

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
#360

Dearest grandchild,

Jesus said: **“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment” (Jn. 7:24).** First appearances are often deceiving. On Nov. 28, 1520 Ferdinand Magellan discovered the largest ocean on earth. Since it seemed to be “peaceful” he called it the “Pacific Ocean.” He was wrong! While an ocean may “appear” to be peaceful from a distance, no ocean is truly peaceful when viewed closely. In fact, Isaiah used an ocean to picture the lack of peace experienced by the ungodly. He wrote: **“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked” (Is. 57:20-21 KJV).**

When we see some famous person in the movies or on television we are apt to assume that their wealth and fame have made them happy. They look so peaceful! In reality, their suicide rates are higher than for the rest of us. As Jesus said, we need to stop judging by mere appearances.

Bert Ott has been a friend of our family for many years. He grew up in the small town of Bretten, Germany. Incidentally, this is also the birthplace of the famous reformer Philip Melanchthon. At the city fountain is the famous statue of “Brettner Hundle” which is a dog whom legend says delivered the town from disaster and defeat. As you know, in those days the siege of a city would often last for years until starvation caused the city to surrender. After many months Bretten was out of food and near surrender. Then a city official came up with a bold and deceptive idea. They took what little food was left in the city and fed it to a mongrel dog. Once the dog was sufficiently fat it was released outside of the city gate. The enemy “assumed” that if the city had enough food to keep the dogs fat, they had enough food to withstand the siege for many months to come. In fact, they became so discouraged that they gave up the siege and went home. The original statue of the dog is sitting on top of a historical fountain in Melanchthonstraße, not far from the Western town gate. The gable of Stiftskirche also bears a statue of the famous dog.

The devil is a great deceiver and we should not be ignorant of his devices. Adam and Eve were perfect people in a perfect environment. If the devil could deceive Eve under such circumstances then there is also the danger that he can also deceive us. Paul wrote: **“I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3).** Deception is the devil’s greatest weapon!

Bernie Madoff (Apr. 29, 1938 – Apr. 14, 1921) ran the largest Ponzi scheme in history involving some \$64.8 billion. While he defrauded thousands of people of millions of dollars the good news is that he only robbed them of physical wealth. The money he stole from his victims was destined to stay on earth. In the end it didn’t matter whether they died with millions of dollars in the bank or zero dollars in the bank the damage he did to them was temporal. There is an old story about the rich man who died and guests at his funeral were asking one another how much he left? The answer, of course, was that he left it all!

The deception of the devil is much more serious. He not only wants to destroy you physically, he also wants to suffer eternal punishment. When Cain had a disagreement with his brother the Lord warned him that Satan’s “desire” was to have him (Gen. 4:7). Young’s Analytical Concordance lists 13 different Hebrew words translated as “desire” in the Bible. The word used in Gen. 4:7 is “teshugah”. Keil and Delitzsch define it as “a violent craving” and “a desire bordering on disease”. The point is

that the devil had a pathological desire to destroy Cain and ultimately did. If we wander nonchalantly through life without a serious about eternity we are easy prey for the enemy of our souls. Jesus was concerned that even the elect were vulnerable to his deception (Matt. 24:24). We need to stop judging superficially and give serious thought to eternity.

In the course of your life you will make many decisions. Some are more important than others. These decisions will involve marriage, money, education, health, and a wide variety of other subjects too numerous to mention. It is my prayer that where you will spend eternity will be at the top of your list. You didn't ask to be born, but you were. You don't need to ask to die because you will. Please stop worrying about so many trivial things that have no eternal significance. Perhaps you can start by giving serious thought to this invitation from Christ:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30).

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce