

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 141

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the dowry system in India. I know this seems far afield from the many problems you are facing. The point I am trying to make involves our grand daughters for it emphasizes that the Bible has a consistent track record of elevating women wherever it is taught. The point for our grandsons is to emphasize that treating all women with respect pleases Christ and is a godly thing to do.

I thought I understood the dowry system, but the dowry system in India is different. I thought it involved a man falling in love and paying a price to the girl's family for the privilege of marrying her. In India, it is the reverse. In India a woman is of such little value that her parents have to pay some man to take her off of their hands. I was reluctant to accept this, but am now convinced that it is true. I discovered it some years ago while visiting India. After being invited into a Hindu home, I asked my translator about the status of a single mother who was there with her baby daughter. He explained that the family had not paid enough money to her husband and he sent her home. The birth of a baby girl was involved as little girls can be a financial burden many are unable to bear..

Here is what Wikipedia has to say on the subject: *"The Dowry system in India refers to the durable goods, cash, and real or movable property that the bride's family gives to the bridegroom, his parents, or his relatives as a condition of the marriage. It is essentially in the nature of a payment in cash or some kind of gifts given to the bridegroom's family along with the bride and includes cash, jewelry, electrical appliances, furniture, bedding, crockery, utensils and other household items that help the newlyweds set up their home. Dowry is referred to as Jahez in Arabic (derived from Islamic jahez-e-fatimi). In far eastern parts of India, dowry is called Aaunnpot Wedding gifts for the son of the Imam of Delhi, India, with soldiers and 2000 guests. The dowry system is thought to put great financial burden on the bride's family. In some cases, the dowry system leads to crime against women, ranging from emotional abuse, injury to even deaths. The payment of dowry has long been prohibited under specific Indian laws including, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and subsequently by Sections 304B and 498A of the Indian Penal Code"*

While the dowry system is "prohibited" by law, it is still very much a part of Indian life. Some unwanted wives are not just sent back home but are covered with kerosene and burned alive. Abortion clinics advertise that by spending hundreds of rupees now, you may save thousands of rupees later. The ugly truth is that when tests reveal that an unborn child is a girl thousands are aborted. India today has 50,000 less women than men for this very reason. I was privileged to bring a Bible lesson to a dozen little girls rescued from the streets by Christian workers. Since their parents could not afford to pay a dowry, these precious little girls were either abandoned or sold into prostitution.

Many years ago I wrote an article for the Carl Junction newspaper involving women that was placed on line. A feminist from Tulsa took issue with the article and insisted that the Bible in

general, and Paul in particular, degraded women. After several letters she said that since neither of us was about the change, further correspondence was futile. I agreed but asked one favor in my final letter. I asked: "Tell me where on earth you want to live where the Bible has never been taught?" She agreed that this was a good question and promised to get back with me after the holidays. That was over 20 years ago and I am yet to receive her reply. The degradation of women in India pales into insignificance by the way they are treated by Muslims.

The fact is, Jesus did not discriminate against women and neither did Paul. The Bible always elevates women. The idea that Paul didn't want women to work in the church is preposterous. Take, for example, the last chapter of Paul's letter to Rome. Here he pays tribute to many women who helped him and played key roles in Christian service. Phebe was a servant of the church in Cenchrea. She probably carried Paul's letter to Rome. Paul not only gave her a carte blanche recommendation, but admonished the brethren there to assist her in whatever she needed. She had been a personal help to Paul and to many other also (Rom. 16:1, 2). In the same chapter Paul also sent greetings to Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, and Julia. In addition to these women whom he mentioned by name he also sent greetings to the mother of Rufus, who had also been a mother to him. He also sent greetings to the sister of Nereus. Women were not just important to Paul in Rome, but everywhere. Lydia and her household, for example, were the first converts to Christ in Phillipi (Acts 16:14, 15). Consider also that quite a few of the chief women in Thessalonica play key roles in the church there. These Scriptures can easily be multiplied.

So thanks for indulging you grandpa. As I said, I pray that all of our grandsons will treat women with respect like Jesus and Paul. I pray that all of our grand daughters will marry men who agree with Jesus. Jesus wants you to develop your spiritual gifts and to achieve your full potential in every area of life. If you have a boy friend who doesn't agree with this - find one who does.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce