

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 376

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be a page out of the past. It will focus on one of my mentors whom I greatly admired. He was the late W. Carl Ketcherside. We first met in 1958, became friends, and frequently corresponded with one another. I have saved every letter I received from him. (I shared them with the Abilene Christian University and they are available on line in pdf format) Today's letter will be a compilation of excerpts from letters I received from him between March 1983, and September 1984. Carl was a famous man. He edited a monthly magazine, preached all over the world, authored 34 books, was the subject of two Master Theses and three Doctoral Dissertations. He debated unbelievers on the secular college campus and was called "The Answer Man" by the students. He baptized thousands of people into Christ. Among many other honors he was invited to teach at the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Amsterdam in 1983. This conference was by invitation only and 3,800 attended representing 133 countries. At the time he began writing the following letters he was 76 years old. Instead of retiring and taking it easy, however, he and his wife chose to devote their last days on earth to establishing a new congregation in the inner city of St. Louis.

(March 21, 1983) - *"We will soon be in the satellite congregation. It will necessitate our going into a thousand homes, where often there will be the dull stare from drug or drink-sodden eyes, to encounter the hundreds of despair-ridden who are depressed and forsaken. I am anxiously awaiting the time . . ."*

(April 28, 1983) - *"Day before yesterday I made 200 homes in the vicinity of the new place. Today I am starting out again. I met a bearded man who was just out of prison and talked with him a long time; I sat down on the sidewalk beside an old man who slept in a garage the night before and rose at 5:30 a.m. and was drinking a cup of coffee and eating a doughnut; I conversed with two foul-mouthed prostitutes and talked to them of Jesus; I saw a number of old people who had lost hope. Pray for us . . ."*

(June 11, 1983) - *"The inner city work is going as strong as ever. There has been no slackening of resolution upon the part of those who are a part of this spiritual project. The sign is going up at the place this evening. It reads 'The Cornerstone – An Adventure in Christian Fellowship – By Oak Hill Chapel – Telephone 522-6680.' It is a hard pull. But those who come seem interested and we place the work in the hands of the Lord. We are starting this evening a training course to enable us to liberate the captives. We will be trying to develop commandoes for Christ. These will involve both black and white, as well as a few Mexican folk.*

*There are some dedicated people working with me on the venture, people who will sell their lives dearly for Jesus on the street. With a few like this it will help to know that our absent King is working with us and is interested in the result. It is a costly project from the standpoint of life, finance, and frazzled nerves as people lie to you without realizing they are doing it. It is a strategy for survival which they have developed. Pray for us . . ."*

(November 18, 1983) - *"We are as tired and weary tonight as a wet collie that was beaten with a two-by-four . . . Monday we were at the Cornerstone all day folding and sizing clothing to give away. Yesterday we began the distribution. The doors were open at 9:30. Nell and I got there just after 9:00. There was a line waiting. More than a hundred went through yesterday. Some of them were ill dressed and ragged. Some stank. Some had the smell of wine or other strong drink as they gave their names.*

*Some of the women were pregnant. Others had two or three little children clinging to their dresses. Some of them suffered from malnutrition.*

*All of them found coats and things they could wear. Today the more than sixty who went through did same. We gave away one of the biggest stacks of clothing I have ever seen. We will duplicate the two days with another two, December 7 and 8. We paid the rent for a woman who was evicted from her home. We gave away fifteen blankets and our blanket distribution has not started yet. We have given away food to the hungry, comfort to the weary, and sown the seed of good deeds in the hearts of many. Please pray for us. Pray very earnestly . . .”*

*(June 21, 1984) - “I write this as I prepare to go to the Cornerstone for the fourth day. Yesterday I went house to house in the vicinity and made slightly in excess of a hundred homes. I got stymied in the backyard of a Laotian home with an elderly man who left his immediate family behind because they chose to remain in the jungle rather than be rescued and come to the United States. He was wrapping copper and flattening beer cans for the aluminum. I sat down with him on an old rug and taught him three words – screen, pliers, and hatchet.*

*I intend to continue going until we can start a class in his backyard this summer and learn to speak English. I say that because I am sure that I will learn as much as they do. I wish I had jobs for all of these. Their little half-naked children worry me. There are about forty-five or more Laotians in this ‘compound.’ It is three blocks from the Cornerstone. Pray for us . . .”*

*(August 2, 1984) - “Nell and I are in the process of selling our home. We are moving down into the area where the work is. I have talked about the suburbia complex until at last it has made me uncomfortable. I spend a lot of time down in the area. I meet scores of people the likes of whom I have never seen before. One would never meet them inside a church building but they come to us in their pitiable state.*

*One of our best people, one of the most dependable, was a tavern owner across the street from the time he was eighteen until he was twenty-nine. He is now forty-five and blind. He has been a real blessing to me and I deeply love and respect him. We have no trouble with those who have not been reared in the church. Nell works by my side and is a powerful witness for Jesus . . . pray for us . . .”*

*(August 28, 1984) - “The upstairs over The Cornerstone was raided and women pushing drugs were hailed into court. We are where we are needed . . .”*

*(September 6, 1984) - “We are literally swamped with responsibility at present. We will probably have to move in two weeks. There is a woman from North Ireland in our home for a month. The Cornerstone is exacting a great deal in time and emotional involvement. This week I was there four days. One morning I talked in succession to two girls, the oldest of whom was twenty-three. Both of them had two children by different men. Neither of them is married. One brought clothes, the other came hoping to find them. I prayed with both of them and made arrangements to perform a marriage for one of them.*

*As soon as they left a Pentecostal Holiness woman came in. Her husband had been without work for three months. They were literally starving. She was pregnant. I gave her a sack of food and she asked if she could pray for me. We are beginning to make headway. This woman had called the St. Louis Social Services and they had sent her to us first.*

*They called me last week and congratulated me on what we are doing for the community. But they told me they were preparing to raid the upstairs where drugs were being pushed. They did so and got rid of the pusher. The month previous they raided upstairs and removed a hooker who was taking men whom she had solicited on the street to her upstairs apartment which the government was*

*providing. So life goes on and there are really no dull moments. I am not satisfied with what I am doing. I awaken tired every morning . . .”*

So Carl and Nell chose to spend the last years of their lives ministering in the inner city to the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, those needing clothes, the sick and the prisoners. Jesus called these unfortunate souls **“the least of these” (Matt. 25:45)**. Carl’s final day came in May of 1989. After a busy day of witnessing and conducting a Bible study, he came home to his inner city apartment about 10:00 p.m. He put on his pajamas, went to bed, and then went home to be with Jesus. His body was discovered at about 9 a.m. the next day. He was 81 years old. His wife, Nell, preceded him in death the year before.

As the late Jim Elliott said: “He is no fool who gives up the things he cannot keep to gain the things he cannot lose”.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce