

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

September/October 1986

ISSN 8756-1336

## Family Prayers

When I was a child my father and mother gathered the six of us in the living room after breakfast every morning for family prayers. First we sang a hymn, omitting none of the stanzas, accompanied on the piano by one of our parents. It was in this way that we learned a good bit of solid theology without any conscious effort. I must emphasize that it was hymns and old gospel songs we sang, not choruses or gospel ditties.

There are some young families who still do this today. Judy Palpant of Spokane, who had heard me tell about our family prayers, writes, "Our children know that you were the inspiration for our three-year-old tradition of singing a hymn with our family devotions. We sing the same one each morning for a month. Tonight was the first time we tabulated the number of hymns we learned. The children were impressed! Let me assure you that many new words and truths have been impressed upon their hearts and minds as we have discussed the themes and words of our chosen hymn. Our many guests at breakfast (especially when we were in Africa) were often blessed by the singing of a hymn. My husband's parents were visiting us when we were singing 'Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us.' That hymn was sung at their wedding. During the Easter season one year we were learning 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross on Which the Prince of Glory Died.' A missionary from Kenya underlined the words 'Prince of Glory' for us by sharing some insights with us. Thank you for this idea which has enriched our family as well as our guests."

A reader asks, "At what age were the children when your parents started family prayers? How long a passage was read?" I think they must have begun as soon as the first child was born. I am Number Two, and I can't remember a time when

we did not have family prayer. All of us were included, the smaller ones sitting on laps. My father read from Hurlbut's *Story of the Bible* (wearing out three hardback copies!), just a page or so each morning. In the evening after dinner he read the evening portion of *Daily Light*, which is pure Scripture (King James Version). The hymn came first, then reading, then (in the mornings, because we were not around the table then) we knelt to pray, my father leading, all joining in the Lord's Prayer to close.

This question from another reader: "How can I encourage my husband as the spiritual leader of the family to have regular family devotions?" This is one I am often asked. If he is a Christian I would hope that he is willing at least to listen to his wife's suggestion. Many men believe their wives are "more spiritual" than they, and feel justified in leaving spiritual training of the children up to them. This is a mistake. The father is the priest in the home. He is the head of his wife. It is his God-given assignment to take spiritual leadership. No matter how brief and simple the devotional time may be, there is no calculating the power of its long-term effect on the children. They learn very early the place God has in their parents' lives. My father was a very simple man—humble, honest about his faith, but reticent in the extreme about speaking of it. We had no such thing as "sharing times" in our family. It was rare for us to converse about spiritual things, especially personal experience. But we knew our parents prayed in private, read their Bibles, and prayed and read aloud with us. It was routine. But it mattered. It matters to me now. I hope perhaps these words of testimony may nudge some of those reticent Christian fathers to take courage, take the bull by the horns, and say, "I've learned something. It's important. More important, maybe, than anything else we do in this house. We're going to start today."

## What's Out There?

Last May *Time* magazine reported the discovery of the most massive object ever detected in the universe. The odd thing is nobody knows what it is. The Kitt Peak telescope picked up two quasars ("intensely bright bodies so far away that the light they emit travels for billions of years before reaching the earth") which seemed to be identical, an occurrence astronomers consider about as likely as finding two people with identical fingerprints. Something called a "gravitational lens" seemed to be bending the light (get that!) from a single quasar in such a way as to produce two identical images. Nothing astonishing about that—Einstein predicted it more than seventy years ago, and Arthur Eddington confirmed it a few years later.

The great question is just exactly *what* is acting as a gravitational lens. Whatever it is, it has to have the mass of a thousand (1,000) galaxies. If it's a black hole, it is "at least a thousand times as large as the Milky Way (which consists of hundreds of billions of stars, including the sun)." Got that? I was bemused by the statement, "Astrophysicists find it difficult to explain how so tremendous a black hole could have formed." I guess they do. They're turning over a third possibility, much too arcane for me to peer into at all, but it has to do with the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe.

The most numbing of the facts of this story for me is that people go to such elaborate lengths to avoid mentioning one vastly prior fundamental possibility that (surely?) stares them in the face: creation.

How much faith does it take to believe in God? Less, I venture to say—a great deal less—than to believe in the Unconscious generating the Conscious, Mindlessness creating Mind, Nothing giving birth to Something.

What we know of God we have seen in His Son. He in whom we are asked to trust is Love, creative Love, thinking of us, I suppose, before He thought of gravitational lenses, giving Himself in sacrificial love long before He gave us His own breath of life—for the Lamb was slain *before the foundation of the world*.

My Lord and my God. Forgive my faithlessness.

## Grandchild Number Five

Colleen Amy was born in Laurel, Mississippi, June 7. She has two brothers and two sisters. Their parents are Walt and Valerie Shepard. "Whose work is this, I ask, who has brought it to pass? Who has summoned the generations from the beginning? It is I, the Lord, I am the first, and to the last of them I am He" (Isaiah 41:4; NEB). "Grandchildren are the crown of old age" (Proverbs 17:6). Thank You, Lord.

## Help Needed

Is there someone who would be willing to live in and help Valerie care for her house and five children for the coming school year? Please write directly to her, and send a photo: Mrs. W.D. Shepard Jr., 3234 University Ave., Laurel MS 39440, or call (601)425-4115.

## Booklet on Virginity

In the May/June 1986 Newsletter I asked you to pray about the publication of a little booklet for people aged about eleven to sixteen. When *Time* magazine ran a cover story on the prevalence of teen-age pregnancy they managed to come up with two "remedies" for this "flaw in the social fabric": more sex education in the schools, more availability of contraceptives.

I was upset. What can I do? I wondered. This twelve-page booklet is meant to help these children see that there is another way.

It's called *Sex Is a Lot More Than Fun*. You can order it directly from us:

Lars Gren  
10 Strawberry Cove  
Magnolia, MA 01930

Please don't order it from the Newsletter address.

Prices: Single copies, \$1.50 each, postpaid.  
Lots of ten, \$12.50, postpaid.

Make checks payable to Booklets Ltd.

---

© Copyright 1986 by Elisabeth Elliot Gren

*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.

## Regrets

When my father was twelve years old he lost his left eye through disobedience. He had been forbidden to have firecrackers, so he sneaked out early in the morning of July 4, 1910, and, with the help of a neighboring farmer, set off some dynamite caps. A piece of copper penetrated his eye.

Four years later my grandfather wrote this letter to my grandmother:

Dearest:

I am not one bit surprised that after all our experiences of the past four years you should suffer from sad memories, but I really do not believe for a moment that you should feel you have any occasion to let remorse bite into your life on account of Philip's accident. Surely we *cannot* guard against all the contingencies of this complex life, and no one who has poured out life as you have for each one of your children should let such regrets take hold.

None of us could be alive to the pressing needs of today if we should carry along with us the dark heaviness of *any* past, whether real or imagined. I know, dearest, that your Lord cannot wish anything of that sort for you, and I believe your steady, shining, and triumphant faith will lead you out through Him, into the richest experiences you have ever had. I *believe* that firmly.

I have had to turn to Him in helplessness today to overcome depression because of my failures. My Sunday School fiasco at Swarthmore bears down pretty hard. But that is *not right*. I must look ahead, and up, as you often tell me, and *I will*. I know how sickening remorse is, if anyone knows; yet I also know, as you do, the lift and relief of turning the whole matter over to Him. We must have more prayers and more study together, dearest. I haven't followed the impulses I have so often had in this.

Lovingly, your own Phil.

My grandfather was the most cheerful and serene man I knew in my childhood. It is hard for me to imagine his having had any cause for remorse or temptation to depression. This letter, which bears a two-cent stamp and a

Philadelphia postmark, was sent to Grandma in Franconia, New Hampshire, where they had a lovely vacation house. I spent my childhood summers in that house and can picture her sitting on the porch, perhaps on the anniversary of her son's accident, looking out toward Mts. Lafayette, Bald, and Cannon, wrestling with the terrible thoughts of her own carelessness and failure. I thank God for my heritage. I thank Him for the word of His faithful servant Paul, "I concentrate on this: I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead, I go straight for the goal—my reward the honor of being called by God in Christ" (Phil 3:13, 14 JBP).

## Readers Write:

### Home Schooling

"We began home schooling this year and we love it," writes the mother of seven, ages three to fifteen. "It is helping us become a strong family as we work and learn together. My children are working harder, learning more, and developing good study habits. I need a lot of self-discipline in order to keep up with housework and do justice to the schooling, but it's an area I'm weak in and I appreciate the challenge." I have a hunch the lady is like the rest of us—not "born disciplined," just willing to ask for and receive the Lord's help.

### Committed to Staying Home

"I am a seminary faculty wife and we live on almost poverty-level income, but no matter how great the sacrifice, I am committed 100% to being in the home. I can affirm that God honors this. We have few material possessions and have moved every year of our oldest child's life (seven). I've seen that we Christians can do many strange and unusual things (that the world and many Christians say cannot be done without the children's suffering—e.g. lack of possessions, permanent home), but with the family as #1 priority, a mother and father devoted to teaching the children sensitivity to life with God as center, God will bless and honor."

## Help Needed

Help needed in Palm Beach, FL. Care for 93-year-old (ambulatory) man. \$1,100 per month plus room and board. Call Lars (617) 525-3653.

## Wedding Rings

An elderly jeweler who had spent his life selling wedding rings in New York City to people in all walks of life was asked by a radio interviewer, "Do you see any difference between those who are buying rings now, and in the past?"

"Yes," was his prompt answer. "They are not so happy now. They live together first, and you do not see the happiness couples used to have when they came looking for a ring." He also noted that a large number of homosexuals are buying wedding rings.

As Aristotle noted millenia ago, all men seek happiness. There are no exceptions. The difference between people is their definition. What's yours? How do you get there? John 13:17 (J.B. Phillips) has a good starter: "Once you have realised these things [the things the Master does], you will find your happiness in doing them." It seems that not many folks swallow that nowadays.

## Travel Schedule September/ October/November 1986

**September 20** Lenox, MA; Stevens School of the Bible women's seminar; 413-637-2241.

**September 25** Sarasota, FL; Covenant Life Church.

**September 26, 27** St. Petersburg, FL; Moody Bible Institute women's seminar; Josephine McCarthy, 312-329-4000.

**October 4** Alexandria, LA; Baptist Student Convention; 318-448-3402.

**October 17, 18** St. John, NB; Atlantic District Women's Convention; Mrs. Flora Nye, 506-273-3051.

**October 31-November 2** Ashville, NC; The Cove women's conference; Mrs. Eley, 1-800-THE-COVE.

**November 7, 8** Boyne Mountain, MI; Winsome Women's Retreat; Meg Brown, 616-347-4945 (office 0020).

**November 22** Bangor, MA; Don Gill, 617-425-4115

**November 25-30** Colorado; Campus Crusade for Christ (details uncertain).

## The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

Servant Ministries, Inc.  
Post Office Box 7711  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 14  
Ann Arbor, MI