

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

Premier Issue November, 1982

Contexts

A writer in the *New Yorker* some months ago analyzed television as "the context of no-context." Think about that one. The only context in which the words are coming at us from the tube is our living room or kitchen, which has nothing whatever to do with the speaker. The speaker's backdrop is usually a TV studio, which we know is a mock-up. So we are excused from evaluating what is said in terms of context. There is none.

In what context does a Christian live, move, act, think, decide? It must be the context of God's kingdom. We either live in that kingdom, or we live in the world, taking our cues from the Bible or from the media, setting our goals according to what is going to matter forever or according to the quotation of the day.

Think, in the context of the kingdom of God, about this recent incident in a public school classroom: The teacher asked each child what his mother did. There was only one child whose mother did not work outside the home.

Teacher: Oh, so what *does* your mother do?

Child: She—um, well, you know, she does, um, stuff around the house.

Teacher: You mean she cooks and cleans? She irons clothes, makes beds?

Child: Yes.

Teacher: So you could say, then, that you have a *traditional* mother, is that right?

Child: Yes.

Teacher: (with a long, searching look) And do you *like* that?

Consider the context from which that teacher's questions come. It is not one which recognizes any divine design for the home, any glory in service, any joyful willingness to do humble work without thought of gain or appreciation. Consider the pressure put on a little child to question the only context his life has had, the context which has till now meant security, normalcy, and happiness for him. He will be wondering if his mother is some sort of an oddity, his home not an ordinary one.

It is not for nothing that the classic passage on the warfare of the Christian immediately follows Paul's specific instructions about intimate human relationships: wives, submit; husbands, love; fathers, do not goad your children to resentment. These are the areas of most vicious and relentless attack. The Christian home is a stronghold, and the enemy will never let up his attempts to undermine it or breach its sanctity.

"Put on all the armor which God provides, so that you may be able to stand firm against the devices of the devil. For our fight is not against human foes [corrupt government officials, public school boards, for example, or even an impossible-to-live-with spouse or teenager] but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens. Therefore take God's armor . . ." (Eph 6:11-13 NEB).

Prayer is a powerful weapon. It is an indispensable weapon. It takes practice to wield it. It takes courage and time and spiritual energy. ●

Why Another Newsletter?

People have actually asked for a newsletter. The suggestion has been made a number of times over the years, but I've balked. Who would want to read it? What in the world would I say? And the *mechanics* of the thing, alas. How to put it together, who would help, where would it be printed, what would I do about mailing? Several members of The Word of God, a Christian community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, came to me about a year ago and out of the blue told me I ought to be writing a newsletter and offered their services of every kind to make it possible. They are a group founded in the sixties, comprising about five-hundred families, doing ordinary work like ordinary folks (they don't live in a compound), but trying earnestly to live the life of Christ and to stand against what they see as an "escalation of evil" in the world today. They are committed also to standing with any who are fighting the same battles. I was awed and humbled to be counted among this latter group, and I gratefully accepted their suggestion and offer of help.

Not very much of what I have to say applies exclusively to women (can't think of a thing just now that would). I hope that my being a woman will not limit too seriously the readership of my letter. The Bible is a book for men and women. Like Jews and Gentiles, we are fellow-citizens with God's people, members of *God's household*, bonded together, being built with all the rest into a *spiritual dwelling for God* (Ephesians 2:19, 21, 22 NEB).

Encouragement comes to me from many different sources, and I would like to be able to pass some of it on to others of the "household." It'll be one more way of "bonding" us. Not the least of the sources of encouragement is letters that come to me. Instead of just throwing them away or filing them, I can give you some of the more toothsome bits.

Lessons I'm trying to learn, issues I'm thinking about (and asking God to bring every thought into captivity to Christ), and maybe some news about a recent book or tape will be a part of the

letter. Could you stand a story now and then about one of my three grandchildren? How about my husband? Here's one from him—the other day he said to me, "Now dahlin" (he's from Georgia, you know), "I'm going to explain what I plan to do about this matter. I really want your opinion. Be perfectly frank. Then, if you think the whole idea is absolutely asinine [long pause, expression of deep study], why, I'll probably just go ahead and do it anyway."

