

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

May / June 1983

The Weapon of Prayer

News came one day recently which indicated that a matter I had been praying about had deteriorated rather than improved. What good are my prayers, anyway? I was tempted to ask. Why bother? It's becoming a mere charade. But the words of Jesus occurred in my Bible reading that very morning (and wasn't it a good thing I'd taken time to hear Him?): "If you, bad as you are, know how to give your children what is good for them, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him!" (Mt 7:11, New English Bible).

Are you as often tempted as I am to doubt the effectiveness of prayer? But Jesus prayed. He told us to pray. We can be sure that the answer will come, and it will be good. If it is not exactly what we expected, chances are we were not asking for quite the right thing. Our heavenly Father hears the prayer, but wants to give us bread rather than stones.

Prayer is a weapon. Paul speaks of the "weapons we wield" in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. They are "not merely human, but divinely potent to demolish strongholds." The source of my doubts about its potency that morning was certainly not the Holy Spirit. It was the unholy spirit, the Destroyer himself, urging me to quit using the weapon he fears so intensely.

*Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

An Old Prayer

Christians in the Orthodox Church use a prayer called the Jesus Prayer. Sometimes they pray it in the rhythm of breathing, learning in this way almost to "pray without ceasing." The words are simple, but they cover everything we need to ask for ourselves and others: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.

The Lord did not say we should not use repetition. He said we should not use vain repetition. A prayer prayed from the heart of the child to the Father is never vain.

The Very Reverend Kenneth R. Waldron, a priest of both the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and of the Anglican Church, wrote to me of his having had surgery. "The last moment of consciousness before the anaesthetic took over, I heard my surgeon repeating in a whisper: HOSPODI POMILUY, HOSPODI POMILUY, HOSPODI POMILUY [Dr. Waldron put the Russian words into phonetic spelling]—Lord, have mercy on us. . . . It is wonderful to drift off into unconsciousness hearing these words on the lips of the man whose hands you trust to bring you out of your troubles. It is great to have a surgeon who knows how to pray at such a time. Think of the comfort and help that this simple prayer has brought to thousands through the years, a prayer that was a big help to me in January 1982. Some of my hospital friends thought they would not see me alive again, but the good Lord had a bit more work for this old priest to do."

The Jesus Prayer was one my husband Add and

I often used together when he was dying of cancer and we seemed to have "used up" all the other prayers. I recommend it to you.

A Note to Fathers

Are you depriving your son of his sonship? "Hey! Hold it. What...?" Hebrews 12:7 says, "Can anyone be a son who is not disciplined by his father? If you escape the discipline in which all sons share, you must be bastards and no true sons." Do you love your son or daughter enough to say no—and *hold to it*? Would you, by cowardliness that fears to make a rule (perhaps because "nobody else" believes in it), treat your child as though you cared no more about him than you would care about a bastard?

But there are some words of caution. "Fathers, don't over-correct your children, or make it difficult for them to obey the commandment. Bring them up with Christian teaching in Christian discipline." (Eph 6:4, J.B. Phillips)

This reminds me of the way in which the Lord teaches us. He is so patient with us who are such "fools and slow-of-heart." The Shepherd does not make it hard for the sheep to walk in the right paths. He is always trying to make it easier for them, but they balk, they wander off, they don't listen. Children as well as adults are like sheep. They go astray. Fathers are meant to be shepherds. Don't over-correct. "You fathers must not goad your children to resentment, but give them the instruction, and the correction, which belong to a Christian upbringing" (same verse, New English Bible). It's balance that is needed. Correct them, teach them. Don't go to extremes. Ask God for wisdom. It's too big a job for any ordinary human being. Look at God as a Father. How does He deal with us? Try to follow His pattern.

A Note to Mothers

If you have small children, you have the toughest, most demanding, exhausting, consuming job in the world. You need help! Watching my daughter Valerie with her three children shows

me that keeping them happily occupied while she does her necessary housework is no small matter. Have you thought of giving even tiny children *work* to do? It doesn't have to be all play. They can learn very early to do small tasks: put away the silverware, store paper bags when you come home from grocery shopping, empty waste paper baskets, pick up toys and clothes and put them where they belong, straighten shoes on the closet floors, wipe baseboards with a damp rag, sweep under the radiators with a small dustbrush, pick up sticks from the lawn, take everything out of a drawer or shelf so that you can clean it, then put it back. Of course you can do it better and faster. But if you patiently show a child how to do these things and then patiently (!) let him do them, he will: 1) learn to work, 2) be taught responsibility, 3) have the pleasure of being useful, 4) learn that actions have consequences, 5) feel himself an important member of the household, 6) know he is needed, 7) enjoy cooperating with mother, and 8) be busy. A few weeks or months of patience on your part, provided you start early enough, will result in an ordered home, where each person contributes to the others' happiness as a matter of course. I think most parents are way behind their children's development—in other words, they are saying, "Oh, he's not old enough for that. He can't understand that yet," when the truth is the child is well able to understand and perform much better than his parents give him credit for. I've seen evidence of this on occasions when I have taken care of other people's children. They've done for me (simply because they saw that I expected it) what they "could not" do for their parents (because they knew that the parents did not expect it). This lesson is one the Indian mothers taught me years ago in the jungle. Survival demanded that children take far more responsibility than is ever required of them in our country. They did it. They did it without complaint or protest of any kind. They took care of baby brothers and sisters, went hunting or fishing or gather-

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ing food when food was needed, crossed rivers, climbed steep hills, made their way on rugged and muddy trails, built fires, carried water. It was expected. Children generally live up to expectations. Expect them to be helpless—they will be.

How Can I Say Thanks?

Wonderful letters have come from many of you, expressing appreciation for the newsletter. "Who'd want to read an Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter?" I had asked, and you've cheered me immensely. Sometimes writing seems like dropping pebbles down a gopher hole—"disappeared without a trace." But if a gopher pops up now and then, you know a pebble touched. Thank you, from my heart. A lady in Florida said she would love to hear about Valerie and the other families of the men killed in Ecuador in 1956. "We still have the *Life* magazine from January of that year," she said.

The epilogue to the 25th-anniversary edition of my book *Through Gates of Splendor* includes recent news and photographs of the families.

Valerie is now twenty-eight, wife of Walter D. Shepard, Jr., pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Laurel, Mississippi. They have three children. Five-year-old Walter told me last summer that the thing he wanted more than anything else in the world was "to be a good brother." Elisabeth, at age three, is direct, decisive, and daring. Shortly after her third birthday she climbed behind the wheel of a large van, turned the ignition key, shifted from "park" to "drive," and drove down a steep hill. Val and a friend watched (helplessly) but prayed (effectively). "He shall give His angels charge over thee . . ." Those assigned to Elisabeth must be specially nimble and attentive. There was very minor damage to the van, none at all to Elisabeth or to the two children who were passengers. One of them was Christiana, Elisabeth's six-month-old sister. The other was a seven-year-old boy who had gotten into the van to talk to Elisabeth. A recent phone call from Val reported that Christiana is now walking and trying very hard, with long sentences in original gibberish and with much intonation and body language, to talk. She was a year old on December 29.

Where in the World Shall I Go?

People often ask me how to investigate possibilities for Christian service, in this country or overseas. Do you know about Intercristo? It is an organization specializing in Christian careers—all vocations, all locations, thousands of openings available now. Call Intercristo toll-free, 800-426-1342. Tell them you read about their organization here.

