

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

July/August 1985

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## But Also to Suffer

**A**my Carmichael once spent a day in solitude in a cave in Japan, wrestling in prayer over some secret matter which she never fully revealed to anyone. It seems she feared loneliness. The words which were given to her then in answer to her cry were Paul's to the Philippians when he was in prison and they were being persecuted: "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, *but also to suffer* for his sake" (Phil 1:29 AV). She understood then that the Lord was not promising escape from the thing she feared, but assurance that whatever He might allow of suffering in her life would be a privilege and a gift—a thing given to her to give to Him, something which she could expect would accompany her faith. To believe in Christ is to suffer for Him.

In Jesus' last discourse with His disciples He explained the same truth. John 14 records His wonderfully comforting words, "Set your troubled hearts at rest" (NEB), His description of where He was going and why, His clear teaching on obedience as the only proof of love, and the promise of His gift of peace. In the next two chapters we find His prediction of the suffering His disciples should expect—hatred, persecution, their words ignored, their entrance into the synagogues refused, even death. "A servant is not greater than his master," He said. "It is on my account that they will treat you thus" (15:20, 21).

Some newsletter readers will be suffering on the very day that this arrives in the mail. The message it brings is not a new one. Jesus knew that His disciples would often need reminders of the things He had taught them while He was with them. Suffering would tempt them to wonder if the whole thing had been for nothing—their original decision to follow Him, the three years of listening and trying to learn, the price they had paid to be

disciples. Amy Carmichael, alone in that cave, must have been filled with similar questions, although her suffering was of a different kind from the disciples'. Had she missed His call? Was her work all for nothing? What to do with this fear that haunted her?

Don't be afraid to bring your questions to the Lord and hear His loving assurances: "Your grief will be turned into joy. . . . For the moment, you are sad at heart; but I shall see you again and then you will be joyful and no one shall rob you of your joy. . . . I have told you all this so that *in me* you may find peace. In the world you will have trouble. But courage! The victory is mine; I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:20, 22, 33 NEB). Peace is to be found in Him who entered into all our sorrow, knows it from the inside, and asks us to accept the hardest thing as a privilege, a gift, yes, even as an honor—because we have put our trust in Him.

## A Sentimental Journey

**A**n invitation to speak for Missions in Focus Week at Wheaton College (Illinois) last April gave me an opportunity to live over again in vivid memory some important crises in my own student life.

Edman Chapel is new since my time, but there were the same eager, earnest, hopeful, uncertain, longing, dubious, shy faces turned up to me that we turned up to chapel speakers in the 1940s. How strange to be on the platform of Pierce Chapel in the evenings, saying the same things I heard when mine was one of the hopeful, uncertain faces. Strange to look up to the balcony where Jim Elliot always sat; to visit my old room in Williston Hall (the one described in the opening chapter of *Passion and Purity*) where I

prayed and dreamed of Jim; to go to Alumni Gym where he used to wrestle; to walk the sidewalks we walked from dorm to class to chapel. Strange—and wonderful—today, to receive a letter from a sophomore at Wheaton, a young man: "Mrs. Elliot, I sit here in my dorm room with books and papers strewn around me, buttressed by the challenge you left with us—'If you're a student, the will of God for you is to study. Have you ever thought of that?' Ha! Yes, I had thought of it. . . . I am prompted to lay down my books for a few minutes, though, to do something I think is important: thank you, thank God, for something else you said while here." He refers then to my talks on bringing one's lovelife under Christ's control (the theme of the above-mentioned book). "I don't really care if what you said is 'old-fashioned,' I'm convinced that it is right on target. . . . The principles make sense to me. I can't help but feel that if we had let ourselves hunger without being fed we would be much happier, and much more mature in Christ. . . . I thank you for bearing a message that was heard and is being heeded (by God's grace) as well as possible by at least one Wheaton student. . . . In as small a way as it may be, for me this is 'fellowship in His sufferings.' Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 16:13, 14, and 2 Corinthians 5:7 have special significance to me now. Thank the Lord Elisabeth Elliot is old-fashioned!"

## Child-Care

A business which is "old hat" in England is new and rapidly growing in America—the training of nannies, women whose profession is the care of other people's children. Most of the nannies are young, but it is of particular significance that many of them are middle-aged women who have left careers. They have had ample opportunity to find that the business world can be an awful bore, but, as one of them said, "Nothing is as interesting as babies." What a shame that the mothers of these children are out chasing money, freedom, power, a cosmopolitan lifestyle, or who-knows-what and missing out on the most demanding, consuming, rewarding, ful-

filling, and certainly the most *creative* job in the world. If only they'd listen to the older women they're about to hire! Those women could tell them that the glamor is false, and the mothers could save themselves \$300 a week, look after their own babies, and the babies—bless 'em—wouldn't be motherless.

One is reminded of the description of the ostrich which has neither sense nor wisdom: "She treats her chicks heartlessly as if they were not hers, not caring if her labour is wasted . . . while like a cock she struts over the uplands" (Jb 39:16-18 NEB).

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton of Harvard and Dr. Edward Zigler of Yale, speaking of the latent damage to infants caused by sensory deprivation and separation from the mother, compared it to the effects of a drug which caused gross deformities in Europe in the 1960s. They said, "We might be handing out psychological thalidomide."

