

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

#317

Dearest Grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with important lessons we can learn from the late Victor Serebriakoff. He was born in the slums of East London Oct. 17, 1912. He was the son of a Russian father and cockney mother. He died on New Year's Day 2,000 at the age of 87. Among other things, Victor is famous for his brilliance. In fact, he became the president of the prestigious Mensa Society. This is the oldest, largest, and best known organization for geniuses in the world. In order to be a member you must score within the top 2% on a standard intelligence test.

The first lesson we learn from Victor is to recognize and live up to our full potential. This brilliant man wasted the first years of his life doing odd jobs and manual labor. He dropped out of school and was fired from his first job at a lumber company because of lack of attention to detail. When the Depression hit he did manual labor to survive with various periods of unemployment.

Late in World War II he was conscripted into the army and given the standardized Army Intelligence Test. The highest score on the test indicated an IQ of 161, and Victor went over that mark. Victor was a genius and yet had dropped out of Secondary School and spent the first 30 years of his life doing meaningless jobs and manual labor.

The Army, however, recognized his potential and assigned this "uneducated" man to train recruits. After the war he became an internationally known inventor and author. Many of the books he wrote have been translated into various foreign languages. And, as we have already said, he became president of the Mensa Society. Under his leadership that group of geniuses grew from under 100 to an International organization with over 100,000 members.

So the first lesson we learn from Victor Serebriakoff is to recognize and experience our full potential. The reason he was resigned to doing meaningless work during the first part of his life, was because he did not recognize or understand the gifts that God had given him. Once he was convinced of his own capabilities his life was transformed. Christians, of course, have an added advantage. Not only can we come to recognize and understand the God given talents and abilities we have from birth, we can also come to know and understand the additional power and gifts we have by means of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures promise believers that we are able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine by means of the power that God has placed within us (Eph. 3:20).

The second lesson, and perhaps a more important one, is the power of love to unite people who do not agree. Yes! We can learn from Victor the unifying power of love. In an interview with the New York Times Magazine in 1960 he said: *"When I joined Mensa I thought 'now I am joining a bunch of very bright people; therefore everyone will agree with me.' Alas, this turned out not to be so. Then I married a member and began to understand the full extent, breadth and profundity of human disagreement."* His marriage did not depend upon knowledge, it depended upon love. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1).**

By his own statement, Victor "began to learn the full extent, breadth, and profundity of human disagreement" when he got married. The fact that his wife was also a genius, and also a member of

Mensa, did not guarantee that they would think alike. Quite to the contrary. Her brilliance precluded the possibility that she would shift her brain into neutral and acquiesce to his thinking. Their disagreements, however, did not mean that they did not have a happy marriage. As we have said, the foundation of marriage is not “knowledge” but “love”. Their marriage lasted 41 years and ended with her death in 1995.

The application of this truth to Christianity is obvious. There are 7 references to “knowledge” in the first 12 chapters of 1 Corinthians. As we have said, **“knowledge puffs up but love builds up”**. In chapter 13, however, Paul taught them about love. He declared it to be a more excellent way. He said it was indispensable, invincible, and eternal. In fact, he said that if he could understand “all mysteries” and have “all knowledge” it would profit him nothing if he did not have love.

Let us, therefore, learn at least these two lessons from this very famous man. First, let us recognize that we can do all things through Christ Who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). Our success does not primarily result from our own effort, but rather by the power of His Spirit within us. Secondly, let us also remember the awesome power of love. Love never fails! (1 Cor. 13:8)

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce