

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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## Sunday Morning

Sunday mornings can be a real test of a mother's sanctification, especially if her husband happens to be a pastor who leaves the house much earlier than the rest of the family. Here's how it went recently in one house (you're free to speculate on whose):

The fifteen-year-old couldn't tuck his shirt in because of "something to do with the pockets," and his belt was too small.

The thirteen-year-old was having trouble curling her hair.

The ten-year-old couldn't find her Sunday School lesson.

The eight-year-old hadn't done his Bible readings because he didn't know which they were.

The six-year-old's room and closet were unacceptably messy, and the socks she had on were muddy.

The three-year-old couldn't find her Bible. Although not yet a reader, she couldn't think of going to church without the Bible.

The baby's carrying blanket had disappeared.

Somehow the mother was to be nicely groomed, calm, and able to get this whole package into a van, belted and seated as law requires, and drive them to church on time.

But everything in this scene is the King's Business, which He looks on in loving sympathy and understanding, for, as Von Hugel said, "The chain of cause and effect which makes up human life, is bisected at every point by a vertical line relating us and all we do to God." *This* is what He has given us to do, this task here on this earth, not the task we aspired to do, but this one. The absurdities involved cut us down to size. The great discrepancy between what we envisioned and what we've got force us to be *real*. And God is our great Reality, more real than the realest of earthly conditions, an unchanging Reality. It is His providence that has put us where we are. It's where we belong. It is for us to receive it—all of it—humbly, quietly, thankfully.

Sunday morning, the Lord's Day, can be the very time when everything seems so utterly unrelated to the world of the spirit that it is simply ridiculous. Yet to the Lord's

lovers it is only a *seeming*. Everything is an affair of the spirit. Everything, to one who loves God and longs with a sometimes desperate longing for a draught of Living Water, a single touch of His hand, a quiet word—everything, I say, can be seen in His perspective. Does He watch? Yes, "Thou God seest me" (Gn 16:3, KJV). Is His love surrounding us? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3, KJV). "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5, KJV). May I offer to Him my feeling of the dislocation between reality and my ideals, that great chasm which separates the person I long to be, the work I long to do for Him, the family I struggle to perfect for His glory—from the actuality? I may indeed, for it is God Himself who stirs my heart to desire, and *He* can easily see across the chasm. He enfolds all of it, He is at work in me and in those I pray for, "to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13, KJV). I may take heart, send up an instant look of gratitude, and—well, get that beloved flock into the van and head down the freeway singing!

Sir Thomas Browne wrote, "Man is incurably amphibious; he belongs to two worlds—to two sets of duties, needs, and satisfactions—to the Visible or This World, and to the Invisible or Other World" (*Essays and Addresses*, 2nd series).

## Are Christmas Trees OK?

My father-in-law, Dad Elliot, was one of those mentioned in Romans 14:5 who consider every day alike. He was pretty consistent about this when it came to Christmas and Easter, but he did consider Sunday (the Lord's Day to him), different from the other six days in the week. Since he believed that Christmas trees had a pagan origin he could see no sense in having one in a Christian home. I don't think he actually forbade it, but certainly he didn't help decorate it.

I've had a few letters asking me if I "believed in" Christmas trees. Never thought about believing in them, but I do enjoy having one. Celebration and ceremony have characterized the life of the people of God since Old Testament times—even in very little ways. I always put flowers and candles on the dinner table if possible. Though there are usually just two of us, I try to make it

an occasion. It's worth observing. Less frequent occasions are marked more specially. The virgin's veil, a measured pace, a ring—these are visible signs of the deeply solemn reality celebrated in a wedding. Pink ribbons, showers, silver cups mark a baby's birth. My Norwegian husband's birthday calls for a *bløtkake*, a layered cream cake soaked with all sorts of good stuff that I wouldn't fuss with except on September 9.

I don't think we need to rule out everything pagans do or did just because they did them. Christians have the only real reason for celebrating Christmas (or Easter). Why shouldn't we *invest* an ancient custom with a Christian meaning? It's the birthday of the King! What would you not do to make your house festive if He were coming? Ought we not to signal the good tidings with great joy?