Are you one of those mothers who has no choice but to work? There is help for you. Remember, first of all, that your Heavenly Father knows what you need (Mt 6:33), and "My God will supply all that you need from his glorious resources in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19 JBP). There is excellent practical advice in Mary Pride's book, *The Way Home*. You may find a way to earn money and stay home. Never limit what God may do in response to faith and obedience.

## Recommended Reading

Hannah Whitall Smith: *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Word Books, Waco, Texas). This classic has been in print for over ninety years and comes now in paperback with an introduction and built-in study guide which I was delighted to write at the publisher's request. The book is full of lucid, practical, thoroughly scriptural wisdom. Excellent for group or individual study.

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## Notes from a Grandmother's Diary

ELISABETH (age five): "Come outside, Granny. I want you to play with me."

GRANNY: "In a few minutes, sweetheart. I've got a few things to do here in the kitchen."

ELISABETH: "Oh, don't worry about all that housework, Granny. Leave it to Mama. She's used to it."

In Sunday School the children were singing "I've Got a Home in Glory-Land," with gestures. When they came to the stanza, "I took Jesus as my Savior, you take Him too!" Elisabeth, instead of pointing forward as everyone else did, pointed straight back over her shoulder at her eight-year-old brother, Walter.

## How I Got the Job Done

Last week I received a fat package in the mail which I was not specially eager to open. The galleys of a new book. I was going to the west coast so I had to do the proofreading and correcting in two days in order to return them by the deadline. I feel as Flannery O'Connor felt about reading galleys—it's like chewing all day on a horse blanket, or eating stewed Kleenex—pretty tasteless stuff that I've worked over for years and can't believe anybody in the world will find readable. I have to make myself sit down at the desk and go to it. This time it seemed worse than ever. The only way I got the job done was to set myself small goals—ten pages at a time, then a break: write a letter. Ten more pages: make a phone call. Ten more: walk to the post office. Ten more: another letter. I did it. I got through the 230 pages and put it in the mail before I left for the airport. The title of the book? I'm afraid to tell you! You might say, when you see it on the shelf next fall, "Oh, that's the one she said was like stewed Kleenex."

"My character as a mature woman will generally be shaped less by big decisions than by small decisions I make daily in disciplining my life right now." (From a letter from Allison McNeese, Iowa)

## My Mother

In April my mother fell and broke her hip. It's a miracle it hasn't happened sooner—she has fallen many times. The surgery to insert a pin and plate was successful, and she is recovering. There have been several offers of help in response to my request, so we trust the Lord will make our way plain in His time. We count on your prayers.

## Prayer Requests

Prayer is preparation for receiving the blessings we ask. It brings us, like little children, to the Father's knee. We need things; we want things for ourselves and others; we ask Him for them. But He is perfect Love, and for that very reason will not always give what we ask. If we trust Him, we will receive with thanksgiving whatever He gives, whether it fits our notions of what we need or not.

Some pointers for prayer:

- For Christian leaders to whom others look for example, that they may be given grace to obey their Master at any cost, even at the cost of popularity (see Jn 15:19, 20).
- For fathers, that they may take Christ's yoke upon them and learn of Him who is meek and humble in heart. Their burdens of responsibility are too heavy to bear alone. Sharing Christ's yoke makes them bearable.
- For lonely children who think that they are sometimes not much more than a nuisance and an obstacle to the lifestyle their parents desire.

"Watch Thou, dear Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give Thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend Thy sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest Thy weary ones. Bless Thy dying ones. Soothe Thy suffering ones. Pity Thine afflicted ones. And all for Thy love's sake. Amen." (St. Augustine)

## Questions and Answers

*How do we reconcile God's promises for protection with the fact that so many evil things do happen in our lives? Can we believe God for protection?*

This question comes up often, and no wonder, since there are many promises in the Bible about protection, including (especially in the Old Testament) physical protection. We must be careful to interpret Scripture with Scripture, and if we examine the record we find that God did not by any means always protect His people from harm. He has absolute power to keep us safe, both physically and spiritually, but His engineering of the universe made room for man's freedom to choose—that is, freedom to will to obey or to disobey Him. This is a deep mystery. Man's disobedience brought evil into the world, and all of us are subject to it. God does not cancel out its effects, even for His choicest servants (John the Baptist, Stephen, those nameless victims of Hebrews 11:35-37, for example). Nevertheless, we have the promises. Romans 8:35-39 is one of my most reread passages. I believe we can rest assured that we are invulnerable so long as God does not give permission for us to be hurt. If He gives that permission, He will not leave us alone. He goes with us through the valley, the deep water, the furnace. He will never, absolutely never, leave us or forsake us.

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## Travel Schedule July/November 1985

**July 28** Millersburg, Pennsylvania, David's United Church of Christ, Mr. Solberg, 717-692-4407

**September 16-19** Leakey, Texas, Laity Lodge, Howard Hovde, 512-896-2505

**September 27, 28** Gardiner, Maine, Women of Christ Church, Alice H. Squires

**October 3** Charlotte, North Carolina, Calvary Church, Mrs. Sara Nader, 704-366-6560

**October 4, 5** Memphis, Tennessee, Central Church, Mrs. Peggy Person, 901-365-4673

**October 18-20** St. Simons Island, Georgia, Winning Women, Mrs. Barbara Murphy, 1204 Flagstone Dr., Daytona Beach, Florida 32018

**November 1, 2** New York, Hephzibah House, Mrs. Lois Ewald, 212-787-6150

**November 16** Madison, Wisconsin, Real Women Seminar, Georgeanne Cusic, 4102 Council Crest, Madison 53711

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