

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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What Kind of Power Do Women Want?

"Today's women are the victims of the second biggest con game in history. (The first was when the serpent persuaded Eve she needed to upgrade her lifestyle and become 'like God')." So writes Mary Pride, in her new book *The Way Home (Beyond Feminism—Back to Sanity)*. Mrs. Pride's credentials are awesome—she has a B.A. in electrical engineering, an M.A. in computer systems engineering, has studied theology, and is the mother of three children, whom she is teaching at home. Her conversion to Christianity from the religion [her word] of radical feminism brought a complete change in her perspective.

Not long ago I was asked to speak to a group of 150 pastors' wives. I found that 80 percent of them are working full-time. The consensus among Christians nowadays seems to be that careers for women are not only permissible but to be encouraged. Few are prepared to stand up to the pressures of society and reject the lifestyle of their neighbors.

But why should we? We shouldn't, unless there is a radically different pattern laid down for us in scripture. As disciples of Jesus we are bound by whatever his word tells us, and, although not many women pay much attention to them anymore, the New Testament pattern for women compromises at least eleven responsibilities:

1. faithful marriage
2. the care of children
3. hospitality
4. washing the feet of God's people

5. supporting those in distress (these five are from 1 Tm 5:10)

6. presiding over a home (1 Tm 5:14)

7. reverence in bearing

8. not scandal-mongers

9. not slaves to drink

10. setting a high standard

11. schooling younger women to be loving wives and mothers, temperate, chaste, kind, to stay home, and to respect the authority of their husbands. (Ti 2:3-4)

A careful and prayerful study of this pattern will give a different shape to our lives than that which society is pressing on us. If we study it and ask the Lord how we are to line up with it, most of us will find that it's a full-time job. Women who have no children, or whose children have grown up, often think they are free to do anything that strikes their fancy—something "creative," getting a degree, a job, a facelift, learning computer programming, macrame, French cooking, going on a cruise, building a gazebo. Am I saying that those things are *sinful*? Not in themselves. I am saying that they may be indulgences, because they may leave no time for obedience to God's pattern of women's work. They may make it impossible for us to be available as spiritual mothers. A mother is *available*—to do what needs to be done. If you are one of those who work, you are thankful for the one mother on your block who is available because she has stayed home. Your children can play in her yard.

"Are you kidding?" I hear some readers say. "In the 1980s you're telling us women shouldn't work?" I didn't write the list. Is it an impossibility? Before we say that it is, let's quietly ponder the sort of work the list includes and the sort of

women who would do such work. Imagine the effect in our world if we would be obedient. Have we the freedom to ignore this pattern simply because it's (odious word!) "traditional?"

Dr. Mildred Jefferson is a black physician who came from a poor family in east Texas. She speaks out very courageously against the idea of mothers working and putting their children in day-care centers. When challenged with the usual question, What about economic necessity? she smiles and asks, "Let's look at this 'necessity.' Just what are these needs which are so much greater than the need of the child for his mother?"

Your Heavenly Father knows what you need. "Necessity" is highly relative, isn't it? One woman's necessity is another's luxury. Talk over your needs with God. Face the question honestly. If money is really needed, perhaps He will show you a way to make some without leaving home. Shirley Eichenberger's book, *Mother's Day Out*, tells how God answered prayer along that line. (Orders can be sent to Box 25024, Corporate Woods, Overland Park, KA 66225)

An editorial in *Christian Century* in October, 1982, says that the real issue for women is power. The author quotes Henry Adams' *Democracy*, the story (written in 1880!) of a beautiful, brilliant woman who moved to Washington D.C. "Here, then, was the explanation of her restlessness, discontent, ambition—call it what you will. It was the feeling of a passenger on an ocean steamer whose mind will not rest until he has been in the engine room and talked with the engineer. She wanted . . . to touch with her own hand the massive machinery of society. . . . What she wanted was POWER."

Jeremiah the prophet wrote, "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not" (Jer 45:5). Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). Are there some women with ears to hear this message? May God help us each one to answer his call.

*Lord, do Thou turn me all into love,
and all my love into obedience,
and let my obedience be
without interruption.*

(Quoted by Amy Carmichael)

My Spiritual Mother

Katherine Morgan has been a missionary in Pasto, Colombia, for fifty years. She has been a friend of mine for thirty-four of those years and has done for me what Paul said Onesiphorus did for him: refreshed me often. Katherine's husband died when they had been married only six years, but she carried on their missionary work and reared their four little girls. To Katherine I owe more than I can ever tell. She more or less booted me to Ecuador. I was a missionary candidate without a field, didn't know quite how to find one, talked to her, and within months found myself in Quito. She had had me in her home many weekends, giving me previews of coming attractions—what not to expect from "supporters," what to expect from them, what to expect from Ecuadorians and from jungle Indians, what to take (a sense of humor, for one thing), what not to take (a sense of smell, a trunkful of inhibitions and Plymouth Brethren prejudices, an inflated idea of my own importance, and the notion that people are longing to hear the gospel). At times all of us—her daughters were in junior high and high school then—would be nearly rolling on the floor with laughter. One evening we had a hat show. Katherine had come home from a missionary meeting with a shopping bag full of hats that a lady told her the Lord had "laid on my heart to give to the missionaries."

