

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the remarkable story of Stephanie Fast. Joe Garman used this story in a recent American Rehabilitation Ministry newsletter. Virginia Bendure has been a friend of our family for many years. Her father, the late John Hill was a missionary to Korea and Virginia knows Stephanie.

Here is the story: Stephanie was born just after the Korean War. Her father was an American soldier whom she never knew. She was separated from her mother at the age of four and also has no recollection of her. Somehow, however, she survived on her own for the next three years. During the summer she could steal food from the farmers. In the winter she survived by living in caves and eating roots, insects, and rodents. Because she was bi-racial she was the victim of discrimination. She was known by the insulting name of "Toogee" which means "foreign devil"

As a "Toogee" she was beaten, raped, and abused more than other orphans. Once when caught stealing food she was tied to a water wheel as punishment. Each time the wheel went around she surfaced with a mouth full of mud and blood. Finally, some kind man had pity on her, let her go, and told her to run for her life. On another occasion she was thrown in a well and left to die. On still another occasion she and a younger girl were thrown into an abandoned building to be eaten by starving rats. Stephanie now believes that God preserved and protected her for a purpose.

She does not remember how she got there, but at the age of about seven she was at the garbage dump dying of cholera. A World Vision nurse from Sweden named Iris Erickson found her there. Iris had been warned not to go by the dump, but strangely felt led of God to do so. When she saw Stephanie she seemed to hear the Lord say "She's mine". Though Stephanie was too old to be at the orphanage, Iris made a place for her. In those days World Vision was so poorly funded that living at the orphanage was not much better than living on the streets.

When she was 9 a missionary couple named David and Judy Merwin visited the orphanage searching for a son to adopt. Because Stephanie was the oldest child there she washed diapers and helped take care of the others. The Merwins had already visited six different orphanages looking for just the son that God wanted them to choose. Stephanie was excited to see what little boy they would choose. Stephanie, at the time, barely weighed 30 lbs. She was dirty, cross-eyed, had scars, boils, parasites and head lice. Inexplicably, when David Merwin placed his hand on her head she spit on him. God, however, convinced both David and Judy that this was the child He wanted them to adopt.

The next six years were very difficult. Stephanie was so emotionally scarred that she found it difficult to give or receive love. Finally, the story of Jesus began to register in her confused mind. He too was despised and rejected by His own people. He too knew what it was to be the victim of hatred and rejection. He too knew what it was to live in the midst of people who wanted to kill Him. Even after her father led her to Christ, however, she still needed years to recuperate and heal.

Through it all, however, it is increasingly clear that God preserved and protected her for a purpose.

She married her husband Darryl Fast right out of high school. She was too embarrassed to tell him all of the abuse she had experienced. He would later learn that the sexual abuse Stephanie had experienced made it virtually impossible for her to have children. After miscarrying 5 times, however, she finally gave birth to her first biological son. Her doctor felt this was a miracle and gave himself to Christ. After losing 3 more children she gave birth to another son. She still marvels at the way that God has preserved, protected, and directed her life.

Stephanie tells her own story in her 224 page autobiography published by D & S Publishing (July 1, 2014). It is titled: *She Is Mine: A War Orphan's Incredible Journey of Survival*.

Please consider the possibility that just as God preserved, protected, and directed the life of Stephanie Fast, He is also preserving, protecting, and directing your life. There have been many times when the devil tried to destroy you, but he did not. May reflecting on the remarkable story of Stephanie Fast give you insight and understanding into your own special calling from God.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce