## *Prayer*

"Almighty God, give to Thy servant a meek and gentle spirit, that may be slow to anger, and easy to mercy and forgiveness. Give me a wise and constant heart, that I may never be moved to an intemperate anger for any injury that is done or offered. Lord, let me ever be courteous, and easy to be entreated; let me never fall into a peevish or contentious spirit, but follow peace with all men; offering forgiveness, inviting them by courtesies, ready to confess my own errors,

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apt to make amends, and desirous to be reconciled. Let no sickness or cross accident, no employment or weariness, make me angry or ungentle and discontented, or unthankful, or uneasy to them that minister to me; but in all things make me like unto the holy Jesus. Amen."

Jeremy Taylor, 1613-1667

## *A Baby Can Learn to Rest*

A little booklet was sent to me entitled "The Lamb Will Rule, Not the Lion," by Esther Ann Morey.

"One of the best things I ever did was start a quiet time with our son when he was about five months old (just starting to sit up). I would hold him on my lap and have a quiet time. I gently restricted his movement into a small range by holding his wrists loosely. He could move, but not a whole lot. There we would sit without any entertainment for about five minutes, if he was compliant. If he resisted and threw a fit, the five minutes started after the fit was over. And a fit he did throw. For the first few days he was really mad! He would scream, and I would whisper, 'Rest,' and, 'I love you,' in his ear while he took his breath for the next scream. The first few days he would be in a rage for about twenty minutes—an eternity it seemed! After his crying changed from anger to repentance and his movements stopped fighting me, I would start the five minutes, whispering encouraging things in his ear from time to time and then say cheerfully, 'It's over! It's time to get down!'

"After a week or two of doing this almost daily, his crying times got shorter and shorter and then disappeared altogether. His nervous system learned to come to rest. He actually began to enjoy our quiet time together. I began slowly stretching our quiet time, adding five minutes to it a week until I was up to twenty minutes. After that I could take him almost anywhere—to church, to gatherings, to presentations—and he would sit quietly and contentedly on my lap. People would comment how lucky I was to have a child that would sit still like that. They thought he was born that way! If only they knew....

"I believe this was a very beneficial part of our

discipline in his first year. Before he knew the meaning of 'no' he was being taught how to 'shut down' and how to come to rest. It also taught him that what he wants to do sometimes has to be put on hold." (Copies: \$2.00 each, Kokomo Christian Fellowship, P.O. Box 299, Kokomo, IN 46903-0299. Phone: [317]457-6061).

## *Spiritual Mothering*

A single woman missionary writes, "I come from a huge family where self-sacrifice was just a part of 'normal' life, and no one ever knew she was doing that, but, sadly, I find very few women willing to give themselves up to the task of mothering, which is worth more than career, having gym memberships, hair and nail appointments, etc. Women who are 'willing to put their lives on hold' and stay home are considered exceptional.... I look for service and chances to bless others with my single state."

## *Note from Lars*

Back in early September, Elisabeth and I were in Cambridge, England. We were to take some friends out to lunch after church to a respectable pub. The parking lot was quite full so I ran in to see if a table was available. After finding that they had one, but I should go and see the waitress, I turned to enter the dining room. I noticed a substantial oak beam with the words "Duck or Grouse" on it. Being smart, I ducked and continued walking, whereupon, on my third step, I whacked my head into an equally substantial oak beam which had no sign. Suppose anyone with half a sense would not have needed to read the second sign. The knock was loud enough for the folks at the near tables to hear it, and I'm sure some were watching me, but not a flicker of recognition to the fact. I continued walking to find my waitress. She assured me of a table. Then, turning around, I walked back through the dining room, this time ducking under both those beams, going out to get Elisabeth and the others. Upon seeing me, Elisabeth said, "What happened? You've got blood on your head, running down past your eyebrow." I mopped

up and we reentered to have a delicious lamb dinner.

What good is a knock in the head? Well, it made me remember that last year I did not thank all of you who have so generously helped to keep the Newsletter in the black, until May or June had rolled around, but now here it is, the year has just ended, and we're on to '97, on time with my gratitude. For your interest, the Newsletter is sent to 15,600 in the U.S. and 71 foreign countries. Careful of low beams! We trust the Lord may meet your needs in the new year.

### *Recommended Reading*

Ella Easton Kellogg: *Studies in Character Building*. This must have been written a hundred years ago, but it's full of wise child training about obedience, self-control, the education of appetite, truthfulness, employment for little fingers, and much more. Price: \$10 plus \$3.75 shipping and handling. Sonlight Education Ministry, P.O. Box 518, Colville, WA 99114. Phone: (509)684-6843.

#### 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 1997

**January 2** Spartanburg, S.C., Ladies' First  
Thursday, First Baptist Church, Ruthi Neely,  
(803)585-0834.

**January 6-7** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

**January 31** Pasadena, Calif., Lake Avenue Church,  
David Koser, (818)795-7221.

**February 1** Redlands, Calif., Moody Women's Day,  
Jo' McCarthy (312)329-4402.

**February 21-22** Dubuque, Ia., Women's Bible  
Studies of Dubuque, Ann Riley, 1733 Eden Lane,  
Dubuque, IA 52001.

**February 28-March 1** Hampton, Va., Liberty  
Baptist Church, Sharon Houghton, (804)826-2110  
or (804)851-7871.

**March 14-15** Chambersburg, Pa., First United  
Methodist Church, (717)263-8491, or Peggy  
Shank, (717)264-1147.

**March 21** Vineland, N.J., Faith Bible Church,  
(609)691-3460.

**March 21** Plumsteadville, Pa., Christian School,  
(215)766-8073.

**March 22** Doylestown, Pa., Covenant Church,  
(215)794-7909.

**April 5** Westfield, Mass., Evangelical Church,  
Sylvia Wallis, (413)572-4661 or (413)562-1504.

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