

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

November/December 1995

ISSN 8756-1336

## To Offer Thanks Is to Learn Contentment

Radio mail brings me letters from childless women who long for children, and letters from women who are terribly upset to find themselves pregnant again. God is the Lord of life and gives His children what is good. It is not always easy to receive thankfully what He apportions.

One correspondent who had had four children in four and a half years, morning sickness every day, a husband who continued to pursue his boat-racing, bowling, fishing, hunting, and golfing, felt she could not cope. There was never enough money. "Had abortions been as readily available then as they are now, I am sure I would have considered it even though I knew it was wrong," she said. But she had a mother whose faithful prayers, emotional support, and practical help enabled her to get through those years.

"Let me tell you, thirty-one years later, how the Lord has blessed us, not because of anything special that we have done, but because He is faithful. Not once have we had the heartache of a wayward child. All are Christians with Christian spouses, all active in their churches. We recently celebrated Christmas together, including eleven grandchildren. I can't tell you the joy we have as a family. I want to encourage the dear young mothers to remember the Lord is in control. Sure, they will be very busy, but the years go by quickly and the rewards are tremendous. Put your trust in the Lord—He will bless you for it!"

One who is yet childless after many prayers for fertility writes that she found herself pulling away from the young married people at church. But reading of a young widow's hope that God still had a plan for *her*, this would-be mother began to thank God for all the blessings He had given instead of dwelling on what He had withheld. "I still desire to have a child, but am also allowing my heavenly Father to work His own desires through my life."

Another writes, "We discovered this past fall that our third child will arrive in June. We had not closed the door to more children but the timing of this one was definitely not in our plans. The news shocked and numbed me for a few days, but I now sense a new awareness of God's sovereignty in our lives—an overruling of our plans for His, and there is tremendous peace in that. When we announced our expectancy at a family get-together one would have thought we had just announced a *divorce*. It's upsetting to see how our society's anti-child, zero-population-growth propaganda has crept into the church.

"My wonderful husband's response to the outcome of the pregnancy test was, 'Well, we did what we could to prevent it but God just insists on blessing us!'"

Thanksgiving brings contentment.

Many people seem to be looking ceaselessly for amusement, for some alleviation from boredom. Dissatisfied and restless, they fritter away their lives, wishing to move from what or where they are to what or where they aren't.

"My people have committed two sins," says the Lord in Jeremiah 2:13. "They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, cisterns that cannot hold water."

Discontent dries up the soul.

I hope you know more than one person to whom you could point and say, "*There is a truly contented person.*" Such a one will have learned the lesson of the psalmist, "I am not conceited, Lord, and I don't waste my time on impossible schemes. But I have learned to feel safe and satisfied, just like a young child on its mother's lap" (Psalm 131:1,2, Contemporary English Version). There will be in that man or woman a noticeable peace, "the kind of peace that only I can give," said Jesus. "It isn't like the peace that this world can give. So don't be worried or afraid" (John 14:27, CEV).

Christmastime brings for some, instead of the peace of Christ, temptations to covetousness and self-pity. To love God is to *love His will*. It is to wait quietly for life to be measured out by One who knows us through and through. It is to be content with His timing and His wise apportionment (do I feel that my portion is too much of something? too little of something else?).

It is to follow in the steps of the Master, as did Paul, who was able to say that he had learned contentment no matter what the circumstances. His circumstances when he wrote that? *Prison!* No easy lesson, but "great gain," which is the sum of godliness plus contentment (see 1 Timothy 6:6).

Jesus loved the will of His Father. He embraced the limitations, the necessities, the conditions, the very *chains* of His humanity as He walked and worked here on earth, fulfilling moment by moment His divine commission and the stern demands of His incarnation. Never was there a word or even a look of complaint.

E.B. Pusey (1800-1882) suggested rules for those who wish to gain contentment that surely reflect Jesus' own attitude:

1. Allow thyself to complain of nothing, not even the weather.
2. Never picture thyself to thyself under any circumstances in which thou art not.
3. Never compare thine own lot with that of another.
4. Never allow thyself to dwell on the wish that this or that had been, or were, otherwise than it was, or is. God Almighty loves thee better and more wisely than thou dost thyself.
5. Never dwell on the morrow. Remember that it is God's, not thine. The heaviest part of sorrow often is to look forward to it. "The Lord will provide."

## *The Nativity*

Out of the dusk, a promise	(Is. 9:6)
Out of the dark, a star	(Mt. 2:2)
Out of the world, a maiden	(Lk. 1:38)
Out of the night afar	(Is. 9:2)
Resounds the angels' message	(Lk. 2:14)
Which shepherds heard them sing	(Lk. 2:8)
Out of the dawn, redemption	(Eph. 1:7)
Into the world, a King!	(Rev. 17:14)

source unknown—sent to me by  
Aunt Anne Howard, Christmas 1951

Ponder, if you can, both the majesty of that King whose hands formed the universe, and the meekness that assented to come into the world a helpless infant, utterly dependent on His mother. She would hold those tiny hands as He learned to walk. Joseph would teach them to hold a carpenter's tools. Then, a strong man's hands, they would be laid tenderly on the heads of little children, used to knot a cord for whipping and to turn over tables in the temple. Those hands would heal the sick and the blind. One day they would be

grabbed by other human hands, slammed against a board and hammered through with iron nails which held them immobile.

"[He] made himself nothing...He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:4, NIV).

