

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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The Fear of Man— or Woman

"The majority of men have thought of women as sublime separately but horrible as a herd," said the wise G.K. Chesterton. Alas. Are we so formidable? Robert Bly, in his current best-selling *Iron John* declares that men are petrified of female anger. Then there's a Time correspondent named Sam Allis who says "Women are often daunting obstacles to male peace of mind, and for all their brave talk, men remain utterly flummoxed by the situation."

"The fear of man bringeth a snare," according to God's Word. Meseemeth the fear of woman bringeth a worse one. These comments have set me thinking (again) about fear in general. If men and women were surer of their God there would be more genuine manliness, womanliness, and godliness in the world, and a whole lot less fear of each other.

Jesus told us not to fear those who can kill only the body, but rather to fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell—in other words, *fear God and fear nothing else*. Moses, by faith, "left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27, NIV). When Daniel learned of King Darius's decree forbidding prayer to any god or man except the king himself, he proceeded with his regular manner of worship, on his knees, windows open, "just as he had done before," and was caught in the act. He feared God, therefore he feared neither the king nor the lions. His three friends, faced with the choice between two evils, worshipping a golden image or burning to a crisp in a furnace, made an instant decision. Fear of God made worship of an idol unthinkable. Fear of the fire was, by comparison, *thinkable*. That's manliness.

Uzziah, who became king of Judah when he was sixteen, was *taught* by Zechariah to fear God. A child who is not taught to fear wrongdoing when he is small will have great difficulty learning to fear God when he is a man. "Freedom from fear" is what Russell Kirk calls

"a silly piece of demagogic sophistry," for we all have "a natural yearning for the challenge of the dreadful."

One of the nicest things any of my radio listeners has written to me came from a little girl: "You make me brave." Sometimes I wonder what has happened to words like courage and endurance. What reason is there in our feel-comfortable society ever to be brave? Very little, and, when you think about it, we miss it, don't we? To be really brave is to lay oneself open to charges of hypocrisy, of being "in denial" or out of touch with one's feelings. Moses charged Joshua to be strong and very courageous. Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to do the thing we fear. Go straight into the furnace or the lion's den. Were those men out of touch with their feelings or with reality? No. Nor was the psalmist who said, "When I *am* afraid, I *will* trust." There's a big difference between feeling and willing.

In George MacDonald's *Sir Gibbie* the boy (Gibbie) is up in the mountains in a storm. He hears the sound of the river in flood and realizes it is headed straight for the cottage. He shoots after it. "He is not terrified. One believing like him in the perfect Love and perfect Will of a Father of men, as the fact of facts, fears nothing. Fear is faithlessness.... A perfect faith would lift us absolutely above fear. It is in the cracks, crannies, and gulfy faults of our belief, the gaps that are not faith, that the snow of apprehension settles and the ice of unkindness forms."

Do you feel, in spite of all the promises of God, as helpless as a worm today? There's a special word for you too: "Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you" (Is 41:14).

Jim Elliot's House

Word came recently that the house Jim built in Ecuador's jungle, where he and Valerie and I were living at the time of his death, went on the market. It's a nice house in very bad shape. It had a spectacular view (which I suppose the jungle has by now obliterated) of the Atun Yacu, one of the tributaries of the Amazon.

The airstrip, a ten-minute walk from the house, has become a regular road with cars on it. Unimaginable! Nobody has lived in the house since Valerie and I left in 1963. The missionary who has kept an eye on it for years tells me that one of the Christian Quichuas is buying it for something under \$2000.

One Way to Memorize Scripture

Throughout my life and the lives of my parents a little book called *Daily Light* has been our companion, astonishingly suited to the needs of the day, as though the very subjects were arranged by God Himself for that particular day. It comprises Scripture verses only (no commentary), arranged under subject headings, one page for each morning, one for each evening of the year. Hearing it read nearly every day of our growing-up years helped us memorize without conscious effort.

There is a story behind its compilation. Many years ago my uncle Charlie Trumbull wrote to the publishers (Samuel Bagster and Sons, Ltd., London) asking about it. Robert Bagster replied:

"This book was prepared entirely within our family, mostly by my father, Jonathan Bagster, his sister, and eldest daughter, while others of the younger ones (myself included), worked in a subordinate position. Few are able to appreciate the heart-searching care with which every text was selected, the days, nay weeks of change, alterations, and improvements, until at last each page was passed.

"It has been said that each page was prayed over. This is true enough but far less than the fact that the portions were left for weeks to see if any further guidance came."

My uncle comments, "It has often struck me as a wonderful thought that hundreds of thousands of Christians throughout the world, to its remotest corners, are each day reading the same page with its message of comfort and help."

I encourage you who wish to spend a quiet minute or two twice a day with the Word of God to buy yourselves this little treasury (available from Zondervan in either King James or New International Version).

Self-Pity

A single woman missionary writes, "I've never dated anyone. Is it realistic for a woman to desire confirma-

tion of her femininity at one point in her life? Do I have cause to feel sorry for myself? To be mad at God for leaving me in such dire social straits? I already know the answer, of course! I'm like the children of Israel demanding of Samuel, 'We want a king such as all the other nations have.' Here I am with the greatest of Bridegrooms, complaining because I'm physically lonely and want to be like other women.... I long to know what it's like to be loved by a man. The thought of a life without ever experiencing it makes me so very sad and all the more aware that I have a long way to go before I'll ever be the kind of woman *God* wants me to be."

To the first question I would answer yes, it's realistic, it's natural, it's not wrong. A real woman's desire is to be a real woman, and a man's love helps to confirm that. But human desire is to be brought under the lordship of Christ for fulfilment according to *His* wisdom and choosing (See Ps 10:17; 37:4; 38:9; 145:19).

"He gives the very best to those who leave the choice with Him."

To the second and third questions I would say no, as my correspondent guessed. We are never warranted in feeling sorry for ourselves or being "mad" at God—He loves us with an Everlasting Love, He died for us, His will is always love and, when we accept it in loving trust, it is our *peace*.

Another letter came just a couple of weeks after the above, also from a single woman missionary. "I appreciate very much the honesty and openness with which you talk about missionary life, and the importance you place on obedience and leaving the results in God's hands. That has helped me to know the cost, and to know and give credit to the One who makes any success here possible.... Being obedient to Him *is* good! Obedience gives an incredible peace, and every now and then I think God allows us a glimpse of how He's working out His plan here, and it's awesome! You're right—obedience is worth the cost!"

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Why Student's Don't Read

(From an interview in *Time*, October 17, 1988, with Allan Bloom, author of *The Closing of the American Mind*.)

Bloom: One of the reasons for students' not reading seriously is their belief that they can't learn important things from books. They believe books are just ideologies, mythologies or political tools of different parties. If the peaks of learning offered some shining goal in the distance, it would be very attractive to an awful lot of people—people with very diverse backgrounds. The golden thread of all education is in the first questions: How should I live? What's the good life? What can I hope for? What must I do? What would be the terrible consequences if we knew the truth?

Q. So it is preferable for society to have some elites?

Bloom: One of the most important things to human beings is the capacity to recognize rank order, or decent people, or moral people, or intelligent and wiser people. Without those kinds of elites, we don't have leaders. This kind of greatness inspiring one to human perfection is the central perspective of education. If I were all that man is, it would be very boring to be man.

Sex Education in Public School

Lars and I attended a lecture on "AIDS Awareness" at the high school from which my daughter Valerie graduated, in Hamilton, Massachusetts. The first speaker, a Christian doctor, spoke on abstinence and warned that condoms do not provide "safe sex." There were giggles from some of the audience. The other speaker, a woman dying of AIDS, told of her own background (drugs, sex, alcohol, dysfunctional family, the whole bit). She's still "sexually active," and supposed that high school students generally are too. Abstinence? Impossible, she said. Her advice: try to be careful. Love yourself enough to protect yourself. She was asked what she would suggest for protection. There was a long pause. She ran her hands through her hair, smoked, wound her legs around each other under the table, looked at the ceiling, shook her head. Her reply, almost a whisper, "I don't have the answer."

The doctor had mentioned my little booklet, *Sex Is a Lot More Than Fun*, copies of which Lars was not prevented from handing out to any who wished them. One little knot of girls was observed thumbing through it, with great guffaws.

The number of teenagers who are HIV positive, I understand, is doubling every year. May we as Christians hold up faithfully, by example as well as by precept, God's unequivocal norm: sexual activity is exclusively for one man and one woman within the bonds of marriage. May God help us to teach our children early the beauty of holiness.



You asked for a photo, so here we are, Lars and Elisabeth Gren. (Elisabeth Elliot is only my pen name.)

Recommended (strongly!)

George MacDonald: Discovering the Character of God. Readings from MacDonald's novels and unspoken sermons, compiled and edited by Michael R. Phillips. Bethany House.

Prayer Requests

One newsletter reader "suddenly thought of a scheme for remembering to pray for your speaking engagements. It works so well you may want to suggest it to others—I jot down on a "pink sticky" each date on your travel schedule and put it on my prayer calendar." Thank you, Ann. I need those prayers.

Pray also:

- For commitment to sexual purity among Christians.
- For repentance and a new beginning on the part of those who "blew it."
- For working mothers who long to find a way to stay home to care for their children. Praise for those who have.
- For Christian children in public schools, bludgeoned with thoroughly secular ideologies, that the Holy Spirit will teach, fortify, and comfort them. (My grandson Walter begins public high school this year, having been homeschooled.)

Study Guide

Joyce Holme's study guide to my book, *Passion and Purity*, now costs \$8.00 (\$10.00 in Canada). Her new address: 6002 S. Sconce Rd., Hubbard, OR 97032. Phone (503)651-2578.

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 September - December 1991

September 13 Lancaster, PA; Calvary Church, (717) 284-4123.

September 14 Baltimore, MD; all day women's seminar, radio rally; Joel Freeman, (301) 525-3500.

September 21, 22 Brooklyn, NY; The Brooklyn Tabernacle, (718) 783-0942.

September 27, 28 Ozark Conferences; Mary Siemens, (501) 666-3266.

October 1 Atlanta, GA; First Baptist Church, Jane Barnard, (404) 460-8802.

October 6 Hamilton, MA; Christ Church, (508) 468-4461.

October 12 Charleston, SC; St. Philip's Church, (803) 722-7734.

October 14 Mableton, GA; Westside Baptist, Gloria James, (404) 948-0121.

October 15 South Sioux City, NE; Child Evangelism

Fellowship, Fred Penner, (402) 494-5999.

October 21 Liberty Corners, NJ; Fellowship Deaconry, (201) 647-1777.

October 25-27 Solon, OH; The Chapel, (216) 349-0140.

November 8-10 Jackson, MS; First Presbyterian Church, (601) 353-8316.

December 1 Hingham, MA; South Shore Baptist Church, (617) 749-2592.

December 7 Ellicott, MD; Chapelgate Presbyterian Church.

December 27-31 Nairobi; Focus Missions Convention.

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