### *Be Honest with God*

Since God knows our thoughts even before we think them, isn't it absurd of us to hesitate to tell Him the straight truth about ourselves? When we feel we ought to try to cover our spiritual nakedness it is good for us to open up Psalm 139: "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.... You perceive my thoughts from afar.... You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord.... You created my inmost being" (Ps 139:1-4, 13, NIV).

There are times when I hesitate even to pray, knowing how far short I fall from God's standard.

George MacDonald writes:

If I felt my heart as hard as a stone; if I did not love God, or man, or woman, or little child, I would yet say to God in my heart, "O God, see how I trust Thee, because Thou art perfect, and not changeable like me. I do not love Thee. I love nobody. I am not even sorry for it. Thou seest how much I need Thee to come close to me, to put Thy arm round me, to say to me, *my child*; for the worse my state, the greater my need of my Father who loves me. Come to me, and my day will dawn; my love will come back, and oh! how I shall love Thee, my God! and know that my love is Thy love, my blessedness Thy being."

We may pray the prayer that closes Psalm 139, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23-24, NIV).

"Be persuaded, timid soul," writes Fenelon, "that He has loved you too much to cease loving you."

### *My Favorite Christmas Poem*

It's been six years since this was printed in the Newsletter. Time for a repeat. I know of no more beautiful expression of the radical self-immolation of the Incarnation. It's by Richard Crashaw, seventeenth century poet:

That the Great Angel-blinding light should shrink  
His blaze to shine in a poor shepherd's eye;  
That the unmeasur'd God so low should sinke,  
As Pris'ner in a few poor rags to lye,  
That from His Mother's breast He milke should drinke,  
Who feeds with Nectar Heaven's faire family,  
That a vile Manger His low Bed should prove,  
Who in a Throne of stars Thunders above;  
That He whom the Sun serves, should faintly peepe  
Through clouds of Infant Flesh! That He, the old  
Eternall Word should be a Child, and weepe;  
That He who made the fire, should fear the cold,  
That Heaven's high Majesty His Court should keepe  
In a clay cottage, by each blast control'd;  
That Glorie's self should serve our Griefs and feares,  
And free Eternity submit to years,  
Let our overwhelming wonder be.

(Did you get all that? Please read it at least one more time, and *think* about it. Meditate. Worship.)

### *Addition*

Astrid Dobbs tells me that the May/June Newsletter quoted only half of Klara Munkres' poem. Thank you, Astrid. Here's the rest:

Warm all the kitchen with Thy love  
and light it with Thy peace.  
Forgive me all my worry,  
and make my grumbling cease.  
Thou who didst love to give men food,  
in room or by the sea,  
Accept this service that I do,  
I do it unto Thee.

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## A Word from Lars

Remember the old Maytag ad—the lonely repairman sitting, staring at the telephone, no work orders coming in? Now, I'm not complainin', but because of your generosity and help my responsibility for the Newsletter is on a par with the repairman. Another year is coming to an end with expenses covered, so that I don't have to send out plea letters, but can give you all a hearty and resounding thanks.

Sometimes, thinking of work, if I mailed out the 12,000 copies of the Newsletter, it would take me a *while*, and possibly wear the tip of my tongue down lickin' stamps. Good thing it's done by a mailing firm using a postage meter. The increase in mailings has been steady over the years, and I hope it'll continue. I'm pleased that so many find the Newsletter helpful. I've told Elisabeth she can do the swan song in twenty years or so. My only word of exhortation is to please mail back the renewal card a.s.a.p. (if you want to stay on the mailing list). Of course most of you are doing this very thing. It's the people who come to me at a meeting someplace and say, "Oh, Elisabeth's not doing her newsletter anymore!" to whom I say, "Oh yes she is, but you didn't send in the renewal card." It's not the money that determines whether you stay on, it's checking the box and sending the card in.

Our plans are to be at Strawberry Cove for Christmas, where the experience is one of peace, tranquillity (except when I get upset), and simplicity. Hope you'll also experience some of this (without getting upset) at your place and with your family.

