

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will focus on Matt. 7:13: **“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”**. I memorized these words in 1953 and quoted them like a parrot for twenty years without understanding them. While I'm sure I still do not completely understand this verse, I believe I have learned more about it than I knew in 1953.

We have a couple of brand new babies in the family and another on the way in a few months. We can learn from infants for Jesus considered them an example of how we enter the kingdom of God (Lk. 18:15-17). The newborn infant, of course, knows virtually nothing and must be taught. They start life with only two fears: the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises. Good parents teach them to fear spiders, hot stoves, and many other dangerous things. If they live a normal life they will accumulate 5,000 fears. At the risk of sounding harsh, the newborn infant is completely and totally selfish. They are totally unaware that anyone but them has needs. It doesn't matter what time of the day or night it might be, they will scream until someone solves their problem. Our job as parents is to teach them to think of others and not be selfish. Maturity involves loving others.

I mention this because the Scriptures teach that the Law treated us like children (Gal. 3:23-4:7). The purpose of the Law was to bring us to Christ and maturity so that our lives would be directed by love and not law. Love, as you know, is the distinguishing mark of believers. Jesus said: **“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (Jn. 13:35)**.

Our text is in the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus repeats the contrast between law and love. The Law said: **“Do not murder”, “Do not commit adultery”, “Do not break your oath”, “Eye for eye and tooth for tooth”**, Etc. In each instance Jesus said to do more than the Law demanded. In each instance, love is more demanding than law. For example, the Law commanded not to murder, but love demands that we not even be angry. The Law forbade adultery, but love even forbids lust. Etc. So Jesus concluded these contrasts by giving us the “Golden Rule”: **“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”** Please note that the very next verse is the text that is the focus of this letter: **“ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT. BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEAES TO LIFE, ANE ONLY A FEW FIND IT” (Matt. 7:12-13)**. These two verses are joined together, and what God has joined together man should not put asunder.

NOW I AM CONVINCED THAT THE “SMALL GATE” AND “NARROW ROAD” IS TO DO UNTO OTHERS AS WE WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO US!

Loving someone else as you want to be loved is indeed restrictive. It requires diligence and constant attention. Seeing the world through this lens is revolutionary. It adds a new dimension to everything we do. It constantly monitors out every contact with others. It requires that we always pause to consider how we would want someone else to treat us if our roles were reversed. The Golden Rule is indeed a “narrow” and restrictive life style from which we cannot escape without offending God.

This kind of love also helps us to more clearly understand the commands of Christ. For example, Jesus said: **“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. 5:39)**. What does this mean? How are we to understand these words? Mothers, what would you do if your five year old son deliberately hit you in the face? Would you turn the other cheek or would you turn him over your knee and spank him? True Love is not legalistic! It demands discipline for whom the Lord loves He chastens. Obviously we should love our children in the same way that God loves us!

Or consider these words of Jesus: **“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.” (Matt. 5:42)**. If you know, however, that the one who wants your money will buy alcohol or drugs true love demands that you refuse his request.

Jesus was once approached by an expert in the law who wanted to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him what was written in the law and he answered: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself. ‘You have answered correctly’, Jesus replied, ‘do this and you will live’” (Lk. 10:27-28)**.

But the man wanted to justify himself and asked: **“And who is my neighbor?”** That’s when Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. It seems that a man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers beat him, took his possessions, stripped him of his clothes, and left him half dead on the road. A priest and a Levite saw the man in need but refused to help. They “passed by on the other side”. These men who refused to help represent the law. Touching an unclean man would prevent them from their legal duties. But when a Samaritan saw the man he took pity on him, bandaged his wounds pouring in oil and wine, put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and paid for all his expenses.

Jesus then asked: **“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, ‘the one who had mercy on him’. Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise’” (Lk. 10:36-37)**. We too need to go and do likewise!

In some mysterious way our love for others comes from God: **“Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other” (1 Thess. 4:9)**. PLEASE DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO UNTO YOU, FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce