

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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My Life for Yours

Ten years ago a young Canadian woman sat in the assembly hall at the University of Illinois in Urbana, along with 17,000 other students attending Inter-Varsity's missionary convention. She thrilled to the singing of the great hymns, led by Bernie Smith. She heard the speakers, "and I remember the incredible excitement and desire to know and serve God that I experienced at that time. Now I have walked through some deep waters, and I feel compelled to write to you," her letter to me said. She had read two of my books just before the convention, and I happened to be among the speakers. Another was Helen Roseveare, author of *Give Me This Mountain* and other books. Barbara was especially moved by the thought of the cost of declaring God's glory. Her letter told me this story:

Three years after Urbana she married Gerry Fuller, "a wonderful man who demonstrated zeal for Christ, a passion for souls, a beautiful compassion for hurting, broken people who needed to know the healing love of Jesus Christ." Following seminary and student pastorates, he became a prison chaplain and an inner-city missionary. Then he married Barbara and together they worked in Saint John, New Brunswick, with street kids, ex-convicts, and glue-sniffers.

The time came when Barbara saw Gerry seeking the Lord with such great intensity it made her question her own commitment to Christ. Was she prepared to die to self as he was? What was it that drove him to pray as he did—at least once until four in the morning? Was her own love for the Lord as deep as his, or was it perhaps shadowed by her love for her husband?

Gerry had a nephew named Gary, "a quiet guy with an artistic nature and talents that had been

snuffed as a child, leaving him very insecure, undisciplined." He couldn't hold down a job, got in trouble with the law. When relatives consented to his using their vacation cottage, a neighboring cottage was broken into. The owner called Gerry to say that his gun had been taken; Gary was the prime suspect, but they didn't want to call the police until they'd called Gerry.

Gerry was "scared stiff," but knew what he had to do: put his whole trust in God, go to the cottage, try to persuade his nephew to turn himself in. He and Barbara went to bed.

Next morning when they prayed together he asked the Holy Spirit especially to strengthen Barbara in raising little Josh and Ben. Should she go with him to see Gary? She was relieved that his answer was no—"If anything happens to him, the children will need me," was the thought that flashed into her mind.

Gerry said goodbye. Barbara fasted, prayed, cared for the little boys, worked in the garden, waited. All day she waited. He did not come. Oh well, Gerry was always late for everything. No doubt they were deep in conversation. He had tried so often to help Gary. Lord, may he help him now.

At last the sound of a car. Eagerly Barbara looked up from her weeding. It was the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. She froze, then fell to the ground sobbing. Gerry was dead. But looking up at the bewildered faces of her sons, four and two years old, she pulled herself together, took their little hands, and told them Daddy was with Jesus and they wouldn't see him again for a long time. "From that point on there was the sense of being carried through the whole dream-like event. God surrounded me with His presence and an overwhelming sense that 'It's all right.' I knew He was in charge."

The murder was a deliberate act. Gary is serving a life sentence in a penitentiary with some who were led to Christ through Gerry's

witness. They loved Gerry, but for love of his Lord they have forgiven his killer. A number of lives have been changed as a result of his testimony, but "in spite of the good things that came of his death there is always the WHY," Barbara writes. "As you say, we must let God be God. It's hard to explain, though, to a tired three-year-old when he wails, 'I miss Daddy!'"

"One of my greatest blessings and comforts came as a surprise about six weeks after my husband's death when I discovered that I was pregnant with a baby conceived the eve of his homegoing. And how like the Lord and His perfect timing to present me with a beautiful child on Easter Sunday—the girl I had prayed for. Her name is Marah Grace and it is by God's grace that she has made my bitter waters sweet.

"People say I am brave but I don't see any great bravery in walking through one of the difficult experiences of life. God is the One who strengthens us *at the time* for the things we must face. My greatest fear was the fear of losing Gerry, but when the time came God swooped under me as a great bird and carried me on eagle's wings above the storm.

"So that is my story. I wanted to share it with you—I feel somewhat akin to you. My husband went in obedience to God, well aware of the danger, and laid down his life for Christ's sake. My task is to follow that example and to instill in my children the values Gerry and I shared: the supreme value of knowing Jesus Christ and serving Him with our whole selves."

Thank you, dear Barbara, for being one more faithful witness to a wholly faithful and sovereign Lord. Like Jim Elliot, Gerry knew that "he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Like the coastguardsmen, he knew "You have to go out, you don't have to come back."

The Government Is on His Shoulders

The Orthodox Morning Prayer includes this petition: Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all.

I had thought of "all that comes to me" as coming from outside, that is, from the action of others. Today what came to me was the sudden sickening realization that I had forgotten a speaking engagement last night. It was on my calendar but not in my engagement book. I had looked only at the latter.

I did not treat this with peace of soul. The pastor was very gracious when I called.

"God is in control," was his word of comfort.

Yes. He is still there in spite of my inexcusable failures. What destroyed my peace was not only the thought of those I had sinned against—their inconvenience, disappointment, offense—but the thought of *my reputation* for faithfulness. I had to confess that subtle form of pride.

Nothing that comes to me is devoid of divine purpose. In seeking to see the whole with God's eyes, we can find the peace which human events so often destroy. He is the God who is able even to "restore . . . the years which the swarming locust has eaten," (Joel 2:25, RSV) and to turn "the Vale of Trouble into the Gate of Hope" (Hosea 2:15, NEB).

Matthew Henry on Child Training

When I was the newly widowed mother of a fourteen-month-old daughter, my mother sent me this quotation from Matthew Henry, an eighteenth century commentator whom my father had been reading aloud to her that morning in April, 1956:

"Proverbs 19:18, 'Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.' Parents are here cautioned against a foolish indulgence of their children, that are untoward and viciously inclined, and that discover such an ill temper of mind as is not likely to be cured but by severity.

"1. Do not say that it is all in good time to

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correct them, no, as soon as ever there appears a corrupt disposition in them, check it immediately, before it takes root and is hardened into a habit. *Chasten thy son while there is hope*, for perhaps if he be let alone awhile, he will be past hope, and a much greater chastening will not do that which now a less would effect. It is easier plucking up weeds as soon as they spring up, and the bullock that is designed for the yoke should be betimes [before it is too late] accustomed to it. . . .

"2. Do not say that it is a pity to correct them, and, because they cry and beg to be forgiven, you cannot find it in your heart to do it. If the point will be gained without correction, well and good; but it often proves that your forgiving them once, upon a dissembled [pretended] repentance and promise of amendment, does but embolden them to offend again, especially if it be a thing in itself sinful, as lying, swearing, ribaldry, stealing or the like. In such a case put on resolution, *and let not thy soul spare for his crying*. It is better that he should cry under thy rod than under the sword of the magistrate or, which is more fearful, than under divine vengeance."

The language of the eighteenth century sounds a bit stern. We rarely call our children "untoward and viciously inclined," but we see other people's children—in the supermarket, in church, in our own newly decorated living room—who fit that description exactly. Children need a rod, and they need it early. Not a big stick. My parents found that a thin eighteen-inch switch did the trick so long as it was applied at an early age, and immediately following the offense. It is important to note Henry's specifying "a thing sinful in itself." Punishment for such things should be different from correction for childish mistakes—spilled milk (have him clean it up if he's old enough), a forgotten chore (have him do that one plus another he doesn't usually have to do). One grandmother recently told my daughter a method of persuading children to eat what was put before them. When others had finished and a child was dawdling over his plate, she set a timer for five minutes. If the plate was not cleaned it went into the refrigerator to be presented at the beginning of the next meal. "Worked like a charm," she said.

Soup

I'm married to a soup man. Lars would eat soup and/or fish three times a day if I'd feed it to him. The day you read this will likely be an idyllic and balmy day in spring when soup would be the last thing you'd think of serving. Never mind. The day I'm writing this is bleak. Snow has turned to freezing rain, crackling and sending slivers of ice sliding down the windowpane. The sea is battleship gray. The wind shakes the two ragged skeletons of pine which stand between my study window and the breakers. It's a soup day. This one is really a vegetable stew, but we eat it in soup plates with a spoon.

- 1 medium eggplant, cubed
- 2 medium zucchini, cubed
- 5 carrots, thick diagonal chunks
- 3 celery stalks, thickly sliced
- 2 onions, same
- 5 medium potatoes, cubed
- ½ c. vegetable oil, preferably part olive
- 1 tbsp. each of dried basil and parsley, or 3 tbsp. fresh
- ½ tsp. salt

Throw everything into a large heavy pot. Add ½ c. water. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally till carrots are tender-crisp. If you want it soupier, add water (or a can of beef broth or some tomato juice). Serve with lots of Parmesan cheese on top. Serves 4 quite hungry people. Easiest, most delicious lunch or supper.

A Working Mother

"A few years ago," writes a friend, "when faced with some rather large debts, Elaine wanted to earn a little money to help get the family out of the hole. She didn't want to leave the children, so even though her past work experience had been as a high school math teacher and computer programmer for IBM and Sylvania, she opted instead for a paper route! That meant that she had to leave at 3:30 each morning, seven days a week, for a couple of years, to deliver her papers. She was home again before breakfast and before Ed had to leave for work." Bravissima, Elaine!

Small Seminars

We plan to do a one-day writing seminar in Boston on Saturday, October 3. Also on November 18-22 there will be a gathering at Pine Mountain Club Chalets near Atlanta, exclusively for women who in some way are spiritually responsible for helping/teaching others. Enrollment for either of these events will be strictly limited. If interested, please write directly to me, *not to the Newsletter*, at 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia MA 01930. Please give me some idea of why you are interested and should be included.

Prayer Requests

1. In January I began writing a new book. Will you pray that the Lord will help me with it even if I won't tell you what it is?

2. Please use the itinerary to pray along with us as we travel. The Spring Harvest in England brings together many thousands, in tents, "caravans" (trailers), etc.

3. That God will "equip us thoroughly for the doing of His will, and effect in us everything that pleases Him" (Heb 13:21).

Video Cassettes—For those of you who are beyond twelve-inch black and white TV and "into" huge entertainment centers with VCR's, stereophonic sound, and perhaps AromaVision, we have my wife (she's Elisabeth Elliot) on ½ inch VHS, "My Life: An Offering," (3 talks) \$55 for purchase, \$12 for rental, postage included. Order from me: Lars Gren, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia MA 01930.

March/April/May 1987

March 6 Burlington, MA; Fellowship Bible Church, 617-272-2278.

March 13, 14 Poulsbo, WA; Crista Camps and Conferences, 206-697-1212.

March 27, 28 Columbus, OH; Ohio District Council, 614-890-2290.

April 4-17 England; Spring Harvest, Graeme Bunn, 4352-6055

April 24 Birmingham, AL; Mayors' Prayer Breakfast, Jesse E. Miller, 320-6000.

May 1 Berrien Springs, MI; Andrews University, 616-471-7771.

May 2 Flint, MI; Calvary United Methodist Church, 313-238-7685.

May 8 Staten Island, NY; Gateway Cathedral, 718-351-2400.

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