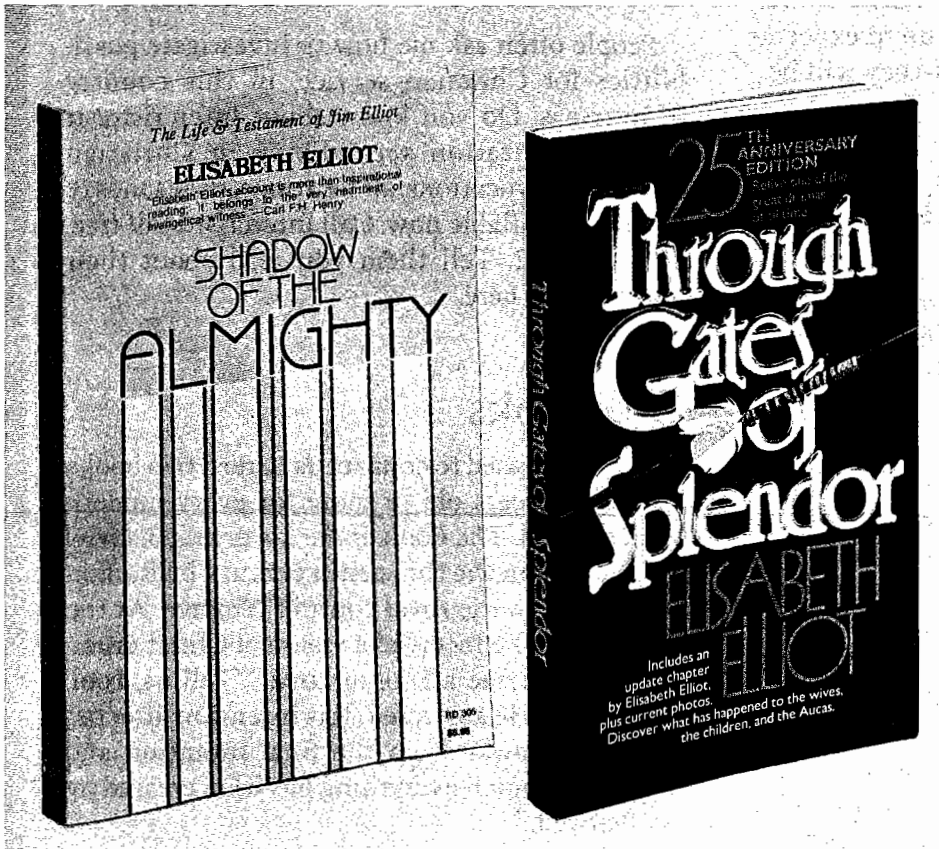
Old Books

My father used to counsel us to read two books a hundred years old or more for every modern book we read. *The Book of the Lover and Beloved* was written in the thirteenth century by Ramon Lull, a page in the royal court of Majorca. At the age of thirty he received a vision of Christ crucified, and became a *Fool of Love*. "Tell us, Fool, what is sin?" He answered, "It is intention directed and turned away from the final Intention and Reason for which everything has been created by my Beloved."

From The Imitation of Christ (attributed to Thomas à Kempis): "He that is not always ready to suffer, and to stand fully at the will of his beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover; for it behoveth a lover to suffer gladly all hard and bitter things for his beloved and not to decline from his love for any contrarious thing that may befall him." (Book III, chap. VI)

Prayer Requests

- Pray for Christians who face costly moral decisions, for example, a judge who, because he stands against abortion, or a minister who, because he will not agree to women's ordination, may be "defrocked." Ask God to give them wisdom, humility, and courage. (Acts 4:29)
- Pray for the unemployed who need and want work—that God will enable them to find it, and, until they do, to learn new lessons in trusting him. (Mt 6:31-34)



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. \$9.95

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: May-July

May 10 Olivet Nazarene College, Kankakee, Illinois.

May 20-22 Women's Retreat, Mrs. C.A. Tomkins, Jr., 5785 E. Camino del Celador, Tucson, Arizona.

June 3-4 Women's Retreat, Betty Jones, 605 Rosewood Cres., Thunder Bay, Ontario.

July 1-4 Montreat, North Carolina, Covenant Fellowship of Presbyterians, 704-669-2911.

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

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