

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 85

Dearest Grandchild,

Today's letter will involve the dramatic conversion of Robert Craig "Evel" Knievel. He was born in Butte, Montana Oct. 17, 1938 and died Nov. 30, 2007 at the age of 69. Most of you have probably never heard of him, but he was very famous 30 or 40 years ago. He achieved fame as a "stunt man" who attempted over 75 death defying ramp to ramp motorcycle jumps. He had so many wrecks during his career that he made it into the Guinness Book of World Records for sustaining 433 bone fractures.

The "good news" is that Evel Knievel confessed Christ a short time before his death.

Throughout his life Knievel delighted in doing what was dangerous. He was fired by the Anaconda Mining Co. for popping a wheelie with an earth mover. While attempting the stunt he lost control, and knocked out a power line leaving the city of Butte without electricity for several hours. Later, while in jail for reckless driving, he chose the name "Evel" as an appropriate symbol of his rebellious life. Representative of his disrespect for rules is the fact that as a professional hunting guide he helped his clients bag their prey by poaching game in the Yellowstone National Park.

In 1962 he broke his shoulder and collar bone in a motocross accident and was laid up for 6 months. Undeterred, he later perfected doing "wheelies" and riding motorcycles while standing on the seat. On January 3, 1966, he led a team of "daredevils" at the National Date Festival in Indio, California. The performance was a great success. The next performance was on February 10, in Barstow, California. During this performance, Knievel attempted to jump spread eagle over a speeding motorcycle. Unfortunately, he jumped too late, and the motorcycle hit him in the groin and knocked him fifteen feet into the air. Again he was back in the hospital. On June 19 he attempted to jump twelve cars and a cargo van in Missoula, Montana. Even though he broke his arm and ribs in the attempt, his crash proved to be a publicity windfall. You know the mantra - "If it bleeds it leads". On May 30, 1967, he successfully cleared sixteen cars in Gardena, California, but when he tried the same jump in Graham, Washington he had another crash resulting in a severe concussion. Later, attempting the same jump again his injuries were even more severe. This time he broke his wrist, knee, and two ribs. Even this, however, did not deter him from his irrational passion for danger.

At the age of 29 Knievel crashed again, this time it was at Caesar's Palace. Before that ill fated jump he lost his last \$100 at the blackjack table, then stopped by the bar for a shot of whiskey. This crash resulted in breaking his pelvis, femur, hip, wrist, and both ankles. It also put him in a coma for 29 days. After that wreck, however, he became even more famous as ABC-TV bought the rights to the crash film. In 1974 he failed in an attempt to jump the Snake River Canyon in a steam powered rocket. That time he landed in the Snake River below and almost drowned.

Fortunately, the course of his life took a dramatic change a short time before his death. Of all things, it happened during the Daytona Bike Week. Surrounded by bikers, booze and scantily

clad women, God reached out to this troubled man in the middle of the night. Evel got out of bed and shouted: *“Devil, devil you bastard you, get away from me. I cast you out of my life.”* He then went to the balcony of his hotel room and told the devil, *“I will take you and throw you, throw you on the beach. You will be dead, you will be gone. I don’t want you around me anymore.”*

On April 1, 2007 Knievel testified about his conversion on Robert Schuller’s TV program: *“I did everything I could. I just got on my knees and prayed that God would put His arms around me and never, ever, ever let me go. When I said [to the devil], ‘Get away from me,’ all of a sudden I was just overcome by the Spirit of God Almighty.”* His baptism triggered others to respond to Christ “en masse”.

Before his conversion to Christ, Evel Knievel wrote a book called “Evel Ways”. In this book he bragged: *“I’ve had a life better than any king, any president or any prince. Hogwash! I didn’t have Jesus Christ in my life. I was talking about the Rolls Royce I had, five of them; the Ferraris I’ve had, five of them; the Stetsons, and the Lamborghinis, and the jet airplanes, two of them....the diamonds, and the gold, and the racehorses, and the women, and the booze . . . I want to tell you something, I’ve been a sinner. You’re looking at a real sinner, but not anymore.”* Thanks God, this “leap of faith” put him in heaven and not the hospital.

Many years ago a young preacher shared an insight into John 21:17 - 19 which has impacted my life. In this passage Jesus said to Peter: **“Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”** Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.” Obviously all deaths do not glorify God. So the preacher said that since he wanted his death to glorify God, he avoided stupid and irrational behavior.

This is good advice for everyone. Many years ago a preacher’s kid from Indiana enrolled at the Ozark Christian College. I was privileged to preach a revival meeting in his home church. His father told me of his son’s remorse and confusion when 3 of his close friends were killed in a car wreck. The four of them had the habit of going out at night and driving over hills at 100 miles per hour. The thrill was enhanced when they went airborne. So while the preacher’s kid was safely in his dorm in Joplin, his three friends lost control in Indiana at 100 miles per hour. Their car slammed into a tree, and all three were killed. Obviously these deaths did not glorify God. The preacher’s kid had to live with the guilt of not blowing the whistle on the stupidity of his friends.

Here is a video testimony of Evel Knievel’s conversion. It is 9 minutes and 11 seconds long.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueXtsPIYTag>

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce