

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

July/August 1983

Working Mothers

Sue Horner, wife of the president of Barrington College in Rhode Island and herself the director of the Center for Women's Concerns in that college, in a recent interview in *New England Church Life*, said, "Men have always been able to be involved in creative, self-actualizing work." She would like to see more women released from traditional women's work "to be involved in creative work." Creative work, in Mrs. Horner's view, does not seem to include homemaking and mothering. *Why not?* I would like to ask. And who, for heaven's sake, is going to do the homemaking and mothering? Mrs. Horner says she felt confused and frustrated when she was doing it, and "struggled with fulfilment." Many women feel as she does. I meet them often. What I long to help them to see is that if homemaking and mothering are the tasks God has assigned to them at present, it will be in the glad offering up to Him of *those tasks* that they will be truly "creative" and find real fulfilment.

There's an eternal spiritual principle here. It ought to be enough reason for anybody. Is there any other reason why I am always telling young mothers to stay home? Yes, two absolutely unarguable ones, and a third interesting one which you can argue about if you want to.

First, the Bible clearly tells *me* (an older woman) to teach younger women "how to work in their homes" (Ti 2:5, Jerusalem Bible), or to be "busy at home" (New English Bible), or "domestic" (Revised Standard Version).

Second, children need their mothers. They

need quantity time. None of this "quality time" nonsense. Any time which a Christian mother who loves her children gives them should be "quality."

Third, it's very possible that a working mother's income is not nearly so "extra" as may at first appear. Take a look at a study done by Wayne Coleman of Austin, Texas. I think his estimates are very modest. From weekly earnings of \$175, subtract:

\$17.50	tithe
35.00	withholding tax
11.00	social security
20.00	transportation (20¢ mile, 10 miles to job)
7.50	lunch (this will have to be dieter's special!)
12.50	clothes, shoes, dry cleaning
35.00	child care for one
5.00	hair and cosmetics
1.00	office collections, gifts, entertainments
2.00	coffee breaks, miscellaneous
10.00	extra for bring-home meals (pick up a Stouffer's casserole, along with eggs and L'eggs?)

Net income weekly: \$18.50. If you subtract from this the things a woman may buy which she would not have bought if she didn't have "her own income," or that she may feel she deserves because she's working, how much "extra" is there

for the necessities that convinced her she needed the job?

Here's a testimony from a young woman in Texas who has no children yet. "The struggle I'm having is even though I work only part-time, there doesn't seem to be time to keep house, be with other women, reach out to the needy and lost. I know the pressures of the world, pushing for 'upward mobility,' figure more into the picture than I realize, making my struggle quite a fight. A part of me wants to quit the job, another part of me isn't that free yet!"

Please—if you're a mother of young children, considering getting a job, will you consider these questions first?

Will your income really be worth it?

Will it increase your husband's tax burden?

Are you giving your best to your family and/or your employer? (Golda Meir said that a working mother is torn apart—when in the office she's thinking of all she didn't get done at home, and when at home she's thinking of all she didn't get done at the office.)

What are your real motives for wanting to work? Could it be social pressure, boredom, acquisitiveness, pride, an unwillingness to do humble things? Are you trying to prove something?

I know some mothers of young children who in the face of genuine economic necessity have asked God to show them work they can do at home. Then they've gone to the library and read about businesses that can be engaged in at home, or they've been given an "original" idea. It's amazing to hear the answers God has given. "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things."

New England Spring

There's no way around it. If I'm going to write about springtime in New England for the newsletter, you'll have to read about it in the heat of summer. That's the way the scheduling of these things works.

Springtime in New England is unrecognizable most of the time. Year after year we look forward to it, long for it, and when March and April arrive feel we have a right to it. It gives us a little nod once in a while. The peepers, I have to admit, never fail us. No matter what else refuses to budge, those tiny frogs emerge from the mud and set up their tiny whistling, "whee, whee, whee, whee, whee," a gleeful piccolo orchestra undaunted by the cold. Usually there will be a day or two, like last Saturday, when the sun comes up early and stays up and thaws things and actually makes the terrace warm enough to sit on. My mother-in-law from Palm Beach, who thinks anything below 74 degrees is arctic, sat in the sun on the chaise longue (pronounced "chase lounge" by most folks now, I notice) which Lars had dusted off and carried up from the basement. He proceeded to haul brush while I raked some millions of last fall's beech and elm leaves. We soon had a glorious inferno going in the middle of the yard (yes, we had gotten a permit and as instructed had called the emergency number in advance to inform the city that the fire on Bay Road was on purpose). There is nothing quite so satisfying as a Saturday at home when you can clean house, bake, wash clothes and hang them outdoors, and then spend the rest of the day raking and burning. Can anyone top that for real recreation—or should I say re-creation and fulfilment?

Every morning I have studied the pussy willow outside my window, not wanting to miss the pussies this year as I have done in years past because I always look too late. Nothing is happening. A few tulips have begun, the lilac leaf buds are swelling just enough to be visible, but it's cold. That's the long and short of it. Much too cold to ride a bike without my down coat and fur hat and mittens. Can't sit in the back yard this week. Next time we try it, however, if things go as they usually do here, it will be too hot. Oh, I do love New England. I wouldn't leave for anything in the world.

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(I might though. Lars is a Southerner, loves Atlanta and Palm Beach and Mississippi and thinks Massachusetts winters are entirely too long.

