

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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An Overflowing Cup

"The Lord is gracious and compassionate.... good to all.... faithful to all his promises.... loving toward all he has made.... righteous in all his ways.... near to all who call on him.... watches over all who love him.... My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord" (from Psalm 145).

As the year dwindles my heart swells. How to express the joy and gratitude for daily evidence of all the above? I thank God for all the saints whose lives have demonstrated to me what it means to be a Christian. In April Dr. May Powell died at age ninety-five. She had joined Amy Carmichael in her work in India in 1924, helping to build up the new medical work and then, when Amma was injured, becoming co-leader with her of the Dohnavur Fellowship. After Amma's death in 1951 the responsibility of leader fell to Dr. Powell. Eventually, she returned to England to care for two older sisters. Following their death she continued to serve the Lord she loved, always available to many who needed her prayers and her counsel.

I visited her in England in 1983 when I was working on *A Chance to Die*, the biography of Amy Carmichael. She had given me specific instructions by phone as to train, taxi, and finding the residential home where she lived. She was waiting at the door, very tiny and erect, very cheerful and direct, reminding me at once (but in appearance *only*) of the old lady in "Beverly Hillbillies!"

"So you're Elisabeth. Come in. Do you know the word loo? (I did—British nickname for toilet.) Yes. There's the loo. There's your room. Tea at the top of these stairs in twenty minutes." Up the stairs she went with great energy. Her room was not much more than a cell. A narrow cot, a small table with the teakettle, cups and biscuits all ready on a neat cloth, two chairs. A short bookshelf on the wall. Half of the books were Amy Carmichael's. I had my notebook in hand.

"What would you like to know?" she asked. There wasn't time for nearly all my questions, but in those hours I knew that I had been with a very great woman,

one of God's hidden ones whose strength lies in nothing explainable by personality or heredity, but in Him who is Rock, Fortress, and Might, who is, "in the darkness drear their one true light," whose distant song of triumph steals on our ears sometimes and makes our hearts brave again and our arms strong. Praise to God for such living flames of His love.

And then there are my parents, both of whom are also with the Lord, but with whom I feel that I have been living again during the past year as I worked on a book about the shaping of one Christian family. Studying minutely their letters and diaries, rereading the autobiography Mother wrote for us children, poring over the pictures, ransacking my memory and the memories of my brothers and sister, I have often paused and said, "Thank You," to Him who gave us such parents and such a home. I have also been solemnly aware of the weight of responsibility that is laid upon us because "to whomsoever much is given much is required."

As an editor my father spent his life reading other people's writings and never thought of writing a book. Three collections of his short writings were published in book form, however, one entitled *New Every Morning* (published by Zondervan in 1969, now out of print). Here's the title piece, an exercise in thanksgiving, and a glimpse of the man he was. I think you'll see why I'm thankful for such a father:

"Blessings taken for granted are often forgotten. Yet our Heavenly Father 'daily loadeth us with benefits' (Ps 68:19). Think of some of the common things which are nevertheless wonderful:

"—the intricate, delicate mechanism of the lungs steadily and silently taking in fresh air eighteen to twenty times a minute;

"—the untiring heart, pumping great quantities of clean blood through the labyrinth of blood vessels;

"—the constant body temperature, normally varying less than one degree;

"—the atmospheric temperature, varying widely it is true, but never so much as to destroy human and animal life;

"—the orderly succession of day and night, spring,

summer, autumn, and winter, so that, with few exceptions, man can make his plans accordingly;

“—the great variety of foods, from the farm, the field, the forest, and the sea, to suit our differing desires and physical needs;

“—the beauties of each day—the morning star and growing light of sunrise, the white clouds of afternoon, the soft tints of a peaceful sunset, and the glory of the starry heavens;

“—the symphony of early morning bird songs, ranging from the unmusical trill of the chipping sparrow to the lilting ecstasy of the goldfinch and the calm, rich, bell-like tones of the wood and hermit thrushes;

“—the refreshment that sleep brings;

“—the simple joys of home—the children’s laughter and whimsical remarks, happy times around the table, the love and understanding of husband and wife, and the harmony of voices raised together in praise to God.

“All these and many others come from the bountiful hand of Him ‘who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s’ (Ps 103:4,5).

“‘It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness’ (Lam 3:22,23).

“‘It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High’ (Ps 92:1).”

What Legacy Do You Leave?

In October 1971 I wrote to my mother, “Do me a favor, please. Go out and buy yourself a smallish loose-leaf notebook (5" x 8" or so) and start writing an autobiography. Put down, as they come to mind, all memories of your relatives, where and how they lived, what they wore; Monmouth [Maine, where Mother’s family spent the summer], what you did, how you lived; smells, sounds, sights, menus, clothes; your houses in Germantown [Pennsylvania], your dog Teddy; what furniture you remember, how an ordinary day was spent, what happened when cars came in and horses went out; your mother’s death [when Mother was twelve], the funeral, life immediately afterwards. . . . Do this at your leisure, but do it for us. It will be a priceless document. Using a loose-leaf notebook, putting one vignette to a page, you can insert things chronologically

as they come to mind. Will you? Please?”

She did. She spent ten years on that notebook, pasting in pictures, answering my questions, writing colorfully and humorously. It is a priceless document of a life that spanned the incredibly rapid progress from the horse-and-buggy to the moon walk, from gas lamps to electronics. And, of course, it reveals the woman she was, her growing up, her conversion, engagement, marriage; her love for my father, her mother-heart poured out for the six of us. It is an inestimable legacy. I urge you, of whatever age, married or single, to give some thought to what you might wish to leave to anyone who happens to care. A silver teaspoon or a golf trophy might matter to some, but the testimony of a relative, even a distant one, who loved God is likely to matter much more. Why not make a beginning—on paper or on tape?

