

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 39

Dearest Grandchild,

God is a God of infinite variety.

- Every star is different from every other star. (1 Cor. 15:41).
- While it may be difficult to prove to a skeptic, scientists believe that no two snow flakes are exactly identical. They say: *“Because air currents are always changing and snowflakes are always swirling around, each snowflake takes a unique downward path through the air layers. So each snowflake has a unique process that builds up its crystals, and each seems to be unlike any other.”*
- YOU are also unique:
 - Your fingerprints are unique and have been used for many years in solving crimes.
 - Your ears are also unique and some say are a better identifier than fingerprints.
 - The United Arab Emirates has been using eye scans to identify people crossing their borders since 2001. To date they have apprehended over 330,000 people attempting to enter their country with fraudulent travel documents.
 - As you know, you also have your own unique DNA.
 - YOU ARE SPECIAL!

In today’s letter I want to tell you about the duck billed platypus. Every creature is “special” but this one seems to be “more special” than others. When the first specimen of this amazing creature arrived in England in 1799 it was thought to be a hoax. The experts could not believe that any mammal could have a duck’s bill, webbed feet with claws, and a beaver like tail. One “expert” even took a pair of scissors and tried to remove the duck bill from the pelt. That very specimen is now on display in London’s British Museum of Natural history, and the scissor marks are still visible.

“The platypus and the echidna (only found alive in Australia) are the only known monotremes—mammals that lay reptile-like eggs and suckle their young. But, even when suckling, they are not like other mammals; the milk is not produced through teats, but is apparently sucked from the skin as it exudes from the ducts of the mammary glands”

God has designed the platypus with an amazing array of features. The claws are for burrowing and its webbed feet are for swimming. God even designed the web so it would fold under when the platypus walks on the land. Its broad, flat tail is useful in diving. Even under water the body of the platypus is dry for God gave it a special skin with two layers. The outer layer is made up of fine fur with 900 long shiny hairs covering each square millimeter and a second wooly undercoat is beneath. When it submerges, it has a fold of skin that closes over its eyes and ears. Its duck-like bill is actually a sensitive muzzle that allows the platypus to find tiny food morsels at the bottom of murky lakes and rivers and under rocks using highly developed electro-receptors. Rather

than giving birth to a live baby, it reproduces by laying eggs. While originally thought to be “primitive”, its incredibly complex electrolocation techniques are so highly advanced that they are anything but primitive.

There is, of course, nothing in the fossil record to indicate that the platypus was ever anything other than a platypus. It is therefore not a living “transitional” form. It is a truly unique creature, and one that continues to baffle those who insist on believing the theory of evolution.

God, in His infinite wisdom, also especially designs people. Consider the legacy of John Mark Stallings. He was born with Down Syndrome and a lot of people, including his father, thought God had made a mistake. In retrospect, of course, God is right all the time!

John’s father was Gene Stallings, a famous football coach. Little Johnny was his only son. That precious child was born with so many health problems that he was not expected to ever see his fourth birthday. At first, his father prayed that God would change Johnny and make him right. Instead, God chose to change his father to make him right. Gene wrote Johnny’s biography, *Another Season: A Coach’s Story of Raising an Exceptional Child*, which has been an inspiration to millions. Against all odds, Johnny lived to be 46 years old. He passed away August 2, 2008.

As the end drew near, Johnny’s oxygen level plummeted from the normal 90’s to only 63. His daddy said: “Johnny, how do you feel?”. Johnny replied “I fine”. He passed away the next morning. His father said: “My complaining days are over!”.

As word spread of Johnny’s death, 1,500 letters poured in from all over the country. Two governors sent police cars to lead the funeral procession, and hundreds of mourners showed up to pay their respects.

Though Johnny could not read, or write, or even count to ten, his short life impacted millions. Here are a few of his achievements.

- A biography honoring his life was written, which we have already mentioned.
- An honorary High School Diploma from Dallas Christian High School.
- A “Change the World” honor from Abilene Christian University;
- An equipment room named in his honor at the University of Alabama.
- A playground also named for him at the University of Alabama.
- A football field named in his honor at Faulkner University.
- A life size statue of him and his father at Faulkner University.
- He was named a Paul Harris Fellow in Rotary International.
- He was made an honorary Marine by the U.S. Marine Corps.
- The Texas A & M Class of ‘57 endowed a Medical School Scholarship in his honor.
- He proudly represented Texas in the International Special Olympics.
- He was featured in the only United Way commercial for the NFL.
- He received the Alabama Sports Festival Medal which was carried on the space shuttle.
- He kicked off the “First Down for Downs” associated with the NFL Arizona Cardinals.

- He appeared on the Today Show, Dateline, and an ABC Special.
- He was featured in People's Magazine, Reader's Digest, and many Christian publications.
- He assisted teaching Sunday School classes for four year olds in various congregations.
- One university included him in a special list of only 5 people who have changed the world..
- He was baptized into Christ in 1985 in Dallas, Texas.
- His name has been written down in the Lamb's Book of Live in heaven.

In an interview with Dr. James Dobson, Gene Stallings said that if he had it all to do over, he would never ask God to change Johnny. He said that Johnny was like an angel from heaven who taught him about love, and friendship, and what it means to really care. One woman reflected on his life and wrote: "Life is not about waiting until the storm passes by, it's about learning to dance in the rain". His father concurred and said: "Johnny taught the girls and Ruth Ann and me, to dance in the rain. Just do the best we have with what we've got."

The Psalmist said it like this: **"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (Ps 139:13-14)**

God deliberately designed the duck billed platypus, John Mark Stallings, and YOU! Please remember that God designed you the way He did on purpose and be obedient to His calling in your life.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce