

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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## A Quiet Heart

Jesus slept on a pillow in the midst of a raging storm. How could He? The terrified disciples, sure that the next wave would send them straight to the bottom, shook Him awake with rebuke. How could He be so careless of their fate?

He could because He slept in the calm assurance that His Father was in control. His was a quiet heart. We see Him move serenely through all the events of His life—when He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He knew that He would suffer many things and be killed in Jerusalem, He never deviated from His course. He had set His face like flint. He sat at supper with one who would deny Him and another who would betray Him, yet He was able to eat with them, willing even to wash their feet. Jesus, in the unbroken intimacy of His Father's love, kept a quiet heart.

None of us possesses a heart so perfectly at rest, for none lives in such divine unity, but we can learn a little more each day of what Jesus knew—what one writer called the “negligence” of that trust which carries God with it. Who would think of using the word negligence in regard to our Lord Jesus? To be negligent is to omit to do what a reasonable man would do. Would Jesus omit that? Yes, often, when faith pierced beyond human reason.

This “negligent” trust—is it careless or inattentive? No, not in His case. Jesus, because His will was one with His Father's, could be free from care. He had the blessed assurance of knowing that His Father would do the caring, would be attentive to His Son's need. Was Jesus indolent? No, our Lord was never lazy, sluggish, or slothful, but He knew when to take action and when to leave things up to His Father. He taught us to work and watch but never to worry; to do gladly whatever we are given to do, and to leave all else with God.

Purity of heart, said Kierkegaard, is *to will one thing*. The Son willed only one thing: the will of His Father. That's what He came to earth to do. Nothing else. One whose aim is as pure as that can have a completely quiet heart, knowing what the psalmist knew: “Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure” (Ps 16:5, NIV). I know

of no greater *simplifier* for all of life. Whatever happens is assigned. Does the intellect balk at that? Can we say that there are things which happen to us which do not belong to our lovingly assigned “portion” (“This belongs to it, that does not”)? Are some things, then, out of the control of the Almighty?

Every assignment is measured and controlled for my eternal good. As I accept the given portion other options are cancelled. Decisions become much easier, directions clearer, and hence my heart becomes inexpressibly quieter.

What do we really want in life? Sometimes I have the chance to ask this question of high school or college students. I am surprised at how few have a ready answer. Oh, they could come up with quite a long list of *things*, but is there *one* thing above all others that they desire? “*One* thing have I desired of the Lord,” said David, “this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life...” (Ps 27:4, AV). To the rich young man who wanted eternal life Jesus said, “*One* thing you lack.... Go, sell everything” (Mk 10:21, NIV). In the parable of the sower Jesus tells us that the seed which is choked by thorns has fallen into a heart clogged with the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for *other things*. The apostle Paul said, “*One* thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14, NIV, emphasis added in all three references).

A quiet heart is content with what God gives. It is enough. All is grace. One morning my computer simply would not obey me. What a nuisance. I had my work laid out, my timing figured, my mind all set. My work was delayed, my timing thrown off, my thinking interrupted. Then I remembered. It was not for nothing. This was part of the Plan (not mine, His). “Lord, You have assigned me my portion and my cup.”

On that same day I found another reminder of the clue to a quieter heart:

I think I find most help in trying to look on all the interruptions and hindrances to work that one has planned out for oneself as discipline, trials sent by God to help against getting selfish over one's work. Then one can feel that perhaps one's true work—*one's work for God*—consists in doing some trifling

haphazard thing that has been thrown into one's day. It is not waste of time, as one is tempted to think, it is the most important part of the work of the day—the part one can best offer to God. After such a hindrance, do not rush after the planned work; trust that the time to finish it will be given sometime, and keep a quiet heart about it.

—Annie Keary, 1825-1879

Now if the interruption had been a human being instead of an infuriating mechanism it would not have been so hard to see it as the most important part of the work of the day. But *all* is under my Father's control—yes, recalcitrant computers, faulty transmissions, drawbridges which happen to be *up* when one is in a hurry. My portion. My cup. My lot is secure. My heart can be at peace. My Father is in charge. How simple!

My assignment entails my willing acceptance of my portion—in matters far beyond comparison with the trivialities just mentioned, such as the death of a precious baby, given to the parents for just one month (see the following story).

Response is what matters. Remember that our forefathers were all guided by the pillar of cloud, all passed through the sea, all ate and drank the same spiritual food and drink, but God was not pleased with most of them. Their response was all wrong. Bitter about the portions allotted they indulged in idolatry, gluttony, and sexual sin. And God killed them, by snakes and by a destroying angel.

The same almighty God apportioned their experiences. All events serve His will. Some responded in faith. Most did not.

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand under it" (1 Cor 10:13, NIV).

Think of that promise and keep a quiet heart! Our enemy delights in disquieting us. Our Savior and Helper delights in quieting us. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" is His promise (Is 66:13, NIV). The choice is ours. It depends on our willingness to see everything in God, receive all from His hand, accept with gratitude just the portion and the cup He offers. Shall I charge Him with a mistake in His measurements or with misjudging the sphere in which I can best learn to trust Him? Has He misplaced me? Is He ignorant of things or people which, in my view, hinder my doing His will?

God came down and lived in this same world as a man. He showed us how to live in this world, subject to its vicissitudes and necessities, that we might be changed—not into an angel or a storybook princess,

not wafted into another world, but changed into saints in *this* world. The secret is *Christ in me*, not me in a different set of *circumstances*.

He whose heart is kind beyond all measure  
Gives unto each day what He deems best,  
Lovingly its part of pain and pleasure,  
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

—Lina Sandell, Swedish

## A Mother's Response

In the November/December issue was the story of the Rettew family of Greer, South Carolina—eighteen children, many severely handicapped. Another testimony, as full of thanksgiving as the Rettews', came from Diane Rieck of Lyndhurst, Ohio. She has three boys, had lost two babies, and found, by ultra-sound in her sixth pregnancy, that the child was a "trisomy," meaning that every cell in the baby's body has an extra chromosome, which is incompatible with life. Although most trisomies miscarry by the third month, those that survive usually die in the birth process or shortly afterwards. Little John Nicholas weighed 4 pounds 2 ounces, had severe cleft lip and palate, an extra finger on each hand, rocker-bottom feet, no eyes behind his lids, and a very severe heart defect.

Diane wrote in her journal, "God has given me the greatest gift possible. I never thought I would be able to hold my baby alive. No matter how much pain will follow, a part of my heart will always be filled with this joy.... No matter how much or how little time is left, I will always treasure this gift of holding baby John in my arms. Heavenly Father, you have truly blessed me in a way I'll never comprehend. And yet, I don't know how to respond to this gift except to say THANK YOU."

Baby John, one month old, died on All Saints' Day. "How perfect a beginning for him to join in the celebration and be the newest saint in Heaven!" wrote Diane, and added a list of six of the countless blessings she had received from beginning to end.

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## Intimacy with God

A reader asked me to explain that kind of relationship and how one “gets there.” These simple steps will make a beginning:

1. Give yourself without reservation to God, asking Him to do in, through, and with you *anything* He wants, at any cost.
2. Trust His power, wisdom, and love as He answers that prayer—and do not be surprised at the answers He chooses.
3. Obey.
4. Receive everything with thanksgiving.

## Corrie's House

Years ago my daughter Valerie and I had the undreamed of privilege of having tea with that great soldier of the Cross, Corrie ten Boom. Then in her eighties, she happened to be spending that day in bed as the doctor had ordered. He said she could not continue to “tramp for the Lord” all over creation unless she took one day in seven for bedrest. So there she was, joyful and radiant as always, talking of the Lord's wonderful pattern for our lives. She leaped out of bed to show us the back side of a piece of embroidery—a meaningless jumble of colored threads. When she turned it over a golden crown on a purple field was revealed. That, she said, illustrates our lives. God is working on a beautiful pattern that appears but a meaningless tangle.

While I was speaking in the Netherlands last November our hosts took Lars and me to Haarlem to visit Corrie ten Boom's house. I had read many of her books and had seen the film, *The Hiding Place*, but was quite unprepared for the overwhelming poignancy of standing before that very hiding place in Corrie's tiny bedroom. Our tour guide was a lady who had become a Christian seven years ago through reading Corrie's books. She showed us the brick wall behind which as many as six people could find refuge, entering through a secret panel in the closet.

It was difficult to believe how many people had lived in that cramped little house with its steep, winding, narrow stairways, its minuscule bedrooms. How they found ration cards and fed them is one of the many miracles. How they practiced their escapes to the hiding place when the Gestapo demanded entrance—those heart-stopping seventy seconds as they raced up two stories above the living room; the occasion when six Jews stood for two and a half days in that dark hole (only one could lie down at a time) while the Gestapo remained in the house, trying to find them.

Why would the Ten Booms pay such a price for illegally sheltering the hated race during World War II? The love of Christ compelled them. Corrie's father, a clock

maker (his shop is still open, on the first floor), had always had a great love for the Jewish people, a love that was stronger than death. When their forbidden activities were reported to the Gestapo he and his two daughters were taken away to a concentration camp. He died enroute. Corrie and Betsy were taken on to the camp. Before Betsy died there she told her sister to carry the message of Jesus' love and forgiveness around the world. Corrie did not forget. Tens of thousands heard her tell of the horrors they had suffered, but always, always, she spoke of the presence of the Lord in the camp, of His tenderness, His love, His all-sufficient grace which enabled Betsy to pray for the guards who had beaten her, “Father, forgive them.” When, years, later, Corrie met one of those responsible for Betsy's death she recoiled at the thought of having to shake his hand. Hatred welled up in her heart. She sent up an instant prayer for grace. “My hand shot out,” she said, “and in that moment God gave me grace to forgive him.”

Corrie's was a life utterly at the disposal of her Master, a life of love, trust, and obedience in circumstances indescribably hideous and frightening. Hers was a quiet and thankful heart. When Billy Graham asked Jeannette Clift George, who played Corrie's part in the film, what single characteristic stood out to her as she studied Corrie's life, Jeannette's immediate reply was JOY!

If such joy can be found in such circumstances, who of us could think it impossible in ours? The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk wrote:

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,  
yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NIV)

## Recommended Reading

George McDonald: *The Wind from the Stars*, edited by Gordon Reid (HarperCollins). Brief readings for each day of the year. I cannot thank God enough for the way in which MacDonald has deepened, heightened, and widened my vision. A sample from the book:

The one secret of life and development is not to devise and plan, but to fall in with the forces at work—to do every moment's duty aright—that being the part in the process allotted to us; and let come—not what will, for there is no such thing—but what the eternal Thought wills for each of us, has intended for each of us from the first.

## Prayer

1. A new producer/director for my broadcast, *Gateway to Joy*. Praise God for Linda Meyers, who has been doing a thoroughly wonderful job. She expects her first baby in June and plans to be a stay-at-home mother. I am thrilled for her, but I'll miss her sorely.
2. Please pray for God's help as I attempt to make the book I am working on *cohere*. It's nothing but a jumble now, but God is not the author of confusion. "On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers" (2 Cor 1:10-11).

My prayer for you: "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word" (2 Thes 2:16).

### 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 48107-7711.

## Travel Schedule March-May 1995

- March 9** Springdale, Ark.; First Baptist Church, Dollie Havens, (501) 751-4523.
- March 10-11** Houston, Tex.; KHCB radio, First Baptist Church, Bonnie BeMent, (713) 520-5200.
- March 11** Houston, Tex.; Christ Evangelical Presbyterian Church, (713) 526-1188.
- March 17** Costa Mesa, Calif.; Calvary Chapel, Women's Bible Class, Kathleen Gilbert, (714) 979-4422.
- March 18** Pasadena, Calif.; First Church of the Nazarene Women's Seminar, (818) 285-0074 or (310) 696-9257.
- March 18** Fullerton, Calif.; First Evangelical Free Church, Africa Inland Mission Banquet, (818) 285-0074 or (310) 696-9257.
- March 20** Newport Beach, Calif.; Mariners' Church, Diana Kohler or Mary Hendricks, (714) 640-6010.
- March 20-21** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.
- March 26** Hamilton, Mass.; Christ Church High School Group.
- March 31** Jury duty
- April 8** Fitchburg, Mass.; Church of the Harvest Women's Conference, Heidi Shultz, (508) 448-2556.
- April 16** Easter
- April 21** Wayne, N.J.; Wayne Manor, Africa Inland Mission Banquet, Dick Van Yperen, (201) 445-7584.
- April 22** Hawthorne, N.J.; Hawthorne Gospel Church, Linda Thomas, (201) 444-7679 or (201) 447-6262.
- May 8-9** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.
- May 12** Brockton, Mass.; Foursquare Gospel Church, (508) 427-1744.
- May 17** Keswick, N.J.; Spring Women's Day, Judee Dickinson, (908) 350-1187.
- May 18** Schooley's Mountain, N.J.; Barbara Nugent, (908) 852-7305.

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