

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the way Jesus Christ helps us to be responsible. It is required for everyone given responsibility to be proven faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). Here is a story to illustrate the point. Many years ago Uncle Ben was a town drunk in Coffeyville, Kansas. As he was a bachelor he had no one to worry about but himself. The only reason he worked was to buy whiskey. As soon as he had saved enough for a long binge he would quit his job and get drunk.

Ben's sister was a widow who made a living for her three children with a low paying job at a ladies' ready-to-wear shop. One morning the children awakened to find their mother had died during the night. Hysterically, they called Uncle Ben and asked for help. Remarkably, Uncle Ben stepped up to the plate and agreed to care for his sister's children.

When Ben appeared in court to ask for custody the judge said: "Ben, why should I give you the kids?" Ben replied: "The Master said that a man can be born again. He said that a man can change and he can stay changed – can change completely. And I believe that he meant any man can do that, even a drunken ne'er-do-well like me".

The judge took off his glasses and looked out the window for a few minutes. Then he agreed to a 30 day trial period before assigning the children to someone else. Ben took the children home and the four of them knelt down to pray. Ben promised God that if He would hold onto him, he would hold on to the kids.

From that day forward Ben never got drunk again or missed a day of work. The oldest boy, Jim Hollingsworth, became a medical doctor. His younger brother Tom graduated from MIT as an engineer.

When the youngest sibling, Nancy Hollingsworth, was graduating from Jr. College she went to the Superintendent of schools to ask for a favor. The superintendent was the late Dr. Kenneth McFarland. Nancy explained that Uncle Ben had attended the High School and College graduations for both of her brothers. He also attended her high school graduation. Yet he never felt worthy to sit in that special section reserved for parents. Nancy wanted to do something special for Uncle Ben at this sixth graduation.

On graduation night several thousand people gathered at the football stadium for the commencement exercises. It was a beautiful evening with just enough breeze to float the flags. The band played "Pomp and Circumstance" for the processional. As the band faded out the orchestra came in. As they faded out the organ came in. As Dr. McFarland stepped up to the podium he saw Nancy on the second row and her face seemed to be a foot long. She thought he had forgotten. Then Dr. McFarland said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I want all the Uncle Bens in the audience who have a graduate representative in the graduating class to please stand". A hush went over the crowd but no one stood. Finally Dr. McFarland said: "Surely with an audience this size there has got to be least

one Uncle Ben who has a representative in the graduating class. We will not proceed with this commencement exercise until he stands”.

Then, slowly on the back row near the top of the bleachers, a tall gangly figure began to stand. The kids in the graduating class were told to expect this and were the first ones who began to clap. This triggered a gigantic applause that rocked the entire stadium. The good people of Coffeyville knew more about Uncle Ben than he thought they did.

There is something helpful and therapeutic about living for others. Many years ago the joke went around about the mother with eight children who said: “All of my life I have wanted to have a nervous break-down, but every time I got ready I had to fix another meal”. As long as Uncle Ben was only living for himself it didn’t matter if he got drunk. The transformation came when he gave himself to Christ and dared to live for others. Remember! It is misers who are miserable!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce

P.S. Dr. McFarland left Coffeyville and received his Master’s from Columbia in 1931 and his doctorate from Standford in 1940. He received many honors and awards and became a popular speak on the lecture circuit. He passed away March 6, 1985.