

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

March/April 1986

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## Struggling with Self-Esteem

Who has been telling people that they should always be "struggling" with things? Who came up with this self-esteem notion? Another letter (I'm amazed at how many I get about this business) says, "I'm so tired of not accepting myself. I can't seem to let go of my standards of what a woman should be." It looks to me as though we've gone entirely too far. Isn't it time to quit prying into our own psyches and take a long, careful look at the Cross of Jesus? Think of what He intended for us there: "His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should *cease to live for themselves*" (2 Cor 5:15); of why He did it: "He loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20); of what His death accomplishes: "When anyone is united to Christ, there is a *new act of creation*" (2 Cor 5:17; NEB footnote). Balance the word of Romans 12:3 ("Do not be conceited or think too highly of yourself") with that of Colossians 1:21, 22 ("You yourselves, who were strangers to God. . . his spiritual enemies, he has now reconciled through the death of his body on the cross, so that he might welcome you into his presence clean and pure, without blame or reproach" J.B. Phillips' translation). Identify yourself with the company God has chosen: "what the world calls foolish, to shame the wise; he has chosen what the world calls weak, to shame the strong. He has chosen things of little strength and small repute . . . to explode the pretensions of the things that are—that no man may boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor 1:27, 28; JBP).

The poor girl was tired of not accepting herself (which self?) and trying to let go her standards. If there's one thing that's mighty scarce these days it's standards! Of course, if she

garnered them from "Dynasty" or from *People* magazine, the quicker she lets those go the better. But if she's taking her standards from Scripture, she needs to hang onto them with all her might. "Be perfect" is the biblical standard. In view of *that* can we "accept ourselves"? Nobody comes close to that, nobody ever has except Jesus Himself. But that's what He intends to make of us some day, and He poured out His life's blood to do it. Would He do that if He didn't love us? Would He do that and then leave us without the help we need every day? If He has done that, can't we trust Him? Isn't He worth obeying? What is the "new act of creation" if not the very life of Christ lived in us, one day at a time? Concentrate on Him. Forget self-esteem. It's an awful waste of time.

## Backfire

The National Organization for Women's "Silent No More" campaign to encourage women who have had abortions to speak out, may be backfiring as women who feel they were exploited and traumatized by abortion tell their stories. The goal of the campaign is to counter the effects of Dr. Bernard Nathanson's dramatic film *The Silent Scream* which shows the real-time ultrasound image of an unborn baby recoiling and struggling as it is being aborted. Larijo Nerad, president of Women Exploited by Abortion, a group of women who have had abortions and are now fighting to stop legal abortion, says that her group "has not needed to launch a nationwide campaign to solicit letters from women. Our files are crammed with testimonies from women both physically and psychologically injured by abortion." (Dale O'Leary, *The Pilot*)

## Mary Pride's Book

In the July/August and September/October Newsletters of 1985 I mentioned Mary Pride's book, *The Way Home*. I have received several inquiries as to my views on some of the things Mrs. Pride says. Other NL readers may have wondered about the same things, and lest my mentioning the book be taken as an unconditional endorsement let me say that I did not intend it to be quite unconditional. While I say *Brava!* to her disavowal of feminism, and applaud the strong encouragement to understanding motherhood as a high form of service to the Lord and her urging women to stay home, I recognize that she is both a young woman and a fairly new Christian. More years and more experience may modify some of her assertions. I would take issue with her on the following subjects:

1. The purpose of marriage. Yes, without question God's original intention was progeny. But the New Testament also reveals a tremendous mystery, signalled in the union of husband and wife: the relationship between Christ and the Church. I see this as a drama or mystery-play in which men and women, by obedience, enact headship and submission as they are enacted both in the Trinity and in the order of the Church. The Christian home, in other words, is a sort of theater where this great truth is represented daily. (See my book, *The Mark of a Man*.)

2. Contraception. It seems to me that the issue is, *May a Christian couple exercise any choice at all?* I believe with Mrs. Pride that a Christian couple may not choose to opt out altogether of the responsibility of having a family. It was what God meant when He ordained marriage. The spacing and number of pregnancies, however, may be a matter for choice. As soon as I say that I must add that what is right for some is not necessarily right for all. Love for God is self-giving, as is His love for us, and we exercise choices as responsible adult Christians in a spirit of total willingness to be and have what in His heart we are meant to be and have. Some believe that the so-called "natural" methods of contraception are acceptable while mechanical or surgical methods are

not. This has been the official Roman Catholic position. (For an explanation, see for example the Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, *Of Human Life*, July 1968.) The encyclical presents a strong and reasonable case for using the natural method.

3. On wives earning money at home. Mrs. Pride's belief that women *ought* to earn money at home, whether it is an economic necessity or not, finds scant support in Scripture. I look on it as a "burden too heavy to be borne" by many young wives and mothers. I do not find it in the New Testament list of women's responsibilities (see Newsletter, May/June 1985).

4. On a man's self-employment. Is it God's ideal? It would appear so when God put Adam in charge of a garden and of all the creatures of the earth. But man demolished God's ideal. In a fallen and broken world we must learn to live a godly, righteous, and sober life in conditions God never intended at the beginning. Employment is perhaps one of those, but was accepted in New Testament times as one area in which Christians may glorify God—by faithful performance of work, by respectful obedience to those put over him.

