

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

September/October 1985

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How to Discover What God Wants

A young woman came in great perplexity to a Scottish preacher, asking how she could resolve the question of her own desires when they seemed to be in such contradiction to the will of God. He took out a slip of paper, wrote two words on it, handed it to her with the request that she sit down for ten minutes, ponder the words, cross out one of them, and bring the slip back to him. She sat down and read: *No Lord*. Which to cross out? It did not take her long to see that if she was saying *No* she could not say *Lord*, and if she wanted to call Him *Lord*, she could not say *No*.

No question comes up more often among Christian young people who face what seem to be limitless options than this one of how to discover what God wants them to do. What, exactly, is one's calling?

There are two very simple conditions to discovering the will of God. Paul states them clearly in his letter to the Romans, chapter 12. The first is in verse 1 (Jerusalem Bible): "... offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God." The place to start is by putting yourself utterly and unconditionally at God's disposal. You say *Yes Lord*. You turn over all the rights at the very beginning. Once that's settled you can go on to the second, in verse 2: "Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modelled by your new mind." I said that the conditions were simple. I did not say they were easy. Exchanging a *No Lord* for a *Yes Lord* has often been painful for me. But I do want a "new mind"—one that takes its cues from the Word of God, not the mass media. I pray for a clear eye to see through the fog of popular opinion, and a will strong enough to withstand the currents—a will surrendered, laid

alongside Christ's. He is my model. This means a different set of ambitions, a different definition of happiness, a different standard of judgment altogether. Behavior will change, and very likely it will change enough to make me appear rather odd—but then my Master was thought very odd.

Paul goes on to say that these conditions are "the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do." No wonder we scratch our heads and ask, "What is the secret of knowing the will of God?" We haven't started at the right place—the offering of that all-inclusive sacrifice, our very bodies, and then the resolute refusal of the world's values.

"Make Thy paths known to me, O Lord; teach me Thy ways. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me; Thou art God my Savior." (Ps 25:4, 5 NEB)

When we cannot see our way
Let us trust and still obey;
He who bids us forward go
Cannot fail the way to show.
Though the sea be deep and wide,
Though a passage seem denied,
Fearless let us still proceed,
Since the Lord vouchsafes to lead. (Anon.)

"If there is any man who fears the Lord, he shall be shown the path that he should choose" (Ps 25:12 NEB).

Disposable Children

A ruling of the Internal Revenue Service now allows parents a tax exemption if a child intended for abortion lives for any length of time. The breathtakingly fancy mental footwork necessary to justify such action goes something like

this: what was meant to be discarded is not a child. It is called a "p.o.c." (product of conception, which of course is what children and all the rest of us are). The bad news is that this disposable tissue, this mere scrap of Kleenex, turned out to be a child and (alas) was *born*. The good news is that you can get a tax exemption for a dependent child. The best news is that its dependence is only temporary. Call it a child, then, till you get your money. You need not go to the trouble of keeping it. You can call it tissue again and toss it out. Thus the abortionist's mistake becomes the taxpayer's windfall, and the doctor who orders the child abandoned (i.e., killed by neglect and sometimes by active means) is not charged with murder but paid for what is now called a post-natal abortion. Now will you stand up against the outrage called "pro-choice"? Now do you understand its implications? "Because they have not seen fit to acknowledge God, he has given them up to their own depraved reason. This leads them to break all the rules of conduct. They are filled with every kind of injustice, mischief, rapacity, and malice. . . . They are without natural affection and without pity" (Romans 1:28, 29, 31 NEB).

Letters

From Washington state: "I have felt in my heart since seventh grade that above all else I want to follow God. It might be hard or scary, but what better place to be than in God's arms when the road gets bumpy and dark? Thank you for encouraging me in this commitment."

From the midwest came a long letter, telling me the story of many ups and downs, off agains, on agains, with a certain man. "I read your book *Passion and Purity*, and vowed I would be that way . . . For the last nine months of our relationship we had intercourse. I knew it was wrong and felt guilty about it but I loved him and wanted to be with him . . . Suddenly he ups and decides to drop me and everything he ever had in Christ. How I wish I could change what I've done. I feel so

ashamed and foolish. Angry at him because I feel betrayed and used. I was so vulnerable, so trusting, and he just booted me right out of his life. . . . I've begun reading your book all over again. This 'lovelife' of mine has certainly been a 'crucial battleground.' . . . I feel so unclean, so impure, for having given away something so precious to someone so undeserving."

The warnings in my book were not enough. Perhaps the warnings in this young woman's letter—the voice of sad experience, authentic, all too familiar—will be enough to keep some reader out of bed till God gives him/her in marriage to the one of his choice. Virginity is the *gift you only give once*.

