

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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Praying and Acting

There are many matters for prayer about which you and I can do nothing *except* pray. Those are the things we must leave entirely to God. There are other things which we ought always to lay before the Lord in prayer, *and* do something about. Some people are confused about this, wondering if to do something is a failure of faith or even a deliberate refusal to trust God.

Nehemiah, for example, while rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, both prayed *and* posted a guard day and night to meet the threats of Sanballat and his crowd (Nehemiah 4:9). This was not in the least inimical to his confidence in God. To post a guard was no guarantee that Sanballat's plot would not succeed, but it was a reasonable human measure taken against it. Only God could control the final outcome, so to God Nehemiah went.

Hezekiah, at the point of death, wailed his lament to the Lord (Isaiah 38), turned his face to the wall and prayed, asking the Lord not for healing but only that he be remembered (2 Kings 20). The prophet Isaiah told him to apply a poultice of figs—a simple home remedy easily available. Was prayer not enough? Was it the poultice that healed him?

Prayer and action. Faith and obedience.

Paul prayed for the believers—earnest, eloquent, detailed prayers which he included in his epistles. But he did not leave it at that. He worked with all the strength God gave him to help them to sanctity. And then? Some grew saintly and others didn't.

Suppose we have prayed our hearts out over a matter, done all that was in our power to do, and then find that all was done in vain. Does our faith falter? Do we say prayer doesn't work? Has our obedience been futile?

What of the great prayer Jesus taught us to pray? It is for *His* kingdom and *His* will, yet we ought not to ask it unless we ourselves are prepared to cooperate. But how pitifully tiny our efforts seem, how ineffective, how absurd.

"We pray for peace in the world and yet we all know that wars and rumors of wars will go on until the end (our Lord Himself told us so)... We pray for the sick. What, exactly, (someone might urge) do we have in mind? That they will get well? Now? Do we suppose the hospitals will empty out because we have prayed?... To press such questions is to reduce the mystery of prayer to frivolity" (Thomas Howard, *If Your Mind Wanders at Mass*, Franciscan University Press).

And yet we are taught to ask and taught to obey. Prayer and obedience.

A prayerful heart and an obedient heart will learn, very slowly and not without sorrow, to stake everything on God Himself. Is there evidence that His kingdom is on its way, that His will is being done on earth as it is in heaven? The day's news would not encourage us to think so. Let's remember Jesus' answer to the Pharisees who asked when the kingdom would come: "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20).

Pray for the coming of the kingdom. Don't pray for it if you're not prepared to do something about it. To each of us is given a measured responsibility. Thy will and Thy kingdom, Lord, for Your Glory. My glad surrender to that holy will, my loving obedience, my prayers, my faith, my action, my daily taking up of the Cross—so may I say with Mary, "I am the Lord's servant; may it be to me as you have said."

It's Been Forty Years

On January 8, 1996, Lars and I, along with daughter Valerie, her husband Walt and their eighteen-year-old son Walter III, were on the Curaray River in the eastern rain forest of Ecuador—with the *Aucas*. The Indians now go by their own name for themselves, Waorani.

Our host was Steve Saint, son of missionary pilot Nate who was one of five men (my husband Jim was another) slain on that same river on January 8, 1956.

Steve and his lovely wife Ginny had, in the space of six months, built a small village which includes their spacious three-bedroom house and a number of palm-thatched Indian houses clustered around.

The Saints' house, open at all hours of the day and night for Waorani visitors, has a living room furnished with hammocks where we sat for hours and hours, talking, laughing, singing, reminiscing.

"Gikari!" they shouted, using my tribal name, "you are OLD!"

"Yes," said I, "*pikyamu imupa!* I am certainly old—and so are you!" Great guffaws, vigorous nodding assent: "*Munitu arobainga pikyamunipa!*"

"And this is Mangari [pointing to Valerie]? Your child? She too is old! Which one is her husband? And this one here—he is her firstborn child? How many does she have?"

