

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 17

Dearest Grandchild,

George Barna leads an organization that conducts research to determine the state of the American Church and culture. His surveys reveal this sad state of affairs:

- 65% believe the Bible “answers all or most of the basic questions of life.”
- 44% believe the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon teach the same truths.
- 60% of Americans can’t name half of the Ten Commandments.
- 63% can’t name the four gospels of the New Testament.
- 31% believe a good person can earn his/her way into heaven.
- 81% believe that “God helps those who help themselves” is a direct quote from the Bible.

Something is obviously wrong! It seems that there is hardly any difference between those who are “Christians” and those who are not. Remember the old saying: “When all else fails, read the instructions”. Let’s do it! Here are some final instructions given by Jesus.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20 NIV)

This passage is generally known as the “Great Commission”. Earlier, as in Matt. 10:5, 6, Jesus gave a limited commission and sent His disciples only to the Jews. Now, however, He sends them to “all nations”. It is amazing that people who respect the “authority” of a small town police officer, will totally disrespect Christ who has all “authority” in heaven and on earth!

- This “Great Commission” contains 4 commands - go, make disciples, baptize, and teach.
- 3 of these commands are written in the Greek text as participles.
 - Go = “poreuthentes” (nom. pl. masc. part. aor. 1)
 - Baptizing = “baptizontes” (nom. pl. masc. part. pres. act)
 - Teaching = “didaskontes” (nom. pl. masc. part. pres. act)
- Only 1 command is written as an “imperative”. Make disciples = “matheteusate” (2 pers., pl. aor. 1, imper. act)
- Grammatically speaking, “making disciples” is the most important command in this passage.
- The Greek word for “disciple” is “mathetes”. It comes from “manthano” which means “to learn”. It is the basis of our English word “math”. The Dictionary of N. T. Theology states that the noun “mathetes” occurs 264 times in the N.T. Scriptures (Exclusively in the Gospels and Acts).
- There is no command in the Scriptures to “plant churches”, but there is a command to “make

- disciples”.
- You can “plant a church” without making disciples, but you cannot “make disciples” without planting a church.
 - It is useless to baptize and teach someone who does not want to learn.
 - LEARNING IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF CHRISTIANITY!
 - GRANDPA WANTS YOU TO LEARN EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT JESUS!

DOING THINGS IN THE ORDER OF THEIR IMPORTANCE

In our last letter we emphasized the importance of doing things in the order of their importance. While my analysis of the Great Commission may be a bit technical, I want you to understand the high priority Jesus placed on “making disciples”. The Greek word for disciple is “mathetes”. This comes from the word “manthano” which means “to learn”. Learning is the key to your success or failure in following Christ.

When you are having trouble in school, it is great to have someone give you private lessons. The Good News is that this is precisely what Jesus promises to do. If you really want to learn, Jesus has promised to be your teacher. Note His beautiful invitation: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt 11:28-30)**

I have taken the liberty of underlining 3 words from this passage - **“Learn from me”**. When Jesus gave this invitation animals were yoked together to accomplish work. It was a common practice to yoke a young and inexperienced animal with an older and disciplined one. In this way, the novice could learn “from” the veteran. This is the way we learn “from” Jesus!

The Bible word for “easy” in this verse is “chrestos” which can be translated as “well fitting”. There is an old legend that the carpenter named Jesus made yokes that fit perfectly. Obviously, a 600 lb. animal needs a different yoke from an animal that weighs 1,200 lbs. A yoke, of course, is for work, but when Jesus puts His yoke on you it fits perfectly. If you take His yoke, you will find “rest for your souls”.

Another interesting word describing our Heavenly Teacher is “parakletos”. It is translated in the King James Version as “Comforter”. It literally means to “call to one’s side” (para = beside, and kaleo = to call). Jesus ascended into heaven, but He did not abandon us like orphans. He promised to come back and help us by means of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would be our “Comforter”. He would be someone we could immediately call to our side in times of trouble.

If you really want to “learn”, Jesus has promised to help you!

THE BIBLE IS OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Jeremiah wrote: **“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.” (Jer 2:13)**

A cistern, as you know, is a receptacle for holding water. Here is a link to a short video about the contrast between a spring and a cistern. This video was taken at Spout Springs, just East of Carthage, Missouri.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0WskptD-34>

- As we have pointed out before, when Jesus was tempted by the devil he overcame those temptations by quoting the Scriptures (Matt. 4:1 - 11).
- Jesus said that man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4).
- The word “disciples” is found 264 times in the N.T. Scriptures. Being a “disciple” and “learning” are obviously important.
- The apostles evidently took Jesus seriously about “making disciples” for this is a key word the book of Acts. Disciple and disciples are found 30 times in the book of Acts while Christian and Christians are found only twice.
- The early disciples devoted themselves to the “apostle’s teaching” (Acts 2:42).
- Over and over the book of Acts makes reference to the fact that the Apostles were “teaching” (Acts 4:2; 5:25; 5:28; 5:42; 13:12; 15:1; 17:19; 18:11 Etc.)
- We are to study the Bible to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15).
- As we have pointed out before, the Bible is the Sword of the Spirit, and is our primary weapon to defeat the devil.
- Please make Bible study an integral part of your life.

BE CAREFUL WHOM YOU CHOOSE TO FOLLOW

Jesus warned His disciples about certain teachers and said: **“Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matt 15:14)**

We began this letter with some shocking statistics from George Barna. As we have said, unfortunately it is often difficult to tell “Christians” from “non-Christians”. Just because someone “claims” to be a follower of Christ does not make it so. Please be careful whom you choose as a role model. In 1952 a preacher named Jim Jones started a religious movement in Indianapolis, Indiana. The movement migrated to California and then to Guyana in South America. On Nov. 18, 1978 Jones ordered his followers to drink Kool-Aid laced with poison. Jones, and over 900 of his followers died on that day. 276 of them were children. How sad! Today the expression “drinking the kool-aid” comes from this tragic event and is used to refer to someone who foolishly obeys irrational instructions.

Jesus warned: “Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt 7:21-23)

Please don't drink the kool-aid, and please be careful who your heroes are!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce