

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest Grandchild,

In today's letter I want to call you attention to these words of Jesus about identifying false teachers. Jesus said:

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” (Matt 7:15-20)

The wisdom of these words is obvious. It is difficult to identify a tree by it's leaves, but it is easy to identify it by it's fruit. The same principle is valid in identifying teachers. How they appear, or what they say, or the books they write, are not as important as what their teachings produce. This principle, of course, applies to all teachers both religious and secular.

Many years ago I wrote an article that appeared in an on-line newspaper. Because I recommended the Bible, a woman in another state rebuked me for believing such a book. She said that the Bible in general, and Paul in particular, were opposed to women. After several exchanges she said further correspondence was useless as neither of us was about to change. I did, however, impose on her to respond to one final question. I wrote: “Since you don't believe the Bible and are convinced that it denigrates women, tell me where on earth you would like to live where the Bible has not been taught?” She said this was a valid question and promised to get back to me after the holidays. That was over 20 years ago and I am yet to receive her reply.

When Charles Darwin returned to England after circling the earth gathering information to substantiate the “theory” of evolution, he found some of his colleagues making fun of missionaries. Darwin rebuked them with these words:

“They forget, or will not remember, that human sacrifices, and the power of an idolatrous priesthood—a system of profligacy unparalleled in any other part of the world—infanticide a consequence of that system—bloody wars, where the conquerors spared neither women nor children—that all these have been abolished; and that dishonesty, intemperance, and licentiousness have been greatly reduced by the introduction of Christianity. In a voyager to forget these things is base ingratitude; for should he chance to be at the point of shipwreck on some unknown coast, he will most devoutly pray that the lesson of the missionary may have extended thus far.” (Journals of Research by Charles Darwin p. 414.)

Letter # 2 had links to a couple of interviews regarding a stone age tribe in Ecuador. For

several centuries no foreigner ever survived in their part of the jungle. I was in their midst, however, without fear. Two of these natives even took me up the river in their dug out canoe searching for a special type of fruit. They were not only my friends, they were my brothers in Christ. The transformation of their lives is “fruit” produced by the Bible.

Howard R. Russell, in his book *“A Lawyer’s Examination of the Bible”* (Pages 191 - 192) quotes James Russell Lowell. When he was Minister of State to England he also heard critics malign the work of missionaries. He said: *“I will challenge such skeptics to find a place ten miles square on the globe, where a man can live in comfort, security, and decency, where he can find education for his children, reverence for infancy and old age, honor for womanhood or any sacred regard for human life, where the gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way, laying a foundation for such a condition of affairs. If they can find such a place, it will then be in order for them to emigrate thither and advocate their unbelief. Scoffers against religion are dependent upon the religion they discard for every privilege they enjoy as citizens of a Christian community.”*

I’m sure you see the point. You should always try to look beyond what someone says to see what their teaching produces. You can get a clearer understanding of Communism, for example, by visiting N. Korea than by reading Marx or Engels. It is also easier to understand Islam by visiting Saudi Arabia than by reading the Koran. The same principle, of course, applies to the teachings of Jesus. I’m glad that missionaries got to that jungle tribe before I did.

While this truth is relevant for everyone, it is especially important for girls and women. Much of the world degrades women, but Jesus never did. If anyone abuses a woman they do so in direct violation of the teachings of Jesus! All women owe a debt of gratitude to Jesus.

There is an old joke about the man who jumped off the Empire State Building. As he went by the 35th floor he said: *“Everything is all right so far!”* “So far” isn’t good enough for Grandpa. I pray for every one of you every day that you will think beyond the 35th floor and choose a road with no regrets.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce