

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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## A Child's Obedience

**Q**uestion from a young mother: How can I train my twenty-month-old to come to me? How many times do I say "Come here" before I go and grab him?

The very first time you tell the child to do or not to do something (come here, don't touch, sit still) (1) make sure you have the child's attention; (2) look him straight in the eye (let him know he has your attention); (3) speak in an even, normal tone, address him *by name*, give the command; (4) give him a few seconds to let the message sink in; (5) speak his name again, and ask, "What did I say?" Since training should begin long before he is talking, he will not be able to verbalize the answer, but he should obey. Children always are way ahead of their parents' idea of what they can understand. (6) Tell him once more: "Mama said *Come*, Andrew." If he does not obey, spank him. After the first time or two of practice, spank after you've spoken *once*.

To make a habit of repeating commands is to train the child to believe you never mean what you say the first time. If the first lesson in obedience is carried out as above, the child learns quickly that you mean exactly what you say. I know it works—my parents taught us this way, and I watched them train my younger sister and brothers. I found that it worked with Valerie.

If you run after the child and physically force him to do what you say (e.g. grab him when he doesn't come, take something away when he touches it), you are training him not to pay attention to your *words*. He knows he can get away with anything until forcibly restrained.

Now about spanking. The book of Proverbs speaks of the "rod of discipline," (22:15) and says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother"

(29:15). "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him" (13:24). My mother used a very thin little switch from a bush in the backyard. We knew there was one in every room, readily available to administer a couple of stings to our legs if we disobeyed. Valerie keeps a thin wooden paint stirrer handy in the house, and also in her purse. One or two firm "paddles" on a small outstretched hand are language that an under-two child understands very clearly.

Don't imagine that following this advice will mean that your child will be punished twenty times a day. The wonderful thing about these simple rules is that punishment needs to be used very seldom, *if you start soon enough*. If you begin at the beginning to show the child you are serious about obedience, you will not need to undo the months or years of raising your voice, repeating commands again and again, rushing after him. You will have control. The child will be learning to trust the word of authority (which will make it much easier later for him to believe that God means what He says) and your life together will be much more peaceful and happy.

Suppose your child is already twenty months or three years old and you have not taught him to obey? Then you must both pay a price, but I believe it can be done. Set aside a whole morning to start over. Talk to him, tell him how much you love him, tell him, "This morning we are going to learn the most important lesson you will ever have to learn." Let him see that you are in earnest. Start practicing the beginner's rules.

A word of caution: spanking, in my opinion, should be for deliberate disobedience only. When a child spills his milk or stuffs peanuts up his nose or pours your talcum powder all over the carpet, he is not being disobedient. He is only acting his age. You have not forbidden him

to stuff peanuts up his nose. If you have, and he does it anyway, spank him. If, in defiance, he dumps his milk on the floor, spank him. But childish mistakes and messes must be pointed out, and by all means he should be made to rectify them or clean them up as best he can. Think of punishments that will fit the "crimes," but reserve the stick or the switch for deliberate disobedience. He will soon learn that when he defies you, a spanking follows as sure as the dawn follows the night—even if you are in church or the supermarket. Take him out to the car and spank him. Explain the whole system to him again (*after* the spanking), if necessary. Put your arms around him, assure him of your love, and change the subject.

## Interruptions, Delays, Inconveniences

Emily, wife of America's first foreign missionary, Adoniram Judson, wrote home from Moulmein, Burma, in January 1847:

"This taking care of teething babies, and teaching natives to darn stockings and talking English back end foremost . . . in order to get an eatable dinner, is really a very odd sort of business for Fanny Forester [her penname—she was a well-known New England writer before marrying Judson]. . . . But I begin to get reconciled to my minute cares." She was ambitious for "higher and better things," but was enabled to learn that "the person who would do great things well must practice daily on little ones; and she who would have the assistance of the Almighty in important acts, must be daily and hourly accustomed to consult His will in the minor affairs of life."

About eighty years ago, when James O. Fraser was working as a solitary missionary in Tengyueh, southwest China, his situation was, "in every sense, 'against the grain.'" He did not enjoy housekeeping and looking after premises. He found the houseboy irritable and touchy, constantly quarreling with the cook. Endless small items of business cluttered up the time he wanted for language study, and he was having to learn to be "perpetually inconvenienced" for the

sake of the gospel. He wrote after some weeks alone:

"I am finding out that it is a mistake to plan to get through a certain amount of work in a certain time. It ends in disappointment, besides not being the right way to go about it, in my judgment. It makes one impatient of interruptions and delay. Just as you are nearly finishing—somebody comes along to sit with you and have a chat! You might hardly think it possible to be impatient and put out where there is such an opportunity for presenting the Gospel—but it is. It may be just on mealtime, or you are writing a letter to catch the mail, or you were just going out for needed exercise before tea. But the visitor has to be welcomed, and I think it is well to cultivate an attitude of mind which will enable one to welcome him from the heart and at any time. 'No admittance except on business' scarcely shows a true missionary spirit."

There is nothing like the biographies of great Christians to give us perspective and help us to keep spiritual balance. Here are two well worth reading. It was J.O. Fraser who so inspired Jim Elliot with missionary vision that Jim decided he would name his first son after him. The above quotations are from Courtney Anderson: *To the Golden Shore*, Zondervan, p. 473; and Eileen Crossman: *Mountain Rain*, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, pp. 32, 33.

One more quotation—this from an out-of-print book, *The Life and Letters of Janet Erskine Stuart*: Says one who was her assistant for some years, "She delighted in seeing her plans upset by unexpected events, saying that it gave her great comfort, and that she looked on such things as an assurance that God was watching over her stewardship, was securing the accomplishment of His will, and working out His own designs. Whether she traced the secondary causes to the prayer of a child, to the imperfection of an individual, to obstacles arising from misunderstandings, or to interference of outside agencies,

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she was joyfully and graciously ready to recognize the indication of God's ruling hand, and to allow herself to be guided by it."

## Rent-a-Mom

Kathy Lewis sent me this advertisement that appeared in her local paper in California. She writes:

"The most distressing part of this 'service' is the implication that Mom can so easily be replaced, particularly when she 'just doesn't want to do it.' What a shame that so many are missing the true joy of mothering which is daily, unconditional, and self-giving.

"I am so thankful that during the years when my three girls were small I could not afford frequent childcare. There were no day care centers. I was home every day and in our daily routine there was such security and comfort. Of course there were days when I was exhausted, bored, sick, irritated, or discouraged. But there was no alternative; I did whatever was next on the list out of sheer survival instinct. Most days were a happy blur of story books, peanut butter sandwiches cut in triangles and soup (with jelly spread on crackers if they had been extra good), tricycles, and long peaceful naps. [No matter how hectic *your* days may seem now, the time will come—we promise!—when they'll appear "a happy blur." EE]

"The long days of mothering small children now seem to me to have been short and fleeting. As God has promised, faithfulness to this calling has brought rewards beyond my deepest longings. The future is bright for my dear ones as they near the time of becoming mothers too, but there are days when I would give a lot to see those precious little faces and bury my face deep in the neck of a sleepy little girl again."

One of the slick catalogues which pour into my mailbox contained recently a "survival manual" entitled *Where's Mom Now That I*

### "GOOD OLD MOM" A Rent-A-Mom Service



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*Need Her?* I lament the need of such a book for the hundreds of thousands of children who must come home from school to an empty house and need help in surviving on their own—with recipes, remedies, first aid, laundry, bike care, and "helpful hints."

For you mothers who are there for your children, stick with it, for *God's* sake, no matter what pressures are brought to bear on you. And for you who want to be there and so far have not found a way to do it, ask God to show you if He has one. Trust Him and do whatever He says.

## The Escalation of Evil

We sometimes smile at those who sentimentally imagine that the past was not nearly so bad as the present. Were they really "the good old days"? A study conducted by the Fullerton, California, police department and the California department of education cannot be dismissed as sentimentality. Compare the leading school discipline problems (*Time*, February 1, 1988):

1940's	1980's
Talking	Drug abuse
Chewing gum	Alcohol abuse
Making noise	Pregnancy
Running in hallways	Suicide
Getting out of place in line	Rape
Wearing improper clothing	Robbery
Not putting paper in wastebasket	Assault
	Burglary
	Arson
	Bombings

## Prayer

May He support us all the day long until  
the shadows lengthen,  
evening comes,  
the busy world is hushed,  
the fever of life is over,  
and our work is done.

Then, in his mercy, may He give us  
A safe lodging,  
A holy rest,  
And peace at last.

(Cardinal Newman)

## The Dangers of Sharing

There is a notion abroad today that we must all be "open" and "transparent," put all our cards on the table, hold nothing back. This, it is claimed, is real fellowship, what John meant by "walking in the light." Is it? Only God can search out the secret places of the heart. Therefore it is only as we draw near to Him that we can draw near to each other without harm. I think we've got it backwards when we suppose that by barging into one another's souls we somehow get closer to God. If we are given the opportunity to know another's heart, we must be very careful not to "foster the self that in a brother's bosom gnaws," as George MacDonald puts it (*Diary of an Old Soul*, November 9), but always to hold that one to the very highest. This is love. This is the kind of sharing which will strengthen and cheer.

## A Little Boy Learns the Bible

When Valerie told the story of Peter's denial of Christ to her three-year-old son Jim he looked up in wide-eyed wonder and asked, "Mama, will we deny him too?"

"We must pray that we won't, Jim."

"Let's pray *right now*," he said, and they did.

On a recent mountain climb they came to a stream which a sign told them was pure for drinking. Stooping down, Jim scooped water into his hand, "like Gideon's soldiers, Mama," he said. When his sister Christiana lay down to drink, he said, "Christiana can't be Gideon's soldier, can she?"

His thoughts are not always exalted. He was sitting so quietly and apparently attentively in church one Sunday morning that Val asked him later what he had been thinking about. "About cutting up pumpkins," was his answer.

### *Travel Schedule May/June/ July 1988*

**May 1-15** Speaking engagements in Australia.

**June 4, 5** Camden, ME: Rev. David Edman, St. Thomas' Church.

**June 16-19** Howard Family Reunion at Gordon College, Wenham, MA.

**July 15-17** Lebanon, OR: Camp Tadmor, Carla Stenberg, (503) 657-4105.

**July 18, 19** Cody, WY: Missionary Alliance Church, Rev. James N. Howard, (307) 587-3418.

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