(Lars dictates the above, and I try to put it down just as he says it. He didn't really say "twenty," though, he said "twunnie," as any Mississippi boy would, but I wasn't sure y'all would understand that—though folks who say "y'all" certainly would have! EE)

## Prayer

O Lord Jesus, when Thou rewardest the saints, remember, we beseech Thee, for good, those who have surrounded us with holy influences, borne with us, forgiven us, sacrificed themselves for us, loved us; nor forget any, nor forget us; but in that day shew us Thy mercy. Amen. — Christina Rosetti

(The prayers I include in the Newsletter are really intended not merely to be read—"Oh, isn't that a nice one!"—but *prayed*. It helps us to use the words of others sometimes, don't you think? They say just what we want to say, but so much more beautifully than we can.)

## Books by Elisabeth Elliot

- Through Gates of Splendor* The story of five missionaries killed in Ecuador by Auca Indians in 1956. \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- Shadow of the Almighty* The life of Jim Elliot, including personal journals and letters, his love story, his missionary preparation and experience. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- The Savage My Kinsman* Photographs and text describing a year spent with the Aucas of Ecuador. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- No Graven Image* A novel probing the question of God's sovereignty. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- These Strange Ashes* A missionary's first year, touching on the questions of apparent failure and loss. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- The Liberty of Obedience* On Christian maturity and service; what a Christian is "allowed" to do. \$4.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- Let Me Be a Woman* Notes for Valerie on what it means to be a woman, single, married, or widowed. trade paper \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
mass market paper \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- Love Has a Price Tag* Short essays, many topics. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- The Journals of Jim Elliot* The making of a 20th century disciple; intimate and nearly unabridged. \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- The Mark of a Man* Notes for Pete on the responsibilities assigned to men by God; the meaning of masculinity. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- Discipline: The Glad Surrender* What it means to accept Christ's lordship in one's body, mind, emotions, etc. \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- Passion and Purity* A true love story, illustrating principles by which to preserve "the gift you give once," virginity. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- A Lamp for My Feet* Meditations from my quiet time. \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- A Chance to Die: The Life and Legacy of Amy Carmichael* \$13.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- Loneliness* A book for all who are human. \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- On Asking God Why* The mystery of suffering and other essays. \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- All That Was Ever Ours* Collection of various essays. \$11.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- A Path through Suffering* God's love and our pain. \$9.00 \_\_\_\_\_
- God's Guidance: A Slow and Certain Light* \$8.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed: (postage free) \_\_\_\_\_

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Magnolia, MA 01930

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### *Recommended Reading*

Pamela Reeve's two little books, most *beautifully* illustrated with colored photographs: *Parables of the Forest*, and *Parables of the Sea*, Multnomah Press, \$5.95/each. These are true spiritual classics, setting forth the universal principle of life out of death, which is Lesson I in learning the meaning of the Cross of Jesus.

### *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 1992–March 1993*

**November 4** Hatfield, PA; Biblical Theological Seminary, (215) 368-5000.

**November 6-8** Asheville, NC; The Cove, Donald Bailey, (704) 298-2092.

**November 11-13** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

**November 17** West Medway, MA; Sue May, (508) 528-6576.

**December 3-4** Sturbridge, MA; Association of Christian Schools, (717) 854-4904.

**December 11-13** Rhineland, MN; Advanced Training Institute of America, Staff Retreat.

**December 29** Washington, D.C.; Ambassadors for Christ, Chinese Mission '92; Dave Tang, (717) 687-8564.

**January 4-6** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

**January 12** Laguna Hills, CA; Calvary Chapel; Peggy Estrada, (714) 770-6038, office (714) 770-7650.

**January 16** Valley Center, CA; Community Church; Nancy Meador, (619) 741-7218, office (619) 749-1127.

**January 25** Jacksonville, TX; Jacksonville College, (214) 586-2518.

**January 29-30** Boston, MA; Evangelistic Association of New England, (617) 229-1990.

**February 5-6** Broomall, PA; Covenant Fellowship, (215) 359-1180.

**February 12** (snow date, February 19) Plymouth, NH; Crisis Pregnancy Center, (603) 536-2111.

**February 24-28** Olympic and Kitsap peninsulas, WA; Mrs. Neil Smith, (206) 683-8448.

**March 13** Chattanooga, TN; Woodland Park Baptist Church; Debra Martin, (615) 899-9185, home (615) 894-0216.

**March 22-24** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

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