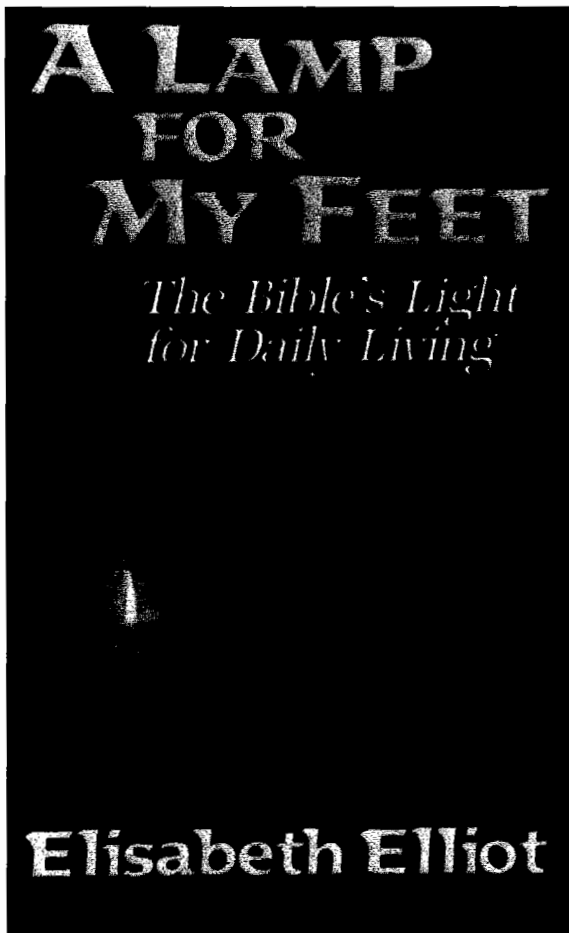
"A friend recommended *Passion and Purity*. I refused to read it at first, thinking a book with a title like that could only have been written by a thirteenth century nun or something! But the Holy Spirit was faithful to convict. It changed my heart and started me on a potato-chip syndrome through your books (i.e., I couldn't stop after just one)."

A Diet that Works

As you know, Lars and I travel often and eat out often. I have to work hard at keeping my weight down. I've found a diet that works. I didn't need to see a doctor for permission or a prescription. I never count calories. I don't require special foods. I need not embarrass a hostess by refusing items on her menu. The diet costs me nothing but a certain measure of self-denial. Want the secret? Send your check for whatever you think the secret is worth to you—no, don't send me any checks. I'd be arrested. Just read the next newsletter. I'll give away my secret.

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A New Book

In August, *A Lamp For My Feet: The Bible's Light for Daily Living* was published by Servant Publications of Ann Arbor, Michigan. It is a collection of short scriptural meditations written in my "quiet time." It may be ordered in hardcover at \$9.95 by writing to *The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter*. For a contribution of \$15.00 or more you will receive a copy of the book plus an additional year of the newsletter.

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Printer's Error: In the May/June Newsletter, column one, page 1, *compromises* should have been *comprises*. The New Testament never compromises responsibilities!

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What's Happened to Grandmothers?

In the dim and distant past, when life's tempo wasn't fast,
Grandma used to rock and knit, crochet, tat, and babysit.
When the kids were in a jam, they could always count on Gram.
In an age of gracious living, Grandma was the gal for giving.

Grandma now is at the gym, exercising to keep slim;
She's off touring with the bunch, taking clients out to lunch,
Driving north to ski or curl—all her days are in a whirl.
Nothing seems to stop or block her, now that Grandma's off her rocker.
(Sent by a reader who didn't know the source. Can anyone identify it?)

Prayer

For all who have no intercessor,
For all who are at present in agony, extreme necessity, or affliction,
For all who are attempting any good work which will bring glory to the name of God or some great good to the Church,
For all who have ever been offended by me in either word or deed.
(abridged from Lancelot Andrewes' *Private Devotions*)

Free us, dear Lord, from the root of all evil—the love of money. Free us from the love of status symbols (in what we eat, wear, drive, watch, read, drink), from affectation in any form, and from the lust to possess and to impress. Make us content to receive what You have given. Deliver us from arrogating to ourselves what is not given. May it be the habit of our lives to be thankful for what we have rather than to complain about what we have not, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Train up a Child

Boswell tells how when Samuel Johnson was still a child in petticoats, his mother put a prayer book into his hands, pointed out the collect for the day, and said, "Sam, you must get this by heart." She went upstairs, leaving him to study it. By the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. "What's the matter?" she said. "I can say it," he replied and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

Was he a genius at that age? Perhaps. But I think it more likely that his intellectual powers owed much to his parents' expectation and patient instruction. Expect little and you'll surely get it.

Travel Schedule

September 1985/ January 1986

September 27, 28

Gardiner, Maine, Women of Christ Church.
Mrs. Newell D. 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 15

Rockville, Indiana, Fellowship of Christian
Athletes. Jack Roberts, 816-921-0909.

October 18-20

St. Simons Island, Georgia. Mrs. Barbara
Murphy, 904-253-7327.

November 1, 2

New York City, Hephzibah House. Mrs. John
Ewald, 212-787-6150.

November 7

Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard Chris-
tian Colloquium, 45 Francis Ave., Cambridge,
Massachusetts 02138.

November 16

Madison, Wisconsin, Real Women Seminar.
Marita Menard, 40 Oak Creek Trail, Madison,
Wisconsin 53717.

November 22

Cambridge, Massachusetts, Campus Crusade
for Christ, Massachusetts Institute of
Technology.

December 6

Raleigh, North Carolina, Pregnancy Life Care
Center. Melinda Delahoyde, 919-847-9715.

January 12, 1986

Chicago Sunday Evening Club, 5 P.M. WTTW,
Channel 11.

January 13, 14

Auburn, Alabama, Covenant Presbyterian
Church.

January 23-25

Lincoln, Nebraska, Baptist Student Union.
Brett Yohn, 402-483-1451.

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