She called me this morning from Pennsylvania where she is visiting a daughter. She just wanted to chat while it's still easy to chat, since she'll be going back to Colombia in a few weeks. Asking about a mutual friend who has been in the hospital, she told me to tell her to jump up and praise the Lord. She mentioned a gift sent to her which had been designated for a retired missionary. "Me—retired? I haven't even thought of retiring." She sent it back. We talked about "travailing" for people who have fallen away from

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the Lord. I reminded her of 2 Corinthians 4, the passage about bearing "death in our bodies" in order that life may work in others. Yes, she agreed, that's in the Bible, all right, but she couldn't think of herself in that way—"I'm too cheerful"—even though I happen to know she has suffered many kinds of death for the sake of other people (and has had her own life threatened a number of times, including being stoned and doused with gasoline more than once).

Dear Katherine! "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Hers has been an elixir for me. She's one of those who bring forth fruit in old age—though she'd hit me for suggesting she's anywhere near that category. May God make me like her.

How Annoyances May Be Vanquished

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian has a conversation with three women in the House Beautiful: Piety, Prudence, and Charity. He describes his journey and the reasons for it. Prudence questions him about temptation to dwell on the past.

"Can you remember by what means you find your annoyances at times as if they were vanquished?"

"Yes," says Christian, "when I think what I saw at the Cross, that will do it; and when I look upon my brodered coat,* that will do it; and when I look into the Roll* that I carry in my bosom, that will do it; and when my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going, that will do it."

"And what is it makes you so desirous to go to Mount Zion?"

"Why, there I hope to see Him alive that did hang dead on the Cross; and there I hope to be rid of all those things, that, to this day, are in me an annoyance to me; there they say there is no death,

*and tells of meeting Three Shining Ones at the foot of the Cross who give him a "brodered" coat (the righteousness of Christ) and a Roll (the Scriptures).

and there I shall dwell with such company as I like best. For, to tell you truth, I love Him, because I was by Him eased of my burden. And I am weary of my inward sickness; I would fain be where I shall die no more, and with the company that shall continually cry, Holy! holy! holy!"

A Child's Prayer

I had already written the suggestion for prayer for one's children's future spouses when I received a letter from my son-in-law. "Your grandchildren are terrific. Christiana [who is three] was swept away by a wedding witnessed in Louisiana. Lying beside her last night when putting her to bed I asked, 'What'd you like best about the wedding?' She thought . . . then said, 'The blue girls.' Then, in an awed whisper, 'When I get big, Daddy, I want to be a mama and get *married!*' Her little face just beamed. I said, 'Well, we'll have to pray that the Lord grows you up to be a big girl who marries the right Christian man.' And she said, very quickly, 'Pray now!' So we did!"

Prayer Requests

- Katherine Morgan told me that when her daughters were born, she began to pray for the mothers of the men they would marry. I had never thought of such a prayer, but I recommend it to you mothers of young children. Probably your children's spouses are growing up now, too. Will their mothers (and fathers) do a good and faithful job as parents? What a difference it will make in the homes your children establish if they do! (Katherine told me that if God had given her leave to go all over the world and personally pick out her sons-in-law, she could not have picked better men than those the Lord gave her. God answers prayer.)

For Our Children

Father, hear us, we are praying,
Hear the words our hearts are saying,
We are praying for our children.
Keep them from the powers of evil,
From the secret, hidden peril,
From the whirlpool that would suck them,
From the treacherous quicksand pluck them.
From the worldling's hollow gladness,
From the sting of faithless sadness,
Holy Father, save our children.
Through life's troubled waters steer them,
Through life's bitter battle cheer them,
Father, Father, be Thou near them.
Read the language of our longing,
Read the wordless pleadings thronging,
Holy Father, for our children.
*And wherever they may bide,
Lead them Home at eventide.*
(From *Toward Jerusalem*, Amy Carmichael)

Four Ways God Answers Prayer

1. No, that's not the best for you.
 2. No, not yet.
 3. Yes, I thought you'd never ask.
 4. Yes, and there is much more.
- (from Linda Schuck, Phoenix)

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Servant Ministries, Inc.
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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107

Travel Schedule May/November 1985

May 17-19 Seattle, Washington, Bethany Community Church, Bruce Howell, 206-524-9000

June 10-14 Hickory Corners, Michigan, Gull Lake Bible Conference, Mrs. Slighly, 616-671-5155

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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