## *What Does It Mean to Submit?*

Jesus showed us the answer. Yet the question comes again and again. Women choke on it. Philippians 2:5-11 is the divine prescription:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a Cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father [NIV].

Here is my friend Judith Lake's response to the question of submission:

"I, being made in the image of God, —a believer, a woman, and a wife, having equal worth in God's sight and equal access to the Lord as my husband—choose not to grasp after a position of equal leadership with my husband which is not my God-given place. Rather, I choose by God's grace to make myself nothing, taking on the very nature of a servant which was the attitude of Jesus—desiring with all my heart to be humble like Him. I choose to be obedient to God's command to submit to my husband and die to myself. I understand that this decision will cause pain and suffering at times, but in those moments may I all the more identify with my Lord. When the cross is hard to bear, I pray for the will to give Him the burden of my heart

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and learn to rest in Him. I trust God and His Word and am confident that He knows what is best for me. One day He will exalt me in heaven as one of His own who obeyed His will. By His grace, I will receive my reward worshipping Him in His presence forever—confessing Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

## Announcement

Yes, we have seen the studies, sepia strokes across yellowed parchment, the fine detail of hand and breast and the fall of cloth—Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Titian, El Greco, Rouault—each complex madonna positioned, sketched, enlarged, each likeness plotted at last on canvas, layered with pigment, like the final draft of a poem after thirty-nine roughs.

But Mary, virgin, had no sittings, no change to pose her piety, no novitiate for body or for heart. The moment was on her unaware: the Angel in the room, the impossible demand, the response without reflection. Only one word of curiosity, echoing Zechariah’s *How?* yet innocently voiced, without request for proof.

The teen head tilted in light, the hand trembling a little at the throat, the candid eyes, wide with acquiescence to shame and glory—  
“Be it unto me as you have said.”

—Luci Shaw

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## What Every Christian Ought to Know

(My father, Philip E. Howard Jr., was editor of *The Sunday School Times*, a weekly magazine for which he regularly wrote editorials. Here is one of them.)

- [Know] that your temptations and trials are not peculiar, for every other believer in the world is also tempted and tried;
- that the Lord Jesus understands, for He also was tempted as we are, though He never sinned;
- that all other believers of all the earlier centuries have been harassed by the world, the flesh and the Devil;

- that the Devil will flee if you resist him in the power of God, and that the best weapon against him is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God;
- that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability in Him, and that He will comfort you in unexpected ways and force even the Devil to give you breathing spells;
- that no organization, no man, woman, or child is perfect, and therefore it pays to make some allowances and be sympathetic;
- that only One is altogether lovely, therefore it is well to keep our eyes on Him;
- that the whole body of believers, which constitute the true Church, is the battleground of a tremendous spiritual struggle, but that the battle is not really ours but God’s, and that as we trust in Him and use the armor He has provided, we shall be victorious;
- that God has begun a work in your heart which He will complete, has provided grace sufficient for every need, and has promised unconditionally not to forsake you;
- that there are some questions you cannot answer, some problems you cannot solve, because you are still a human being with a finite mind and limited knowledge;
- that God may allow you to be in some perplexity for a time, in order that you may be humbled, forced to depend on God moment by moment, and learn by hard experience that you must get your wisdom from above;
- that the strife will not always last, and that ahead of you lie rewards for faithful service and the indescribable joys of eternal life in the presence of God;
- that if you doubt the truth of any of these statements, you will find scriptural support for them in the references given below.

1 Pet. 4:12, 13;	Lk. 4:13	Deut. 29:29
5:9	Jas. 3:2	1 Cor. 13:12
Heb. 4:15	Song of Sol. 5:16	Deut. 8:3
Jas. 4:7	Heb. 12:2	Jas. 1:5; 3:17
Mt. 4:1-11	Eph. 6:12-17	2 Tim. 4:8
Eph. 6:17	Phil. 1:6	Rev. 22:1-7, 12
1 Cor. 10:13	2 Cor. 12:9	
Mt. 4:11	Heb. 13:5	

## Prayer (Gregorian, A.D. 590)

O GOD, the Protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy; that, Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.



Life is too short:

To remember slights and insults,  
To cherish grudges that rob me of happiness,  
To waste time in doing things that are of no value,  
To give my youth to the devil and my old age to God.

—anonymous



## Radio Log

*Gateway to Joy* is now heard in forty-three states, five provinces of Canada, Guam, and Ecuador. We have sent a radio log along with the Newsletter a few times, but the cost is a bit steep now. If you'd like to know stations on which *Gateway to Joy* is broadcast, call 1-800-7594-JOY.

### 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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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Travel Schedule November 1995-January 1996

**November 2** Nyack, N.Y.; Karen Dewey, (914)358-1710.

**November 3-4** Norfolk, Va.; Tabernacle Church, (804)423-8266.

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

**November 12-13** Baton Rouge, La.; First Presbyterian Church, (504)387-3221.

**November 14** Gulfport, Miss.; Broadwater Beach Hotel, women's luncheon, Dale Simpkins, (601)864-4856, or Virginia Wagner, (601)467-7872.

**November 20-21** South Hamilton, Mass.; Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Dr. Christy Wilson, Missions Class.

**November 22** Jury duty

**November 23** THANKSGIVING

**December 2** Albany, N.Y.; Northeast Gospel Network, Brian Larson, (518)686-0975.

**December 25** CHRISTMAS

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

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

**February 2-4** Houston, Tex.; Texas Women's Retreat, (713) 780-4047.

**February 22** Lake 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.

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