

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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Lord, Please Remove the Dilemma

Because my husband is a Norwegian who would happily eat fish three times a day if I'd give it to him (I seldom do), I often have fishheads and fishbones to discard. I don't like the noise the disposal makes if I put them in there, so I fire them out the window onto the grass. A prompt and thorough garbage service is provided free of charge by the seven resident crows who materialize out of nowhere (nine minutes is the maximum time it has taken them to detect my offerings). Recently I watched one of them attempt to stuff all the pieces into his beak before his buddies realized I had spread them a feast. He carefully picked up everything except one long backbone. Here was a dilemma. How was he to handle (is *beakle* a better word?) the backbone without dropping the beakful he already had? Solemnly he surveyed the scene, stepped slowly around the bone and cogitated. So everything is done by instinct, is it? I don't believe it. He was reasoning. He made a decision. He dropped the smaller pieces, grasped the bone right in the middle and raised it. Too unwieldy. More cogitation. Then, delicately, he lifted one end of the backbone, bent it around and picked up the other end. Now, holding both ends in his beak he succeeded somehow (I couldn't for the life of me see exactly how) in gathering all but a few small bits and flew off, triumphant, to relish his find in solitude.

Is there anyone reading this who is not faced with a perplexity of some sort? Some of you face serious dilemmas. We want to pray, "Lord, please remove the dilemma." Usually the answer is "No, not right away." We must face it, pray over it, think about it, wait on the Lord, make a choice. Sometimes it is an excruciating choice.

St. Augustine said, "The very pleasures of human life men acquire by difficulties." There are times when the

entire arrangement of our existence is disrupted and we long then for just one *ordinary* day—seeing our ordinary life as greatly desirable, even wonderful, in the light of the terrible disruption that has taken place. Difficulty opens our eyes to pleasures we had taken for granted. I recall one of the times my husband Add was released from the hospital when he had cancer. I did not suppose he was cured, but just having him at home once more was all I asked for that day. I set the table in the dining room with candlelight as I always did for dinner. I had fixed his favorite meal—steak, baked potato, salad, my homebaked apple pie. As he bowed his head to give thanks in the usual way I had a sudden urge to do something very unusual—to drop to the floor and clutch his hands and sing "Let us break bread together on our knees." I didn't do it. Things proceeded in the ordinary way, but there was a new radiance about them simply because we had been deprived for a while, and knew we would soon be deprived again, probably permanently.

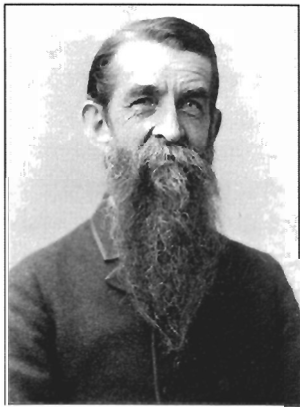
Paul said he had been "very thoroughly initiated into the human lot with all its ups and downs" (Phil 4:12, NEB). He was hard-pressed, bewildered, persecuted, and struck down. God in His mercy did not choose to remove the dilemmas with which he was faced (some of His greatest mercies are His refusals), but chose instead to make Himself known to Paul *because* of them, in ways which would strengthen his faith and make him a strengthener and an instrument of peace to the rest of us. Hard-pressed he was, but not hemmed in—God promised none of us would ever be tempted beyond our power to endure. Bewildered he was, but *never* at wit's end—God promised wisdom to those who ask for it. Persecuted, but he never had to "stand it alone"—God promised His unfailing presence, all the days of our lives. Struck down, Paul was not left to die, though some of his rescues were ignominious in the extreme—the great apostle, let down over a wall in a basket, and on another occasion making it to land on a chunk of flotsam! Hardly the means he would have envisioned God's using to fulfil His promises. But on

second thought, why not? The absurdity of it all does us good. Life is absurd—on the surface of things—but every bit of it is planned, as Paul goes on to say:

“It is for your sake that all things are ordered, so that, as the abounding grace of God is shared by more and more, the greater may be the chorus of thanksgiving that ascends to the glory of God” (2 Cor 4:15, NEB). Maybe Paul’s testimony which has cheered countless millions will cheer somebody who still faces a dilemma he has begged the Lord to remove. All of Paul’s were solved, but not all of them in Paul’s way or Paul’s time. *Selah*.

Training a Child to Self-control

Shall I brace myself for the inevitable charge of ancestor-worship which is bound to come? This is not the first time I’ve quoted my forebears, and probably won’t be the last, but it’s worth the risk of a taunt or two! Henry Clay Trumbull, a chaplain in the Civil War, was my great-grandfather, and only recently I found that his book, *Hints on Child Training*, has been brought back into print. His reason for writing it was a friend’s having asked for his theory of child training. “Theory?” he responded, “I have no theory, in that matter. I had lots of theories before I had any children [he had eight]



Henry Clay Trumbull

but now I do, with fear and trembling, in every case just that which seems to be the better thing for the hour, whether it agrees with any of my old theories or not.”

A book written one hundred years ago which a publisher now deems worthy of reprint must be good. The publisher is Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Brentwood TN; price

\$8.95. Here’s an excerpt from Chapter Ten:

“A child who is trained to self-control—as a child may be—is already a true man in his fitness for manly self-mastery. A man who was not trained, in childhood, to self-control, is hopelessly a child in his combat with himself; and he can never regain the vantage-ground which his childhood gave him. . . . It is in a child’s earlier struggles with himself that help can easiest be given to him, and that is of the greatest value for his own developing of character. . . . It rests with the parent to decide, while the child is still a child, whether the

child shall be a slave to himself, or a master of himself; whether his life, so far, shall be worthy or unworthy of his high possibilities of manhood.

“A child’s first struggle with himself ought to be in the direction of controlling his impulse to give full play to his lungs and his muscles at the prompting of his nerves. As soon as the nerves make themselves felt, they prompt a child to cry, to thrash his arms, to kick, and to twist his body on every side, at the slightest provocation—or at none. Unless this prompting be checked, the child will exhaust himself in aimless exertion, and will increase his own discomfort by the very means of this exhibit. . . .

“When a child has fallen and hurt himself, or has cut his finger, or has burned his hand . . . it is natural for him to shriek with pain and fright, and it is natural for his tender-hearted mother to shrink from blaming him just then for indulging in this display of grief. But even at such a time as this, a mother has an unmistakable duty of helping her child to gain a measure of control over himself, so as to repress his cries and to moderate his exhibit of disturbed feeling. . . .

“Coaxing and rewarding a child into quiet at such a time is not what is needed; but it is the encouraging a child into an intelligent control of himself, that is to be aimed at by the wise parent. It is only a choice between evils that substitutes a candy-paid silence for a noisy indulgence of feeling on a child’s part. . . . Dr. Bushnell, protesting against this method of coaxing a child out of a state of irritation, in a fit of ill-nature, by ‘dainties that please the taste,’ says forcefully, ‘It must be a very dull child that will not cry and fret a great deal, when it is so pleasantly rewarded. Trained in this manner to play ill-nature for sensation’s sake, it will go on rapidly, in the course of double attainment, and will be very soon perfected in the double character of an ill-natured, morbid, sensualist, and a feigning cheat besides. By what methods or means can the great themes of God and religion get hold of a soul that has learned to be governed only by rewards of sensation, paid to

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affectations of grief and deliberate actings of ill-nature?’

“That control of himself which is secured by a child in his intelligent repression of an impulse to cry and writhe in physical pain is of advantage to the child in all his lifelong struggle with himself; and he should be trained in the habit of making his self-control available to him in this struggle. . . . Every child needs the help of his parents in gaining control over his body, instead of allowing his body to gain the control of him. The appetites and passions and impellings of the outer man are continually striving for the mastery over the inner man; and unless one is trained to master these instead of being mastered by them, he is sure to fail in his life struggle.

“A parent ought to help his child to refrain from laughing when he ought not to laugh; from crying when he ought not to cry; from speaking when he ought not to speak; from eating that which he ought not to eat, even though the food be immediately before him; from running about when it is better for him to remain quiet; and to be ready to say and to do just that which it is best for him to say and do, at the time when it needs to be said and done. Self-control in all these things is possible to a child. Wise training on the parent’s part can secure it. The principle which is operative here, is operative in every sphere of human existence. By means of self-control a child is made happier, and is fitted for his duties, while a child and ever after, as otherwise he could not be. Many a man’s lifecourse is saddened through his hopeless lack of that self-control to which he could easily have been helped in childhood, if only his parents had understood his needs and been faithful accordingly.”

Would you like help in beginning at birth to teach a child self-control? Read *My First 300 Babies*, written by a midwife who stayed to help new mothers put their babies on a happy schedule so that the infant did not rule the household. Windsor Publications, 335 Laurel Ave., Arcadia CA 91006; \$8.95 plus \$1.50 for shipping and handling; 6% sales tax in CA, 6 1/2% in L.A. county.

Wheat Honey Bread

My years as a missionary, when store-bought bread wasn’t available, have pretty well ruined me for anything but homemade. Lars likes this kind, of which a single slice (with a cup of coffee) often makes his breakfast.

Pour 6 c. warm water over 2 c. old-fashioned oats
Add 1/2 c. honey, 1/2 c. blackstrap molasses*
Sprinkle 3 Tblsp. dry yeast on top. (Make sure water is not hot.)

Allow to stand 5 min. Then add:

1/2 c. vegetable oil

10 c. stoneground wholewheat flour*

1 heaping Tblsp. salt.

Mix well. Add:

1 c. wheat germ

1/2 c. sunflower seeds

1 c. soy flour*

1/4 c. sesame seeds*

6 c. unbleached white flour

Turn out on board or counter, knead till smooth and elastic. Put into clean, oiled bowl, turn dough over so that top is oiled. Cover with wet towel, let rise in warm place till double in bulk. Punch down. Let rise again. Punch down and form into four loaves. Place in loaf pans. Let rise a third time till double. Bake at 350° for 45 min. Turn out of pans at once, cool on racks.

*Available at health food stores. But these items are optional, may be omitted or substitutions made.

Ten Commandments

It’s much easier to memorize verse than prose. This, from McGuffey’s *Reader*, will help your child (maybe you, too) to remember the commandments:

Above all else love God alone;

Bow down to neither wood nor stone.

God’s name refuse to take in vain;

The Sabbath rest with care maintain.

Respect your parents all your days;

Hold sacred human life always.

Be loyal to your chosen mate;

Steal nothing neither small nor great.

Report, with truth, your neighbor’s deed;

And rid your mind of selfish greed.

Prayer

• For the greatest need of today’s children: holy parents. Pray for them, that God will give them holy wisdom in

