

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

May/June 1990

ISSN 8756-1336

## Chronicle of a Soul

I kept a five year diary from high school through college, and began spiritual journals during my senior year in college (1948) which I continue to keep. These are chronicles of growth, mental, emotional, and spiritual. It is astounding to go back through them and learn things I had completely forgotten. It is wonderfully faith-strengthening to see that indeed "all the way my Savior leads me," hears my prayers, supplies my needs, teaches me of Himself. As God said to Israel, "Thou shalt *remember* all the way which the Lord thy God led these forty years in the wilderness." My memory is poor. A journal is a record of His faithfulness (and my own faithlessness too—which teaches me to value His grace and mercy). If you decide to begin recording your pilgrimage, buy yourself a notebook (or one of those pretty flowered cloth-bound blank books available in gift and stationery stores) and begin to put down (not necessarily every day):

1. Lessons learned from your reading of Scripture. (If you put these in a journal instead of marking up your Bible, you will find new things each time you read the Bible instead of reading it through the grid of old notes. Worth a try?)

2. Ways in which you intend to apply those lessons in your own life. (Reading your journal later will reveal answers to prayer you would otherwise have overlooked.)

3. Dialogues with the Lord. What you say to Him, what He seems to be saying to you about some problem or issue or need.

4. Quotations from your spiritual reading other than the Bible.

5. Prayers from the words of hymns which you want to make your own.

6. Reasons for thanksgiving. (Caution: when you get into the habit of recording these the list gets out of hand!)

7. Things you're praying about. You might choose to have a separate notebook for this, or an "appendix" in another section of the same book—date on which a prayer was prayed; date on which answered, with space for *how* the answer came in some cases. If you have a family, I would strongly urge you as a family to keep a prayer notebook together. This will help everybody first of all to learn to *pray* about *everything*, instead of merely talking or worrying or arguing. It will also help you to be specific, to hold your requests before the Lord together, and then to note the answers and give thanks together (especially when the answers weren't the ones you were looking for).

As George MacDonald wrote, "No gift unrecognized as coming from God is at its own best: therefore many things that God would gladly give us, things even that we need because we are, must wait until we ask for them, that we may know whence they come: when in all gifts we find Him, then in Him we shall find all things."

"Where I found Truth, there found I my God, the Truth itself, which since I learnt, I have not forgotten. . . . Too late I loved Thee, O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! too late I loved Thee! And behold, Thou wert within, and I abroad, and there I searched for Thee. . . Thou calledst, and shoutedst, and burstest my deafness. Thou flashedst, shonest, and scatteredst my blindness. Thou breathedst odors, and I *drew in breath* and *pant for Thee*. I tasted, and *hunger and thirst*. Thou touchedst me, and I burned for Thy peace." *Confessions*, St. Augustine (*italics his*).

## Mail

An unsigned letter came from a man in Atlanta who says he had written me a three-page letter last year: "If a person, male or female, digs deep to share with you, it seems to me that a reply, no matter how brief, would certainly be appropriate."

Lars says, "The alarm goes off at 4:50 a.m., breakfast at 8, lunch at noon, dinner at 6, bed about 8:30. You're saying, 'Gee, that's exciting.' For variety we hear the weather and news while dressing, walk nearly two miles every afternoon, E. tunes in a talkshow sometimes while she fixes dinner (the TV is a 12-incher that sits on the counter). We have no VCR, no answering service. Our 'staff' is a neighbor lady who types and a live-in student who does anything we ask that can fit into his seminary schedule. This is life in Strawberry Cove, and we enjoy it. When I think of what my wife accomplishes it amazes me. She has five major things besides me to think about each day: book (current work-in-progress), correspondence, Newsletter, radio, and next year's speaking schedule. In order for her to do this, I try to cover the telephone. People are sometimes surprised to hear me instead of someone saying, 'One moment please, I'll see if they're in.' I arrange travel, send out book and tape orders, sweep up the floor and vacuum the rugs. Whatever errands there might be I do in the afternoons. By far the greatest burden on E. has been the mail, because she has always felt that every person deserves an answer. Now it has gotten out of hand with radio mail, even though a lot of this is answered by the Gateway to Joy people in Lincoln. Mail that comes here we always read and answer. 'Possum,' as I sometimes call my wife, is a sensitive person, so when the above-quoted letter arrived I didn't want to read it to her because it's not true. The man's first letter may never have reached us. This happens sometimes when mail is sent to publishers, but had the man put his name and address on this one, surely he would have had a reply and more than likely I'd have sent one of E's books or tapes as a peace offering or as throwing a hat into the ring.

"Don't feel bad for our lack of social life, and not being up on sitcoms! When we travel, which we do about a third of the time, our life is turned

upside-down, with non-stop gracious entertainment given to us, and lots of people to meet and talk to, and this we do appreciate and enjoy. 'The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places.' Thank you for your encouragement and prayers for us."

And may I (E.) add first, that Lars doesn't mention *most* of the work he does, and second, that when I can't answer every letter, I do indeed *read* them and *pray* over them. I can't be Ann Landers or King Solomon, but when questions come which I can respond to, and think are of general interest, I'll continue to try from time to time to answer here. Will you still keep praying for me? Will you still offer the cheering word now and again?

## The Absence of Feeling in the Devotional Life

"I am sporadic in my devotions," writes a Newsletter reader (who happens to be my daughter!), "though I am up pretty regularly by 5:30 a.m. There are many mornings when my mind and heart are too dull and cold to learn of Him."

Here's part of what I wrote to her: It is in the total absence of feeling that our faith is most faithful and most accurately gauged—if we go on getting up early, putting ourselves faithfully before the Lord whether we feel like it or not, even "just going through the motions," when we know that the deepest desire of our hearts is to know and love the Lord. He knows that deepest desire, and I can look back over the years, remember my own hopelessness and helplessness to drum up any very spiritual feelings when I thought I should have them, and I can see that God was at work all the time, loving me, hearing my cry, shaping me into His image, in spite of my terrible failures and faithlessness. Oh, if you knew how I've repented of my own failures toward you—things I did and things I failed to

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do that I can't bear to think about now, yet God has been merciful, has proved His mercy a thousand times over.

Spiritual writers of long ago have helped me, for example, St. Francis de Sales: "Should you find neither delight nor consolation in meditation, do not be disheartened, but have recourse occasionally to vocal prayer (as opposed to mental or silent), tell your trouble to the Lord, confess your unworthiness, and say with Jacob, 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me,' or with the Canaanitish woman, 'Yea, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.' . . . Do not be disheartened, however great your dryness, only continue to present yourself devoutly before God. How many courtiers daily appear before their sovereign without a hope of speaking with him, content to be seen by him and offer their homage? So we must pray purely and simply in order to do homage to God and show our faithfulness." (Introduction to the Devout Life)

## Feeling Good about Doing Bad

Charles Krauthammer wrote an essay (*Time*, Feb. 5, 1990) about the state of education in this country. I want to jump up and down, yell BRAVISSIMO!, and shout it from the housetops. Americans, he said, did worst of six countries who gave a standardized math test to 13-year-olds. Koreans did best, but when asked to respond to the statement, "I am good at mathematics," Koreans came in last, Americans first.

This is what the self-esteem curriculum has done for our children. Feelings, not results, have become the focus. The notion of "inclusion," an ideology "masquerading as education and aspiring to psychotherapy . . . demands outright lying." Not all groups in America have contributed to the development of all aspects of our society. "There is little to be said, for example, about the Asian-American contribution to basketball . . . or the contribution of women to the Bill of Rights."

We may learn to feel good about ourselves, but we won't be educated. The way to true self-esteem, Krauthammer tells us, is through *real achievement* and *real learning*. If we do not insist on this, our schools will continue to "do

bad, for which feeling good, no matter how relentlessly taught, is no antidote."

Need I add a warning about what "self-esteem" and "inclusiveness" have done to Christian thinking?

## The Shepards

Readers do ask about my daughter and her family and many of you have told me you pray for them, especially Colleen who has a form of epilepsy. She is doing well on phenobarbitol—no seizures since, but they are concerned about recent news that this drug can damage children's brain cells. Two readers have sent suggestions about alternate treatments. Thank you! Allergies (to wheat, sugar, certain fruits, eggs, and more) trouble several of the children. Val is very conscientious about trying to feed her family on nourishing, sensible, economical foods (which isn't easy, as you mothers know), and is sometimes distressed about health problems, wondering what she's doing wrong. Last time I visited them I noted three (3) kinds of milk on the table because of allergies—goat, cow, and soy. It's a complicated world.



At back, Walter III, 12; next row, Evangeline, 1; Elisabeth, 10; Christiana, 7; Jim, 5; Valerie; Walter D. Shepard Jr.; Colleen, 3

## Note from Lars

Greetings and thanks from Lars for your good response for Hungarian printing funds.

Here's the address again in case some meant to contribute and forgot. (We don't mean to say, "Thank you and how about another gift?")

Grace Church, 3021 Blume Dr., Los Alamitos, CA 90720, Attn: Bob Kingsbury. **DO NOT SEND YOUR CHECK TO THE NEWSLETTER**

## Recommended Reading

Mary Wilder Tileston: *Joy and Strength*. (World Wide Publications, Minneapolis, hardback \$8.95, pb \$5.95). A real treasure of daily readings: Scripture, hymns, poetry, and quotations from many authors. Here's a sample (some of you won't be surprised that I'd choose this one):

### Do It At Once

"No unwelcome tasks become any the less unwelcome by putting them off till tomorrow. It is only when they are behind us and done that we begin to find that there is a sweetness to be tasted afterwards, and that the remembrance of unwelcome duties unhesitatingly done is welcome and pleasant. Accomplished, they are full of blessing, there is a smile on their faces as they leave us. Undone, they stand threatening and disturbing our tranquility, and hindering our communion with God. If there be lying before you any bit of work from which you shrink, go straight up to it and do it at once. The only way to get rid of it is to do it." (Alexander Maclaren, born 1826)

## Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? *Don't forget to send us your change of address.* The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. *Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to:* The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107.

## Travel Schedule, May-July 1990

**May 7** Minneapolis, MN; Marie Sandvik Center, (612)870-9617.

**May 17, 18** Albany, GA; women's seminar, Dr. Wm. Eidenire, (912)436-6612.

**May 19** Huntsville, AL; Whitesburg Baptist Church.

**May 20** Morrow, GA; Clayton Community Church.

**May 23** Collingswood, NJ; Women Alive, Dot Worth, (609)858-6750.

**June 4** Ottawa, Ontario; Ottawa Christian Counselling Service, Roger C. Moyer, (613) 729-8454.

**June 11** Virginia Beach, VA; TV appearance on CBN.

**June 18-21** Beverly Farms, MA; Howard family reunion.

**June 22** Topsham, ME; commencement, Servants of the Cross School, (207)725-7577.

**July 7** Anaheim, CA; Pacific Coast Conference of Free Methodists; missions banquet, (213) 822-8094.

**July 17, 18** Muskegon, MI; Maranatha Bible Conference, women's day, (616)798-2161.

**July 29** East Middlebury, VT; (802)388-4267.

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