

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

May / June 1991

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The War

Four days before the deadline that President Bush had given Saddam Hussein my morning reading fell in I Kings 8. These verses held particular significance as I wondered what would happen: "When your people . . . have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people." I wondered if we, with all the power and prestige which our nation enjoys, might one day suffer a tremendous defeat. God allowed His people Israel to suffer in all kinds of ways. We know little of suffering as a nation.

Solomon was kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven as he prayed. Then he stood and blessed the whole assembly in a loud voice, praised the Lord that not one word of all the promises He had given through Moses had failed, prayed that the people's hearts might be turned to Him, and ended with these words: "But your hearts must be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."

Hearts are committed *one at a time*. Is it hard to believe that the Lord takes account of a single heart fully given over to Him? I'm tempted to doubt that, yet I believe we'll see in heaven the literally world-changing effects of individual, hidden obedience. Might some choice you or I make today reverberate in what God brings about tomorrow—even in the decision of some military commander, the results of some sortie, the machinations of Saddam Hussein's mind? Why should it be thought a thing impossible? Doesn't *everything*, every breath we take, every smallest task we do, every briefest prayer, every atom of every created thing, matter to God? To us who bear His name has been revealed the mystery hidden for ages and generations, "His secret plan for the nations. And the secret is simply this: Christ *in you!* Yes, Christ *in you*, bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come" (Col 1:26,27).

Each one of us has a part to play. Solomon had his part. He prayed, and expected God to heed what he said, "And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other."

A glorious victory, an ignominious defeat—which will it be? Beware of supposing that He is more interested in a godless democracy than He is in an Islamic dictatorship.

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The above was written early in January. In His wisdom and mercy God granted us a stunning victory. Let us not suppose that we deserved it. Let us humble ourselves and pray for the tens of thousands whose terrible suffering continues. Only He knows what will best bring about the coming of His kingdom. For this the Church has always prayed: *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*

Afraid?

Hundreds of times in Scripture we are told not to be afraid. How can we help it? If someone we love is in danger, if awful possibilities constantly present themselves, what are we to do? The psalmist gives the answer: "When I am afraid, I will trust in you" (Ps 56:3). He brings the two conflicting powers, emotion and will, into a single verse. He's a realist. He does not deny the feeling, but he doesn't let that govern his life either, or drain the energy God gives for his work. He feels one thing, he does another. He applies the antidote. I think the best way to do that is simply to offer up to the Lord each fear as it arises, and pray for grace to go on peacefully doing the work He has given us to do. How often we've dreaded things which never happen—an awful waste of time—and even when they did happen we've found what we had *not* expected, the all-sufficient grace to help us. Won't that same grace be there for people we love too? Doesn't God love them much more

than we do? Offer them to Him as well.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Is 41:10, NIV).

A Tiny Treasure in Heaven

Last December I spent two weeks in a hotel within walking distance of my daughter Valerie's home in Mission Viejo, California. This gave me the chance to have uninterrupted writing time for mornings and early afternoons, then spend the rest of the day with her family. Four of the children thought it a wonderful lark to spend a night in the hotel with me (one of the six is too young, one too old). What pleasure for me to watch and listen and savor the marvel of each dear unfolding personality.

Early on the morning of December 4 as Jim (6) and Colleen (4) were still sleeping the sleep of the carefree and innocent (how utterly relaxed little children can be!) I was going over various matters with the Lord. Finding myself a bit anxious about a few of them, I turned to Philippians 4:5-7: "The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Copying the words into my journal helps me to obey them on the spot so that's what I did. At seven o'clock Val called. Could I come over as soon as possible? She needed to see her doctor. We lost no time.

Later that morning when she and Walt came home I saw that she was crying. The baby she was carrying (perhaps in her fourth month) had died. Two days later, following the agonies of induced labor (much worse than I had imagined), she gave birth to a tiny girl whom they named Joy. I held her in my hand—perfectly formed, the fingers and toes about the size of hyphens. I could not help but think of the millions of babies this size who have been purposefully destroyed and cast out as "hospital waste."

The Shepard family grieved. There was no question that Joy was one of God's little lambs. The children hung a tiny stocking on the mantelpiece along with theirs. They now have a new treasure in heaven, known and loved and cared for by the Lord. Someday they will know her too. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be." Walt and Valerie found peace in the only

place it is to be found—acceptance—and were greatly comforted by the words of Philippians 3:10, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."

Those last six words embody, I think, what Jesus meant when He said His followers must take up the cross. Other translations: "growing conformity with his death," "reproducing the pattern of his death," "even to die as he died." How did He die? In utter self-abandonment to the Father's will. Valerie was also comforted, she told me, by the reading for that day, December 5, in *Joy and Strength* (World Wide Publications, Minneapolis 1986): "Whatever thy grief or trouble be, take every drop in thy cup from the hand of Almighty God. He with whom 'the hairs of thy head are all numbered,' knoweth every throb of thy brow, each hardly drawn breath, each shoot of pain, each beating of the fevered pulse, each sinking of the aching heart. Receive, then, what are trials to *thee*, not in the main only, but one by one, from His all-loving hands; thank His love for each; unite each with the sufferings of thy Redeemer; pray that He will thereby hallow them to thee. Thou wilt not know now what He thereby will work in thee; yet, day by day, shalt thou receive the impress of the likeness of the ever-blessed Son, and in thee, too, while thou knowest it not, God shall be glorified" (E.B. Pusey).