Finally—and this, I guess, is the primary reason why those men from The Word of God convinced me—I need prayer. I need more pray-ers—people who know what's going on and are willing to give themselves to God for me. Of course I have no special claim on anybody's prayers. I'm just one individual, but one to whom much has been given in the way of opportunities I never sought, platforms I never asked for, and influence I hardly know about. What do I have that I have not received? Not a thing. But "where a man has been given much, much will be expected of him; and the more a man has had entrusted to him the more he will be required to repay" (Lk 12:48 NEB).

The work we do for/with God must be done by the power of the Holy Spirit. That kind of work demands prayer. C.S. Lewis said in one of his letters to his friend Arthur Greeves that in a sense we can paddle every canoe except our own. I think the principle applies here. I can pray, of course, for help in the things God asks me to do. I do pray. But I can't do it alone. Each of us needs to have other people praying for him, paddling his canoe, as it were.

May I ask you then, most earnestly, to pray for me? For every book, every article, every talk, every tape—that Christ may be lifted up. ●

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From *Discipline: The Glad Surrender*

The bodies we are given are sexual bodies, equipped for sexual intercourse. Modern advertising never lets us forget this. Popular songs refer to very little else. The fashion business thrives on sexual provocation through dress. But being sexually equipped is not a license for us to use the equipment in any way we choose. Like every other good gift which comes down from the Father of Lights, the gift of sexual activity is meant to be used as He intended, within the clearly defined limits of His purpose which is marriage. If marriage is not included in God's will for an individual, then sexual activity is not included either.

"What am I supposed to do, then, with all this? I've got so much to give—what if nobody takes it?"

Give it to God.

"You cannot say that our physical body was made for sexual promiscuity; it was made for God, and God is the answer to our deepest longings" (1 Cor. 6:13 JBP).

To offer my body to the Lord as a living sacrifice includes offering to Him my sexuality and all that that entails, even my unfulfilled longings.

Today this advice will be laughed out of court by most. Sexual control is regarded as a "hang-up," from which the truly mature have been liberated. There are those still, however, as there have been in every age, who hold as holy the intimate relationship between a man and a woman, recognizing in it a type of Christ's love for His own bride, His church. As such it is not to be profaned.

This attitude can be held only by the mind's being captive to Christ. It is a miracle of grace. Let us not imagine it is anything less.

Malcolm Muggeridge notes in his diary, March 26-27, 1951 (published by Collins, London, 1981), that Tolstoy "tried to achieve virtue, and particularly continence, through the exercise of his will; St. Augustine saw that, for Man, there is no virtue without a miracle. Thus St. Augustine's asceticism brought him serenity, and Tolstoy's anguish, conflict, and the final collapse of his life into tragic buffoonery."

This body, remember, is to be resurrected. As John Donne pointed out long ago, the immortality of the soul is acceptable to man's natural reason, but the resurrection of the body must be a matter of faith. ●

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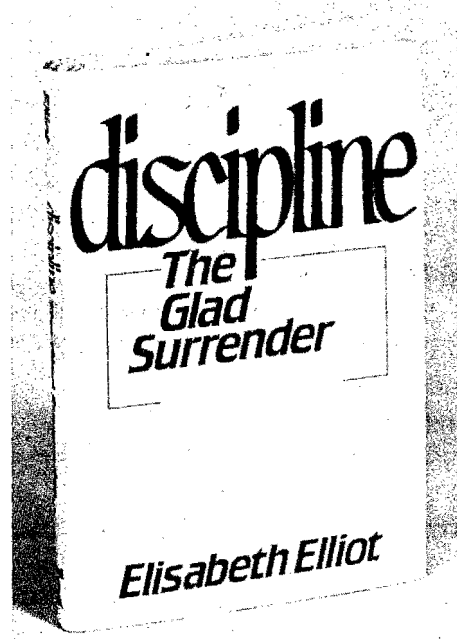
Letters Received