Infanticide

In March the Department of Health and Human Services issued a regulation requiring hospitals to post notices in their nurseries and in the delivery, maternity, and pediatric wards which read, in part, "Any person having knowledge that a handicapped infant is being discriminatorily denied food or customary medical care should immediately contact the Handicapped Infant Hotline . . . 800-368-1019 (available 24 hours a day)." Perhaps if this had happened sooner, the baby in Bloomington that I wrote about last January/February might not have died. (Note: A federal judge has recently ruled that this regulation cannot be implemented. The decision is being appealed, and the hotline remains in operation.)

Amniocentesis

The president's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research would like to see more physicians providing the service of amniocentesis for women well under thirty-five. This procedure involves the insertion of a needle into the amniotic sac to withdraw fluid which can be tested to reveal certain abnormalities in the fetus. If they are found, abortion is often recommended. I was stunned to find this statement by Richard Doerflinger of the Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities (quoted in *Action Line*, March 31, 1983): "Amniocentesis performed on a woman of 32 is *four times* as likely to induce a miscarriage in the second trimester as it is to detect a child with Down's syndrome. The Commission argues that 'whether the benefits outweigh the risks' in such a situation 'is largely a matter of personal values.'"

"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me," Jesus said.

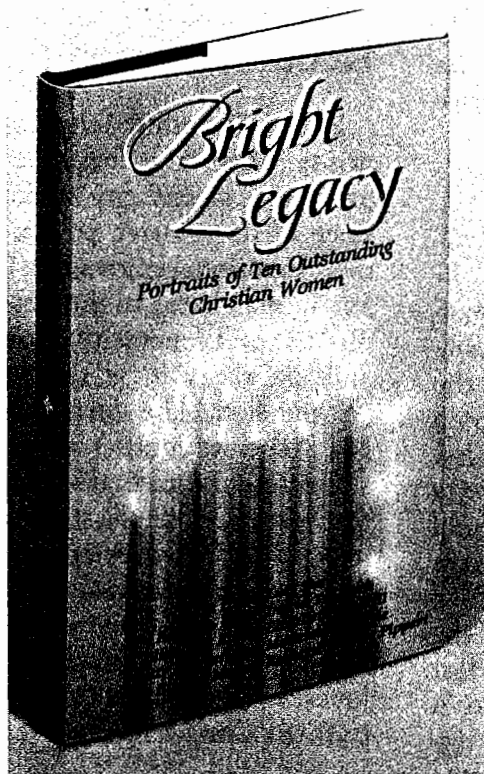
Recommended Reading

Evelyn Underhill: *School of Charity* (now out of print). "Pain, or at least the willingness to risk pain, alone gives dignity to human love, and is the price of its creative power. Without this, it is mere emotional enjoyment. It costs much to love any human being to the bitter end; and on every plane a total generosity, a love that includes pain and embraces it, is the price of all genuine achievement. The son of man must suffer, in the last desperate conflict between supernatural and self-giving and natural self-love. The Cross means the ultimate helplessness and dependence of man, when he comes up to his own limit and has nothing left but charity; and his willing acceptance of that helplessness and limit, because it throws him back upon the God he trusts and loves. So here, by the Crucifix and what it means to them, Christians must test their position."

Prayer Requests

Prayer without sound theology is prayer without foundations, without certainty. It is an illusion. We need constantly to study the Bible in order to learn what to pray for.

- Please pray the prayer of Psalm 69:6 for me and for those who may look to me for help and example: "Let none of those who look to thee be ashamed on my account, O Lord God of Hosts; let none who seek thee be humbled through my fault."
- Pray for Christian nurses and doctors, that God will minister His love through them to the suffering people; that they may also be given the courage to refuse unethical or unchristian practices.
- Pray for the fall speaking schedule, and a proposed trip to London to do research for my next book. It looks too big a task for me, but I think I've been "called" to do it. (It's always possible to do what you're called to do!)



Bright Legacy

Portraits of ten outstanding Christian women

Elisabeth Elliot, Karen Burton Mains, Gladys Hunt, and several other well-known Christian authors write affectionately about the women they admire, including Amy Carmichael, Catherine Marshall, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. \$10.95

Other Books and Tapes by Elisabeth Elliot

Through Gates of Splendor—

The story of how Jim Elliot and four other missionaries were killed by Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador. The 25th-anniversary edition includes an update and photographs of the families of the five men. \$3.50

Shadow of the Almighty—

The life of Jim Elliot, including his personal journals and letters, his love story, and his missionary experience. \$5.95

The Savage My Kinsman—

The true story in text and pictures of the author's life with the same

Indians who had killed her husband Jim Elliot nearly three years earlier. Includes over thirty-five photos, most of which were taken by the author. \$5.95

Discipline: The Glad Surrender—

The subject is personal discipline, based on obedience to a loving and sovereign Master, touching on the discipline of the mind, the feelings, the body, and of one's time, work, and possessions. \$8.95

Let Me Be a Woman—

Reflections on what it means to be a Christian woman, single, married, or widowed. Written as notes to Valerie Elliot just before her marriage. \$2.95

The Jim Elliot Story—

Includes Jim's voice telling a witch-doctor story. (tape) \$5.00

Travel Schedule

July 13-16 Bellingham, Washington, The Firs, Women's Conference, Mrs. Richard Eley.

July 20-August 5 England, to do research for a book.

September 13 Memphis, Tennessee, First Baptist Church Women's Luncheon, Elizabeth Linder, 901-454-1131.

September 14-15 Knoxville, Tennessee, Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, Mrs. Donald Hoke, 615-693-6132.

September 19-20 Wayne, Pennsylvania, Church of the Savior Women's Seminar, Mrs. Pam Snyder, home—215-964-9810, church—688-6302.

October 7-9 Sierra Madre, California Congregational Church Women's Retreat, Mrs. Mary C. Upham, 1102 Bungalow Place, Arcadia, California 91006, 213-357-3471.

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