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A plastic model of an unborn baby at eleven weeks is worth more than a thousand words. You can obtain one for \$1.50 (or 25 for \$2.30), along with a card explaining what a child that size can do, by writing to Project "Young One," 2125 W. Lawn Ave., Racine, WI 53405.

Let's Do Lunch!

Many letters come from young women longing for help from an old one. I pray that there will be more older

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women making themselves available for this. Kathy Drown (daughter of Nate Saint, one of the men killed in Ecuador in 1956) wrote to me of an idea some of you will want to follow.

"In California I invited a group of gals my age (41!) over for a salad bar lunch. Their ticket in the door was a bottle of salad dressing (from their refig.) and one question for an older woman, written out on a 3x5 card. I chose Mom [Marj Saint VanDerPuy] and one other woman in her sixties to answer the questions as I read them. We did the same thing here [Kathy lives in Asheville, NC now] recently. The response only convinced me more that few women my age know of older women to whom they can turn for spiritual counsel, and long for it. The Scriptures say we are to learn from older women! Valerie and I are so blessed to have mothers like you and my dear Mom."

Thank you, dear Kathy. I thank God for young women who *want* help and open their ears to hear!

Let Me Guide A Little Child

Dear Lord, I do not ask
That Thou shouldst give me some high
work of Thine,
Some noble calling, or some wondrous task.
Give me a little hand to hold in mine.
Give me a little child to point the way
Over the strange, sweet path that leads to Thee.
Give me a little voice to teach to pray,
Give me the shining eyes Thy face to see.
The only crown I ask, dear Lord, to wear
Is this: that I may teach a little child.
I do not ask that I may ever stand
Among the wise, the worthy, or the great;
I only ask that softly, hand in hand,
A child and I may enter at the Gate.
(Source unknown—help, please?)

How Much Should Children Work?

"I have four boys, ages sixteen months through nine years. When I ask them to empty the dishwasher the oldest often says it's my job. I feel they need to learn to work and help around the house, but why? I'd like a specific *reason* why he should have to do it. I have

nothing against big families, but isn't it possible that older kids have to do a lot of work because Mom keeps having babies and can't handle it all? I often feel guilty. Don't children deserve a childhood?"

Good questions. Let me begin with the last. The idea that a child deserves to play *rather* than work is a mistake. Play is a natural part of childhood and so is work. It better be. I think I read that we learn half of all we'll ever know in the first two years! Watch a child who is given a piece of real work that he can do. He is even happier than when at play. When I phoned Valerie last Saturday she was cooking up fifteen meals to put in the freezer (that's 15 x 8). She had her six-year-old putting carrots through the food processor and he was having a ball.

Now the first question. *Why* should they help? Try something like this: "Because you are a working member of this family, for a start. The only one who isn't is the baby. I'm your mother and one of my most important jobs is to teach you to work. I can cook, you can't, but you can empty the dishwasher, so that's your job. The Bible says if a person won't work he can't eat. I'll cook for you, you clean up for me. Doesn't that make sense?"

Teach children the *joy* of work by your own example. Let them see that you don't hate it. Give *everybody* a real responsibility, starting early. Two-year-olds can empty waste baskets, set the table, pick up toys and put them away, put silverware in the drawer (provide a step stool), hang up their own clothes, help fold diapers, sharpen pencils. Time in teaching is very well spent. Caution: words of encouragement should be the *only* rewards offered for routine work. Money or special treats deliver a message you don't want to deliver: working is beyond the call of duty.

A New "Auca" Story

People often want to know what the "other four Ecuador widows" are up to. The youngest of them, Olive Fleming Liefeld, has written a book, *Unfolding Destinies: The Untold Story of Peter Fleming and the Auca Mission*, published by Zondervan. She writes candidly about her confusing and sometimes stormy courtship, her brief marriage and missionary experience, Pete's death by spearing, and her recent visit to the Aucas (now called Waorani) with second husband Walter Liefeld, a professor at Trinity Seminary.

Prayer

Thank God for Colleen's having had no seizures and no medicine since last July. We trust it is a complete healing.

Thank God for three engagements in answer to prayers. It is always heartening to see young women who do not put themselves forward and young men who are willing to receive the woman God chooses.

Thank you for praying for me. I'm sure it matters more than you or I know.

Pray for refugees in many parts of the world. Try to picture what it's like.

Pray for Saddam Hussein and other Arab leaders. We do not know what is best for the world. God does. May we be faithful cooperators by prayer.

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 - August 1991

May 6 West Bridgewater, MA; New England Baptist Church.

May 16 Rochester, NY; Mars Hill Broadcasting Co. banquet; Gordon Bell, (315) 469-5051.

May 17 Syracuse, NY; radio banquet, same sponsorship as Rochester.

May 27-29 taping for Gateway to Joy.

May 31 Deerfield, IL; Allies for Faith and Renewal conference; Kathy Ernsting, (313) 994-0907.

June 29, 30 Mt. Union, PA; Christian Festival, "Creation '91", (609) 654-8068.

July 30 Cullowhee, NC; Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship, Leonard H. Bullock, (404) 244-0740.

August 2, 3 Riverside, CA; California Baptist Guild, Frances Anderson, (714) 689-5771.

Tapes

The Search for Significance, Security, Serenity—3 talks, 2 tapes, \$9 postpaid. DO NOT ORDER FROM NEWSLETTER. Address: TAPES, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia MA 01930.

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