Then began the counting on fingers (their language has only two basic words for numbers, so fingers are necessary), endless repetitions of information for each newcomer who arrived to gaze at the old foreigners. Two of the men who had had part in the spearing of the missionaries came—Minkayi, who years ago had given me his blowgun and dart case, and Kimo, who in 1967 had gone with Rachel Saint to a worldwide evangelical congress in Berlin where he gave his testimony.

(To be continued in the July/August Newsletter.)

Letter to a Twelve-Year-Old (1967)

It is a great thing to me that you felt free to write and tell me about holding hands with Ronnie. The fact that it was exciting to you, and you wanted to tell me about it, makes me know that it is significant in your life, and I am glad that you share with me things that mean something to you. You were not quite sure, you said, that I would "approve." I can't remember what I have said to you on the subject, but I have tried to help you understand who you are and the value of your person—soul and body.

Holding hands is a way of showing friendship, but a little warmer friendship than "ordinary," perhaps. To touch a boy, at your age, is, as you say, "exciting." This is because you are becoming a woman, and physical contact with a man usually is, for a woman, exciting to a degree. This is the way God arranged things, and I think it was a pretty marvelous idea of His—one I would never have had the courage to go through with if I had been the

Creator, because it is also terribly dangerous! It is dangerous because it is a power—the sexual instinct is like the power of electricity. It has its proper uses, and they are very valuable and helpful indeed, but if not carefully controlled it can be deadly. So this is where *maturity* comes in. You are not yet mature, but you are learning every day, and one of the things you have recently learned is that you have a response to the opposite sex, and it's fun. I'm glad for that. It is not a bad thing at all. But because you are a person—a human being, made in the image of *God*, whom *God loves*—and not an animal, you are worth something, and you ought never to give away things that have great value without first thinking very carefully what they are worth, and making sure that you want to make this kind of gift.

Now, holding hands is not quite the same as "giving yourself away," of course, but it is giving a part of yourself. Any expression of friendship is a gift. And the more you give, the higher the price you pay, and the more certain you must be of what it is you are doing.

Unfortunately many young people have no idea whatsoever of themselves as persons, much less of God's idea of them or of His love and care. These are things you know very well, and have been taught since you were very small. Many young people have no conception of giving themselves. They are concerned with what they can *get*. "What will I get out of this? Will this satisfy *me*? Where can I have a good time?" You know the sort of thing.

In your relationships with boys from now on until you get married, I earnestly hope and pray that you will remember who it is that you belong to first of all—to the Lord, of course. He made you, He bought you, He loves you more than anyone ever will. Your body is a precious thing—the expression of who you are, the only place in which your personality is manifest and in which you can serve the Lord.

Perhaps one day the Lord will *give* you in marriage to a man who loves you, to be his until death parts you, and on that day you will be thankful if

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you have saved yourself for him. You know, I think, that I never held hands with any boy until I fell in love with your father. No boy ever kissed me. Not until your father asked me to marry him did he kiss me. Everyone thought I was crazy. Your daddy did not think so when he learned that he was the first. He was terribly glad, although he *had* thought I was a little stuffy to make him wait until we were engaged to kiss me!

It is a funny thing, but it is a fact, that boys are more interested in a girl who keeps a little distance. There is something about *unavailability* which enhances one's desire—like Eve and the apple, you know. The one fruit which God said she could not taste, she had to have. It's human nature. So, don't be too "easy to get." Don't be cheap. Word gets around pretty fast among the boys about which girls *will* and which ones *won't*. But never think for a second that the girls who *will* are the ones the boys like best, or respect, or would want for a wife. It isn't so. You have plenty of time, don't forget. You are only twelve, and you won't get married for eight years or more. Life gets suddenly terribly thrilling and exciting and interesting and scary, and you want to get on the toboggan and roar off with the rest of them. Don't do it. Sit down. Think. Pray. Ponder who and what you are. Take account of the things that really matter, and what you want of life. Save yourself for your husband, for the Lord. Be simple and natural and unselfish and free and friendly, by all means. But let the boys know you are *different*. This will sometimes take a lot of discipline and courage and maybe even sacrifice. Are you willing for that?

