

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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## Nothing Is Lost

A pastor's wife asked, "When one witnesses a work he has poured his life into 'go up in flames' (especially if he is not culpable), is it the work of Satan or the hand of God?"

Often it is the former, always it is under the control of the latter. In the biographies of the Bible we find men whose work for God seemed to be a flop at the time—Moses' repeated efforts to persuade Pharaoh, Jeremiah's pleas for repentance, the good king Josiah's reforms, rewarded in the end by his being slain by a pagan king. Sin had plenty to do with the seeming failures, but God was then, as He is now, the "Blessed Controller of All Things" (1 Tm 6:15, J.B. Phillips). He has granted to us human beings responsibility to make choices and to live with the consequences. This means that everybody suffers—sometimes for his own sins, sometimes for those of others.

There are paradoxes here which we cannot plumb. But we can always look at the experiences of our own lives in the light of the life of our Lord Jesus. How shall we learn to "abide" (live our lives) in Christ, enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, let Him transform our own? There is only one way. It is by living each event, including having things "go up in flames," as Christ lived: in the peace of the Father's will. Did His earthly work appear to be a thundering success? He met with argument, unbelief, scorn in Pharisees and others. Crowds followed Him—not because they wanted His Truth, but because they liked handouts such as bread and fish and

physical healing. His own disciples were "fools and slow of heart to believe." (Why didn't Jesus *make* them believe? For the reason given above.) These men who had lived intimately with Him, heard His teaching for three years, watched His life and miracles, still had little idea what He was talking about on the evening before His death. Judas betrayed Him. The rest of them went to sleep when He asked them to stay awake. In the end they all forsook Him and fled. Peter repented with tears, and later saw clearly what had taken place. In his sermon to the Jews of Jerusalem (Acts 2:23, JBP) he said, "This man, who was put into your power by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed up and murdered. . . . But God would not allow the bitter pains of death to touch him. He raised him to life again—and there was nothing by which death could hold such a man."

There is nothing by which death can hold any of His faithful servants, either. Settle it, once for all—YOU CAN NEVER LOSE WHAT YOU HAVE OFFERED TO CHRIST. It's the man who tries to save himself (or his reputation or his work or his dreams of success or fulfillment) who loses. Jesus gave us His word that if we'd lose our lives for His sake, we'd find them.

## Prayer

*O Direct my life towards Thy commandments, hallow my soul, purify my body, correct my thoughts, cleanse my desires, soul and body, mind and spirit, heart and reins. Renew me thoroughly, O Lord, for if Thou wilt, Thou canst.*  
(Lancelot Andrewes, 1555-1626)

## Homeschooling

My daughter Valerie Shepard homeschools three of her five children (the other two are pre-school age). Her son Walter, the oldest, attended kindergarten and first grade before the decision was made to homeschool. Some of you have asked what advantages homeschooling offers, so I asked Val what she has discovered. Here is her answer:

1. The children have *more time*: to read (aloud and silently); to learn responsibility by doing chores at home; to play (without adult direction) and use the imagination; to listen to and enjoy each other; to learn obedience.

2. Parents need not de-program or reteach values the child hears for seven hours a day. They have the child's full attention at any time of the day and can give him full attention; he is not watching two different value systems daily.

3. Children learn to love each other more. They do not look down on one another in favor of their peers, or in wrong adulation of older children. This society teaches that among children "older is better." That's not right. Having them at home all day allows them to be children without having to "grow up" in the wrong ways.

4. They learn to be servants of one another. The family is a microcosm of the Body of Christ.

P.S. Since I asked Val to write this I have had the fun of trying it out myself. Val and Walt went to South Carolina (taking their nursing baby Colleen) and I had the other four for five (very busy!) days. There is a schedule of chores posted in the kitchen. Daily I reminded them (seldom more than once). The nine-, seven-, and five-year-olds took turns setting and clearing the table, emptying the dishwasher, folding laundry, sweeping the kitchen. Walter and Jim (not quite three) take out trash, the girls clean the bathroom. All but Jim make their beds.

School began at nine with Bible reading, singing, prayer, all four joining in. Jim sat on the floor and played while the others studied. Christiana finished her kindergarten work by ten or so, Walter and Elisabeth worked till nearly lunchtime.

Every afternoon there was Quiet Hour. This was a lifesaver for Granny. The three older children must be in their rooms for an hour.

They need not sleep, but they must read or find something quiet to do *alone*. (Not once did we have any altercation about Quiet Hour. It's always been a part of their lives, and they *like* it.) Jim and I lay down together, I read him a Beatrix Potter story, and he fell asleep. Since we had no car, four of us walked to the grocery store every day, while Walter rode his bike. It was an interesting string of people, Elisabeth hugging (for example) five pounds of flour, Christiana batting things with a box of Saran Wrap, Jim lugging a bag of apples, Granny with a loaded brown bag.

We had poetry readings (Jim memorized with no effort at all) and singing. Everybody learned "Chattanooga Choo-Choo," by mistake, as it were—I meant for them to learn "Praise the Savior" but somehow that one didn't stick so easily, alas! Walter and Elisabeth practiced the piano and played vigorous duets for the rest of us. We made bread and organized drawers and closets and sorted clothes and toys for give-away and picked violets and had a marvelous time.

I should confess this—on the evening of the first day I wasn't sure I'd survive the week. When Val phoned I asked, "How do you do it?" "Mama, I just do what you taught me: don't think about all you have to do, just DO THE NEXT THING!" I needed to be told what I have often told others, and it worked.

Homeschooling is demanding to say the least—but worthwhile. If you are considering trying it, you might want to get Mary Pride's *The Big Book of Home Learning: The Complete Guide to Everything Educational for You and Your Child*, (Crossways, \$17.50).

## Those Mighty Feathers

My friend and spiritual mother Katherine Morgan, who, though pushing eighty, is still a missionary in Colombia, writes: "Many of you are concerned with our safety here in Bogota where people are shot every day in the streets. A

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magistrate of the Supreme Court was assassinated about five blocks from us the other morning. . . . But I can say I have never felt safer anywhere than each day as I go about my duties. Mr. George Schultz came down from Washington to the inauguration of our new president and had about twenty bodyguards with him. But according to Psalm 91 we have a greater bodyguard which is the shadow of the Almighty and His 'feathers.' *Shadow* and *feathers* are mightier than human arms. Some time ago a missionary friend of mine was coming home from the store carrying one baby and leading the other by the hand when a man approached her with a long knife pointed right at her. He demanded her purse. She shouted at him, 'Leave me alone. I am covered with feathers!' Giving her one terrified look, he fled."

## Draw Near That Fire

(The following was written by my mother, Katherine Gillingham Howard, found in her little prayer notebook after her death.)

How cold the heart and stony—like one dead—  
On which the beams of God's own Word,  
In daily meditation, fail to shed their warmth.  
If through neglect, we draw not near that fire,  
At first, unnoticed, creeps a shivering chill.  
But when, neglected, lies the Book for days,  
That chill takes hold, till the whole soul is ill.  
And yet when once again we seek God's Word,  
With empty heart and soul and deep despair,  
In faithfulness He meets us. Praise the Lord!  
And pours in oil and wine on all our care.

## Another Way

Following a women's meeting in Florida I was sitting at a table out under the trees autographing books. A young woman waited politely until I was free, then, with a shining face, told me this story. She had been working, but came to the conviction that she ought to be at home with her children. This, it seemed, was quite impossible. Her husband insisted she work because they needed the money. "Last week," she said, "he was away for three days. I set aside

those days to fast and pray, asking God to change my husband's mind and to show us another way." A day or two later, without preliminary, her husband said, "Honey, we must find a way to enable you to quit working." Within one week they had sold their house and found another with equal floor space at a much lower price.

May her testimony spur others to ask God if He might show them another way. "Your Heavenly Father knows that you need these things."

## A Dozen Ways to Make Yourself (and Quite a Few Others) Miserable

1. Count your troubles, name them one by one—at the breakfast table, if anybody will listen, or as soon as possible thereafter.
2. Worry every day about something. Don't let yourself get out of practice. It won't add a cubit to your stature but it might burn a few calories.
3. Pity yourself. If you do enough of this, nobody else will have to do it for you.
4. Devise clever but decent ways to serve God and mammon. After all, a man's gotta live.
5. Make it your business to find out what the Joneses are buying this year and where they're going. Try to do them at least one better even if you have to take out another loan to do it.
6. Stay away from absolutes. It's what's right for you that matters. Be your own person and don't allow yourself to get hung up on what others expect of you.
7. Make sure you get your rights. Never mind other people's. You have your life to live, they have theirs.
8. Don't fall into any compassion traps—the sort of situation where people can walk all over you. If you get too involved in other people's troubles, you may neglect your own.
9. Don't let Bible reading and prayer get in the way of what's really relevant—things like TV and newspapers. Invisible things are eternal. You want to stick with the visible ones—they're where it's at now.

10. Be right, and be sure to let folks know it. If you catch yourself in the wrong, don't breathe it to a soul.

11. Review daily the names of people who have hurt, wronged, or insulted you. Keep those lists up to date, and think of ways to get even without being thought of as unreasonable, uncivilized, or unchristian.

12. Never forgive a wrong. Clutch it forever, and you'll never be unemployed. Resentment is a full-time job.

*RECOMMENDED READING:* Peter Kreeft, *Making Sense Out of Suffering* (Servant Publications, Ann Arbor MI). Kreeft takes up the unanswerable and carries us inexorably to the stunning answer. He tells us in lucid and vigorous prose the old, old story. I already knew how it would end, but I was swept from one clue to the next as willingly and thrillingly as if I had been reading through a mystery novel. Rabbi Kushner (author of *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*)—can you refute Kreeft's case?

## *July/August/September 1987*

**July 9** Phoenix, AZ; Conservative Baptist Women's Luncheon, Mrs. Myra Falconer, (602) 834-9120.

**July 10, 12** Arkadelphia, AR; Singles Conference, Carol Roper, (501) 376-0900.

**July 12-18** Huntsville, ONT; Richard Holliday, (705) 789-4031.

**August 8** Oklahoma City, OK; Luncheon, Sandra Clopine, (417) 862-2781.

**August 28, 29** Holland; Operation Mobilization.

**September 25-27** Los Gatos, CA; Los Gatos Christian Church.

**September 29** Merrillville, IN; World Home Bible League women's retreat, Mrs. Leona Botting, (616) 669-5977.

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