

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 35**

Dearest Grandchild,

In today's letter let us consider the importance of a support group to help you accomplish what God has called you to do.

There are many verses in the Bible on this subject. For example: **“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”** (Eccl 4:9-12)

In this regard I have found the church to be a group of fellow travelers which have given me support. When I am down, invariably there is someone in the church to help lift me up. Every living thing needs an environment to survive. That's why God had to make water before He made fish. When you are “born again” you have spiritual life that needs a spiritual environment to thrive and grow. I believe that environment is the church.

The contrast between the physical worship of the Jews and the spiritual worship of Christians is made clear in the book of Hebrews:

**“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."** (Heb 12:18-21)

Note the physical environment in which God gave Moses the Law. The mountain could be touched. The noise could be heard. The flames could be seen. This, however, is not like Christianity. The essence of Christianity involves a spiritual environment. The Scriptures therefore continue:

**“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”** (Heb 12:22-24)

Note the spiritual environment involved in Christian worship. While most do not think about it today, spiritual reality was very important to the early followers of Christ. In those days they had no church buildings, and were forced to meet under a tree or in a home. In times of

persecution, the Christians in Rome even met in underground tombs called the catacombs. In spite of their humble surroundings which they could see, they believed they were surrounded by spiritual reality that they could not see. If you really believe that God, Christ, angels, and the spirits of righteous men are present when you worship, it changes your whole perspective on “going to church”.

In addition to the spiritual realities in church, there is also the physical companionship of brothers and sisters in Christ who can sometimes hold us up when we are in danger of falling.

I’m sure you have heard of William Wilberforce. He is the man God used to do away with slavery in the British Empire. He was a small man, barely over five feet tall, and weighed less than 100 pounds.

Many have seen the movie about his life and are familiar with his role in parliament. He was elected in Sept. 1780, but his bill to abolish slave trade was not passed until Feb. 23, 1807. I’m sure you have heard the saying “follow the money”. When you are trying to understand what is going on behind the scenes, “follow the money”. In this regard there was so much money involved in slave trading and slave labor that the task of ending slavery seemed impossible. Government bureaucracies, bankers, and businesses fought Wilberforce tooth and nail. He was lied about, vilified, and even threats were made against his life.

In the end, however, he won. One of the reasons for his spiritual strength and stamina came from a small group of believers called the Clapham Circle. Wilberforce found this tiny handful of committed Christians to be a constant source of spiritual strength and stamina. While the abolition of slave trade happened in 1807, the emancipation of all slaves in the British Empire did not happen until 1833. This long awaited good news came just three days before Wilberforce died.

Craig von Buseck (CBN.com Ministries Director) summarized the life of Wilberforce under five guiding principles:

1. The Principle of Pardon. As a young man he was deeply influenced by friendship with John Newton. Newton, as you know, was the converted slave trader who wrote “Amazing Grace”. Though Wilberforce’s parents sought to dissuade him from fanaticism, he was a deeply committed Christian convinced that Christ could pardon even the vilest sinners.

2. The Principle of Purpose. Wilberforce wrote: “*God has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manner (morals)*”. While he was involved in many other noble endeavors, these two great causes became the focus of his life and ministry.

3. The Principle of Partners. Wilberforce drew strength from a handful of fellow believers known as the “Clapham Circle”. The name comes from the fact that this small group built houses in a circle around their church building in the small village of Clapham Commons. Even though their fellowship was small in number, they were convinced that where even two or three were gathered together, Christ was in their midst.

4. The Principle of Power. Wilberforce was convinced that he could never succeed without

the power of the Holy Spirit. His book *Real Christianity* reflects his deep convictions on this. He wrote in 1897: *Surely the principles as well as the practice of Christianity are simple, and lead not to meditation only but to action*". It was the Holy Spirit that provided him the power to act.

5. The Principle of Persistence. From 1780 to 1833 he never gave up.

Again, I am not sure where God is leading you. He is a God of infinite variety who gives to each of us our own fingerprints, personality, and ministry. When you receive Him into your heart as Lord and Savior, He promises never to leave you, or forsake you (Heb. 13:5). If you truly submit to His leading in your life, surely He will guide you on a regular basis to assemble with other believers in church.

Thanks for taking time to read these words.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce