

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

September / October 1992

ISSN 8756-1336

## Discerning the Call of God

As a little girl I especially loved the story of God's call to the child Samuel as he lay sleeping in the temple. I wondered if God would ever call me. Would I hear Him? What would He say? Throughout my growing years I read missionary stories and heard them told at our dinner table by guests from many lands who came to stay with us. I was always eager to know just how they were called. As a college student I worried much about whether I would fail to follow the Shepherd, would be deaf to His call. I thought it such a bewildering matter.

It is not a worry anymore. Experience has taught me that the Shepherd is far more willing to show His sheep the path than the sheep are to follow. He is endlessly merciful, patient, tender, and loving. If we, His stupid and wayward sheep, really want to be led, we will without fail be led. Of that I am sure.

When we need help, we wish we knew somebody who is wise enough to tell us what to do, reachable when we need him, and even able to help us. *God* is. Omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent—everything we need. The issue is confidence in the Shepherd Himself, a confidence so complete that we offer ourselves without any reservation whatsoever and determine to do what He says.

What He says? But how shall I know that?

He calls us every day, "o'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea." He comes to us in the little things, in the ordinary duties which our place in life entails. When I was a child He called me. The duty which my place in life entailed was obedience to my father and mother. In school and Sunday School He called me through the teacher. What she said I knew I was supposed to do. In first grade (yes, in public school) we sang the hymn, "Father, We Thank Thee." The second stanza says, "Help us to do the things we should, To be to others kind and good; In all we do at work or play to grow more loving every day." God's call again.

It's alluring to think of our own situation as very complex and ourselves as deep and complicated, so that we waste a good deal of time puzzling over "the will of God." Frequently our conscience has the answer.

My friend Jim O'Donnell tells how he, a hard-headed, hard-hearted man of the world, found Christ. His conscience was awakened. The call of God was immediate: "Go home and love your wife." The change was so sudden and so radical Lizzie could not make head or tail of what had come over him. This self-confident and self-interested man had quit living for himself. He had *died*. An altogether new kind of life was now his. The first difference it made was the difference that mattered most—in his private life. It was there that he began to obey.

We are not talking here about audible voices. Although people in Bible times often heard God speak, we can expect that He will usually speak today through conscience, through the written Word, through other people, and through events. Events themselves, the seemingly insignificant happenings of every day, reveal the will of God. They *are* the will of God for us, for while we live, move, and have our being here on earth, in this place, this family, this house, this job, we live, move, and have our being *in God*. He "pulls strings through circumstances," as Jim Elliot said, even the bad circumstances (Gn 45:8, 50:20).

Three questions may help to clarify the call of God. Have I made up my mind to do what He says, no matter what the cost? Am I faithfully reading His Word and praying? Am I obedient in what I know today of His will?

"Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul" (Ps 143:8 NIV).

## Will He Carry Us?

He will carry us in His arms till we are able to walk;  
He will carry us when we are weary with walking.  
He will not carry us if we *will* not walk.

— George MacDonald  
*The Hope of the Gospel*

## Retirement

Tarahai Carunia of the Dohnavur Fellowship (Amy Carmichael's work in India) told in a recent *Dust of Gold* letter of some things she is learning. I am glad I am allowed to reprint here this expression of a lovely old woman's self-abandonment. May the Lord give us this grace...

"Retirement means 'withdrawal' and it involves entering into another sphere of life from the rush and bustle we are used to. It means leaving the responsibilities and duties of the work to a younger person who will gain and mature in that new position. For me it meant leaving Pavilions [the place where the handicapped are cared for] where I had worked for twenty-seven years, and settling back in Dohnavur. Although this is now my place, I felt very much for that part of the Family which had to be left in the hands of another. But God's tremendous love carries me.... There is always the grace of the enabling power of God.

"Retirement provides the opportunity for us to help the Family in many different ways. I go to the hospital to teach the patients coming to us. I also read to two elderly Accals [women who cared for the children] whose sight is poor. We pray together and share one another's problems.... I help prepare Christmas cards for the Christmas feast held for the leprosy patients. I use old calendar verses to make little booklets which can be used for evangelistic work and can be given to our small school girls.

"There are about five compounds where our retired Accals live. It is essential for all of us to live in harmony with each other and learn to trust each other. We need to learn how to use our spare time profitably, to think of others, take an interest in what is going on in the world and in various spheres of missionary work.

"How careful we need to be not to grieve the Lord Jesus.... When retirement has Christ in the centre, we experience satisfaction and find many causes to pray, praise, and worship our Lord and Savior. It can be quite adventurous and exciting as we watch the Lord working in lives and as we realize that we are nearing Eternity."

Not only we who have reached retirement age (I did in 1991) but all of us might give thought to the words of the aged John in his first epistle:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is

what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. (1 Jn 3:1-3 NIV)

## A Child's Prayer

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy  
Once, and just so small as I?...

Thou canst not have forgotten all  
That it feels like to be small:  
And Thou know'st I cannot pray  
To Thee in my father's way—  
When Thou wast so little, say,  
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way?—

So, a little Child, come down  
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;  
Take me by the hand and walk,  
And listen to my baby-talk.  
To Thy Father show my prayer  
(He will look, Thou art so fair),  
And say: "O Father, I, Thy Son,  
Bring the prayer of a little one." ...

—Francis Thompson

## Old Copies of the Newsletter!

Sometimes people ask for old copies. If you want to unload copies from the premiere issue (Nov/Dec 1982) up through 1985 we'd be glad if you'd send them to Lars Gren, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia MA 01930.

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*The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter* is published six times a year by Servant Publications. Donations to the newsletter are tax-deductible and should be sent to: The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, P.O. Box 7711, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107.

## *Joy in Exchange for Pain*

Patty Miner, of Cambridge, Ontario, writes: "In 1980 my husband and I were facing two momentous events in our lives. In June we were expecting the birth of our first child and in November we were slated to leave for Pakistan to serve in a church planting capacity. We had been involved in deputation and as June rolled around we stood at 60% of our support level. Rob was enrolled in the Toronto Institute of Linguistics when I went into labor. On June 2 our son was born. Rob visited me early the next morning before leaving for classes. He had only gone out the door a few minutes before when the staff pediatrician arrived. In a few words he broke the news that it was felt that our son showed some signs of having Down's syndrome and that chromosomal tests would be done which would verify or negate their suspicions.

"Whew! In a few words someone can turn your whole world upside down. After the doctor left I spent the day trying to make some sense in this turn of events and counting the minutes until Rob would return and I would have to break the news to him. As the shock waves rolled over me I know the still small voice of God made an impact on my mind. It went something like this: 'Patty, do you remember the verses you have been sharing as you have gone from church to church on deputation?' 'Yes, Lord, there have been lots.' 'Do you remember Romans 12:1-2, and the emphasis you put on them?' 'Yes, "that you may prove what is the *good, acceptable* and *perfect* will of God.'" 'Do you believe in the blackness of this moment that My will is still good, acceptable, and perfect?'

"The tears were streaming down my face as I said, 'I don't understand at all but from this point I am going to affirm by faith that Your will is good, it is acceptable, and it is perfect. You are the Sovereign God who is in control of all the moments of our lives.'

"There has been lots of pain in the hours, days, and months since then but I know that God has also brought unexpected joy into our lives. He has been with us all the way."

The great Call of God comes to us most inescapably in our darkest night. It is then that our implicit faith in the light we thought we had received must reassert itself. We treasure His call and we then look humbly for his comfort (which will surely come, in God's time and way). Without darkness and pain we will not be

transformed into the image of Christ. His was the way of pain. Our obedience in following Him even there is the stamp and seal of truthfulness, genuineness, the *reality* of what we profess.

Thank you, Patty, for one more witness to His faithfulness.

## *Halloween*

Christian parents often seek an alternative to the ghosts-and-witches sort of Halloween celebration. Gretchen McPherson sent me an outline of their family celebration which they call Cloud of Witnesses Day. She didn't say they make this their Halloween celebration, but I thought it would be very appropriate for All Hallows' (i.e. Saints') Eve. She will be glad to send her outline if you'll send a self-addressed, *stamped* envelope to *HER* (*PLEASE*, not to the Newsletter or to me!): 6063 Elsa Ave., Rohnert Park CA 94928.

## *Prayer*

1. *Thy kingdom come*—a prayer that demands of all who pray it a life lived in harmony with God.
2. For the Holy Spirit's work in churches where there is conflict; in pastors faithful or unfaithful; in members who heed or ignore the call to holiness.
3. For the Lord's help in decisions about requests—for speaking, writing, videos, letters. I am deeply conscious of His help, but I believe it comes as we pray. He tells us to ASK. THANK YOU so very much for praying.

### *Recommended Reading*

Amy Carmichael: *His Thoughts Said... His Father Said*. Dialogues between "the son" (herself) and the Father—just the kind of thing you and I would talk to the Lord about. A *lovely* little book, short portions that bear long pondering. Christian Literature Crusade.

## Tape

One tape with two talks by Elisabeth Elliot on the Lord's Prayer. *DO NOT ORDER FROM THE NEWSLETTER*, but from Lars Gren, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia MA 01930. \$5/pp.

## Correction

Joyce Holmes' excellent study guide for my book, *Passion and Purity*, may be had for \$8.00 each (no need to buy one for each of your groups, though—she says you may copy as many as you wish!) *But, alas, I had given the wrong address in the July/August Newsletter.* *Correct:* 6002 S.Sconce Rd., Hubbard, OR 97032.

### 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 1992

**September 11** Raymond, NH; Fellowship in Christ; (603) 895-9447.

**September 18** Enfield, CT; Pastor Mitch Scharoff, (203) 741-2431.

**September 25-27** Atlanta, GA; PCA Women in the Church; Marriott Hotel, Susan Hunt, 1852 Century Pl. Suite 101 (sold out).

**October 2-4** Philadelphia Tenth Presbyterian Church (City Light Mtg., Women's Day, Couples' Class, Tenth College Union); (215) 735-7688.

**October 15-17** Portland, OR and Seattle, WA; area radio rallies; Linda Meyers, 1-800-759-4569.

**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) 854-4004.

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

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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107

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