A Christmas Reflection

I have been thinking about the ways in which God has revealed Himself to man. Here are a few:

There was a walk in a garden.

A place of safety in a flood.

A smoking firepot and a flaming torch.

A ram in a thicket.

A ladder crowded with angels.

A fire in a bush.

The death angel.

Smoke on a mountain, thunder, lightning, earthquakes.

Stone tables of His law.

Pillars of cloud and fire.

Blood sacrifices.

Miracles of deliverance.

His Word spoken through His prophets.

The still small voice.

...And the little baby born in the barn.

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The Word was God. And the Word became a human being and lived among us. We saw his splendor, the splendor as of a father's only son. Radiance of the glory of God, flawless expression of the nature of God, himself the upholding principle of all that is (Jn 1:1,14; Heb 1:3, JBP).

"They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes, and lift them high;
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry."
(George MacDonald)

A Straw or a Thunderbolt

"If you love Him... you will offer Him the whole use of your day, as you open your eyes to the light of each morning, to be spent in active service or silent suffering, according to His good pleasure. You will not select the most agreeable task, but *His* task, whatever it may be; you will not disdain humble service, or be ambitious for distinguished service; you will lie, like a straw, on the current of His will, to be swept away and forgotten, if it pleases Him, or to be caught up by His mighty hand and transformed thereby into a thunderbolt." (Elizabeth Prentiss, 1818-1878)

Note from Lars

Let's see. How is it that you get on the right side of folks? How to get response to letters? Ah yes—red and blue underlining, triple exclamation marks, a few stars and stripes, and you know now what's coming. You think I'm about to ask you for _____. No, not at all. We are just grateful to all of you for the good support you've given the Newsletter this past year. It is not in the red.

Not only that, but we have, with your help, continued to mail the Newsletter overseas and to everyone who cannot afford to subscribe. My one appeal, though, is—if you want to continue on the mailing list, please return the first renewal notice card—the blue one—and that will save time and money for the staff in Ann Arbor.

It's not often that I would say that I'm jumping for joy, and greeting you with *A Midenható Árnýékában and Győztensen A Gyöngykapun Át*. Are you shaking your head, wondering if Mr. Elliot III has flipped his lid? Not

at all. If you are Hungarian, you'll understand the above as being the titles, *Shadow of the Almighty* and *Through Gates of Splendor*. Why the joy over that? Remember when I asked for donations to a printing project in Hungary? Many of you contributed. If any thought I had run off with the money, I didn't. I've received sample copies, and been informed that ten thousand copies were printed and are being distributed. Just to let you know the kind of man we have in Hungary, the cost of printing the books was two dollars each, but he is selling them for one dollar. (The economics of this is not recommended for everyone!)

So—a hearty thank you to all of you who helped. Now I may get like those appeal letters referred to above, and say, "If you want to be part of the next project, *Passion and Purity* is now ready for printing in Hungary but not all the funds have been collected. If you're interested, tax deductible contributions may be sent to:

Grace Church
3021 Blume Drive
Los Alamitos, CA 90720

Be sure to mark the check or include a note that it is for the Hungarian Printing Project."

Thank you too for all your good comments and letters. As some of you know, by the card you received from me, Elisabeth is not able to keep up with answering *all* letters, especially since the beginning of the radio program. Some of you have written with requests of our "staff." Just so you know, in Strawberry Cove, *I are it*, and enjoy immensely being "the staff," although as Elisabeth mentioned, Andy helps with manual work and Shirley types.

Identification problems still exist. This year someone at the book table gave me a check made out to Jim and Elisabeth Elliot. So I just became Jim long enough to endorse it.

Trust y'all will have a thankful Thanksgiving and a peaceful Christmas.

I know
that when the stress has grown too strong,
Thou wilt be there;

I know
that though the waiting seems so long,
Thou hearest prayer.

I know that through the crash of falling worlds
Thou holdest me;
I know that life and death and all are Thine,
Eternally!

(Janet Erskine Stuart)

Praise for

- The lesson of pain, caused by a fall. This has meant some unplanned days of rest, "a deeper experience of the power of Christ" (2 Cor 12:9, JBP) and a new appreciation of health. (All was completely mended long before you received this letter.)

- Help in finishing a book.
- Those who make it possible for Lars and me to do what we do—Andy Tisdale who lives with us; Shirley Welt who types our letters; Stephanie Giba of Servant Publications who does so much to put this letter into your hands; the folks at Back to the Bible who handle my radio program.

- All who pray for us.

Pray for

- Wisdom to say yes or no to many requests.
- God's messages as I speak, e.g., at the student conference in Nairobi December 27 - January 2.
- As I officially turn OLD (65 on December 21)—that there be no "subtle love of softening things, easy choices, weakenings" (a prayer from Amy Carmichael which I've prayed for many years). "The path of the just... shineth more and more unto the Perfect Day." What a promise! What a prospect is drawing daily nearer! I love the thought.

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 November - January 1992

November 8-10 Jackson, MS; First Presbyterian Church.

November 23 Ellicott, MD; Chapelgate Presbyterian Church.

December 27 Nairobi.

January 21-24 Wheaton College, IL; spring special services, Dr. Stephen Kellough, (708) 260-5087.

January 24,25 Anniston, AL; Faith Presbyterian Church, Rev. Frank Erdman, (205) 238-8721 or 236-4499.

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