Do me the favor of reading Romans 12:1,2 in Phillips' translation: "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity." Now sit down and write me what you think about what I've said! You know that I say it because I love you and have great hopes for you and believe in you and am more thankful to God than you can possibly imagine for His having given you to me. With a heartfelt love, your Mama.

A Grumpy Three-Year-Old

A teenager named Sarah wrote, "Yesterday I was babysitting a three-year-old, Noah, who had just woken up from his nap. He woke up grumpy, which I understood, but he just wouldn't snap out of it. After trying very hard for twenty minutes to get him dressed, I remembered hearing some lady on the radio saying that when she was fussy as a child, her mother would put her by herself until she could 'find a happy face.' I took Noah to his room and sat him down and told him to stay there until he could find one. I told him very simply, so he would understand, and then went out of the room. When I came back, he had found a happy face. (If only I'd have thought of that to begin with!)"

Temptation

Romano Guardini speaks of the petition "Lead us not into temptation" as "a humble recognition of the truth and an appeal to God's mercy.

"But there is still another layer of meaning. Can God permit temptation to become so severe that we must really fall? If we deny that He can, and that, in view of His divinity, He may, we are making God innocuous.

"It is certain that no hour ever stands isolated. It is always woven into the whole fabric of life. Today's temptation grows from our doings of yesterday and before that, back and back through all the years past. What I have done or neglected to do throughout time is still there. It has become incorporated in my living being as weakness or strength, protection or threat. It has penetrated into the realities surrounding me, the things and the people, the circumstances and the associations. And the present hour, with its temptations, is the concentration of all that has happened. Thus it may well be that the failure, the levity, the disobedience, the sloth, the passion of many past hours find their retribution and punishment in a temptation which it is beyond my strength to resist.

"It would be dangerous to think that could not be. The petition of the Lord's Prayer knows that it can be, and that God is being but just when He permits it. But it calls upon that quality in God which is greater than His justice, namely, His mercy.

"Therefore it is a plea for God's patience.... God of patience! Let us not fall from Thy calm and unerring hands!" (*The Lord's Prayer*, Pantheon Books, 1958).

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Thou knowest the snares and pitfalls that are concealed in the way I am to take today. Thou knowest the lures that most readily attract my eyes, my senses of every sort, my desires that are fully exposed only to Thee. Go before me this day, I pray Thee, and keep me from the devil's entanglements, into which, unguided by Thee, I would so easily fall. And may the tricks designed for my undoing be only new occasion for gratitude to Thee for Thy sure leadership in the triumph of Thy grace, Amen.

from *The Many-Sided David*, by
my grandfather, Philip E. Howard

Book Search

Does anyone know a lovely little children's story book which contains a lullaby, "Hush, my baby, do not cry—five brave knights go riding by"? We had it when we were little, we lost it, and none of us can remember the title, alas.

Also, any copies of InterVarsity's *Hymns*, published 1947 to 1962? I would love to buy them (not the one published later).

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 May - July 1996

May 2 Birmingham, Ala., Beeson Divinity School, (205)870-2632.

May 3 Birmingham, Ala., Samford University Auxiliary Luncheon, Marla Corts, (205)969-0350.

May 4 Tallahassee, Fla., Christian Counseling Center, (904)893-6706.

May 11 Haverhill, Mass., Crisis Pregnancy Center, Charles Barton, (508)373-5700.

May 16 Rutland, Vt., banquet for Rutland Area Christian School, Nancy Zins, (802)459-2140.

May 17, 18 Schroon Lake, N.Y., Word of Life women's conference, Don Lough, (518)532-7111.

May 20 Liberty Corner, N.J., Women's Spiritual Life Day, Sister Rita Krohn, (908)647-1777.

May 31 Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

June 1 Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

June 3-5 Asheville, N.C., The Cove, Scott Holmquist, (704)298-2092.

June 8-15 family reunion in Franconia, N.H. (not open to the public!)

June 28, 29 Jacksonville, Ore., Applegate Christian Fellowship, Judith Slaughter, (503)899-8732.

July 13 Anaheim, Calif., Christian Home Educators, (310)864-CHEA.

July 14 La Mirada, Calif., Grenada Heights Friends Church, (310)943-7255 or 698-3038.

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