## Letters To Readers

More than one letter has come from a reader of *Passion and Purity* telling me how much he or she "loved" the book, "really got a lot out of it," etc., and then proceeding to tell a long tale about how the old lifestyle still goes on, sleeping around, "but she's a really neat girl," or "he's a good Christian guy," and "I don't think God wants me to lose him/her," or "we were sleeping together before we read your book and now we don't know what to do," etc. One of those came in yesterday's mail from a twenty-one-year-old who had given away her virginity at seventeen. Both of them students in a *Christian* college,

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she and her current boyfriend go to bed often. But this was her prayer: "Lord, I am about as far from 'pure' as they come. Please forgive my constant attempts to justify compromises." Then she tells me she cannot even *conceive* of a relationship without sex. What to do?

My reply: "Thank you for your long letter. What more can I say than what I've tried to say in the book? You say you read it carefully and it made sense to you. So now you know what you have to do. The choice, of course, is yours. Will you choose to trust God to handle your future, or will you continue to attempt to run it yourself? Will you choose to obey Him, *starting today*, or will you have it your way? Nobody can make those choices for you, Marcia (not her real name). What you sow you will surely reap. My advice is SOW FOR ETERNITY. 'Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who want above everything else to follow your steps' (Psalm 84:5; Living Bible). The first thing you must decide is what you want *above everything else*. Once you make that decision for life, many other things become very simple, and God will most certainly help you."

## Valerie

Readers ask for news of my daughter Valerie Shepard. She lives in Laurel, Mississippi, where her husband Walt is pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church. She is home-schooling her two older children, Walter (third grade) and Elisabeth (first). She teaches a women's Bible class on Fridays, and on Saturdays the men of their church come to the house for a prayer breakfast. The greater part of her "ministry" is the ordinary work of any housewife—"I assure you that whatever you did for the humblest of my brothers, you did for me," Jesus said. Please pray for her and all other young mothers who need to be reminded that "divine service is conducted daily" in their kitchens and laundry rooms. There are many voices that would tell them something quite different.

## Books by Elisabeth Elliot

*Through Gates of Splendor*—the story of five missionaries killed in Ecuador by Auca Indians in 1956. A251 \$5.95

*Shadow of the Almighty*—the life of Jim Elliot, including his personal journals and letters, his love story, his missionary experience. A228 \$6.95

*The Savage My Kinsman*—photographs and text describing a year with the Auca Indians of Ecuador. 0999 \$5.95

*No Graven Image*—a novel probing the question of God's sovereignty. A279 \$5.95

*The Liberty of Obedience*—on Christian maturity and service; on what a Christian is "allowed" to do. A278 \$1.95

*A Slow and Certain Light*—on the guidance of God and how a Christian may understand His will. A280 \$2.75

*These Strange Ashes*—the story of a missionary's first year, touching on the questions of apparent failure and loss. A281 \$6.95

*The Journals of Jim Elliot*. A276 \$6.95

*Love Has a Price Tag*—a collection of essays on varied topics. 1537 \$5.95

*Let Me Be a Woman*—Notes for Valerie on what it means to be a woman, single, married, or widowed. A277 \$5.95

*The Mark of a Man*—notes for Pete on the responsibilities assigned to men by God; the meaning of masculinity. A351 \$5.95

*Discipline: The Glad Surrender*—what it means to accept the lordship of Christ in one's body, mind, emotions, time, work, etc. A004 \$9.95

*Passion and Purity*—a true love story, illustrating the principles by which to preserve "the gift you give only once," virginity. A302 \$5.95

*A Lamp for My Feet*—brief meditations which apply the Bible to the common experience of twentieth century living. 2347 \$9.95

Readers may order through: Servant Book Express, P.O. Box 7455, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-9977. Payment must accompany order. Please pay in U.S. currency or equivalent. Add postage, handling, and guaranteed delivery charges:

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\$50.01 to \$100.00, add \$5.00

over \$100.00, add 5%

Michigan residents add 4% tax.

*Travel Schedule*

*March/April/May 1986*

**March 1**

London, Ontario; Women Alive, 705-726-3803.

**March 15**

Natick, MA; Daybreak Crisis Pregnancy Center, Carol Rosa, 617-489-4276.

**March 21, 22**

Calgary, Alberta; Women Alive, 705-726-3803.

**April 4-6**

Rio Rico, AZ; women's retreat, Barbara Tompkins, 602-299-9000.

**April 6**

Tucson, AZ; First Evangelical Free Church, 602-299-1660.

**April 10**

Seaside Heights, NJ; Open Door Pregnancy Center; Rev. James McColl, 201-793-0247.

**April 11-13**

Ocean City, NJ; Creative Living Women's Conference; Mrs. Carole Williamson, 215-459-4232.

**April 16, 17**

Akron, OH; The Chapel in University Park; Mrs. Lou-Ann Redmon, 216-688-1342.

**April 18, 19**

Winnipeg, Manitoba; Portage Ave. Mennonite Brethren Church, 774-4414.

**April 19**

Winnipeg; women's conference; Mrs. Toni Dueck, 295 Wallace Ave., Winnipeg R2E 0B1.

**May 2-4**

Mt. Hermon, CA; women's conference, Jayne Price, 408-335-4580.

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