A MOTHER in Tucson writes about her little boy Chris: "After hearing you, Chris got into the car and announced, 'What I know now that I have to do is love my enemies.' Since then he's been praying about his specific enemies and acting on this principle." On the back of the same letter was a drawing by a four-year-old with this dictated message: "I liked your talk too. I have laid with my sister to help her fall asleep, so I'm laying down my life for her. Chris is trying to help his enemies."

A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY writes that he has decided to get up ten minutes early each morning to read his Bible, and has decided to stay home this summer in order to help his mother when she has a new baby.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for those in Christian leadership, that they may be living examples of what they teach. Temptations increase as influence increases. They need the protection of prayer and the armor of God.
- Please pray that the words I speak and write may be words that I also live by. God forbid that I should sin against any by being merely a talker.
- Pray for the mothers of young children, that they may be given eyes to see the glory of their task—a humble task, of course, but seen by angels, assigned by God, and leading to tremendous influence if these children are nurtured and admonished in the Lord.



Special Offer

Discipline The Glad Surrender

Elisabeth Elliot points the way to a joyous life of obedience. She explains what Christian commitment really is and how each individual can achieve that commitment. The subject is personal discipline, based on obedience to a loving and sovereign Master, touching on such practices as praying and fasting, the discipline of the mind, the feelings, the body, and of one's time, work, and possessions.

Special price to newsletter readers: \$8.00 (Publisher's retail price \$8.95)

Other Books and Tapes by Elisabeth Elliot

(To order, fill in order form on enclosed card.)

Through Gates of Splendor—the story of how Jim Elliot and five other missionaries were killed by Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador. \$3.50

Love Has a Price Tag—essays coming out of Elisabeth Elliot's recent experiences as wife, mother, widow, missionary, and teacher. \$4.95

These Strange Ashes—the story of Elisabeth Elliot's first year as a missionary, touching on the question of suffering and loss. \$4.50

The Jim Elliot Story—includes Jim's voice, telling a witch doctor story. (tape) \$5.00

Videotape

A seven-part series on denial, forgiveness, relinquishment, pruning, acceptance, exchange, guidance. Available by calling toll-free 1-800-647-2284, or writing Video Dynamics, P.O. Box 20330, Jackson, Mississippi 39209.

Tapes from the Firs and Indian Springs conferences:

Some were defective. Sorry we cannot replace them with the same talks, but will be happy to send you a set of similar talks if you return defective tapes to:

Lars Gren
746 Bay Road
Hamilton,
Massachusetts 01936

Travel Schedule:
November 1982 —
January 1983

Nov. 12 Westmont College chapel, 10 A.M., Santa Barbara, California.

Nov. 12-14 Women's retreat at Danish Inn Motel, Solvang, California (Mrs. Marjorie Schweinfurth, 803-962-5677).

Nov. 21-22 21st at First United Methodist Church, Carrollton, Texas. 22nd, women's seminar, same church.

Jan. 13 Wives' Association of Gordon-Conwell Seminary, S. Hamilton, Massachusetts.

Jan. 21-22 Northwest Singles Conference, Hinson Memorial Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon.

Jan. 24-26 Torrey Memorial Bible Conference, Biola College, La Mirada, California.

Jan. 27-29 Oklahoma University Baptist Student Union Conference, Norman, Oklahoma (Mrs. Ralph Neighbour, 405-321-2810).

How to Receive This Newsletter

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter is published six times per year. If you would like to receive it regularly, simply fill out and return the enclosed card. *If we don't hear from you, we will assume that you are not interested in the newsletter at this time.* If you know of others who would like to receive it, send names and addresses to *The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter*, P.O. Box 7711, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107 or fill in the appropriate spaces on the enclosed card and return it in the envelope provided.