

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with "discipline". While this word may initially seem negative, it is a not negative at all. Discipline is not only a key component in Christianity, but also of civilization. Further, the key command in the Great Commission is to "make disciples" and the very essence of discipleship is discipline. Just to refresh your memory Jesus said: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"** (Matt. 28:18-20).

There are 4 commands in this passage - "go," "make disciples," "baptize," and "teach". The Greek word translated as "make disciples" is "mathateusate". It is the 2nd pers. pl. aor. 1, imper. act. of "matheuo." The Greek word for "disciple" is "mathetes". It comes from "manthano" which means "to learn". It is the basis of our English word "math". The Dictionary of New Testament Theology states that the noun "mathetes" occurs 264 times in the N.T. (Exclusively in the Gospels and Acts) "Going", "baptizing", and "teaching", may have the force of commands, but they are written as participles. The only imperative in the Great Commission is to "make disciples". The discipline of discipleship is key to world evangelism and also to your success in life. You can plant churches without making disciples, but you cannot make disciples without planting a church!

Someone has observed that the discipline to delay pleasure is the key to civilization. Savages lack discipline. Savages eat their seeds and derive instant pleasure. Civilized people have the discipline to plant the seeds and wait for the harvest. Savages gratify their sexual desires immediately, even if it involves rape. Civilized people have the discipline to delay sexual gratification and wait for marriage. Savages are ruled by their passions, but civilized people rule their passions. This is especially true of Christians. Paul, for example, made his body a slave rather than be a slave to his body (1 Cor. 9:27).

Our founding fathers have bequeathed to us the greatest civilization in history. Discipline was the key to their success. Today our "civilization" is being threatened by the lack of discipline.

Take, for example, the way our ancestors purchased a car. Initially it was always by cash. Henry Ford sold his first car July 23, 1903. Since cars were considered a luxury only rich people bought them. By 1910, however, the motorized vehicle found a market in the business world, but Henry Ford still demanded cash. In those days citizens had the "discipline" to save in advance before purchasing a car. In 1918 half of all the cars on the road were Fords. In 1924, however, General Motors came up with an innovative financing program so you could drive now and pay later. By 1930 three out of every four cars on the road were purchased on credit. Ford, as you know, reluctantly caved in! Today Americans have car loans totaling 850 billion dollars.

Your Uncle Paul once sold RVs. While his commissions obviously varied, in general he made more selling a \$15,000 RV on credit than a \$300,000 RV for cash. Credit is costly for the consumer. As you know, it is faster and cheaper to save \$1,000 than to pay off a \$1,000 loan. If you financed a \$100,000 loan for 30 years at 8% interest it will cost you \$337,530 to pay off the loan. No wonder we see so many new bank buildings! The Treasury Department recently reported that the total national debt of the United States surpassed \$30 trillion for the first time in history. This is an amount equal to

nearly 130% of America's yearly economic output, known as gross domestic product. Today the U.S. is one of the most heavily indebted nations in the world. One reason for our national debt involves the lack of discipline.

The lack of discipline also involves other aspects of life as well. Statistically:

- 46 % of American adults cannot understand the labels on their pharmaceutical prescriptions.
- 50 % of U.S. adults are unable to read an eighth grade level book.
- Almost 85% of the juveniles in the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate.
- More than 60% of all inmates in U.S. prisons are functionally illiterate.
- 90% of welfare recipients are high school drop outs.

I'm sure you know the story of Dr. Ben Carson. He was raised by a single mother who was one of 24 siblings. She married at 13 and was divorced when her two sons were only 8 and 10 years old. She dropped out of school in the third grade and had to support her sons by working two or three jobs. Sometimes she would leave at 5 a.m. and not get home from work until midnight. She ran a disciplined household, however, and never let her sons go outside to play until their school work was done. She limited their TV time and required them to read and write a book report on two books every week. The discipline she demanded was key to the progress of her children. As you know Dr. Carson became the director of pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center in 1984 at age 33. At the time he was the youngest chief of pediatric neurosurgery in the United States.

Dr. Carson also had another source of discipline besides his godly mother. He was a devout Christian. When the Holy Spirit dwells within you He produces the "fruit" of discipline. This fruit manifests itself in nine different ways. Please consider: **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control" (Gal. 5:22).** Please note that "fruit" in this passage is singular. All nine virtues the Holy Spirit produces are inter related. Every one of them, of course, involves discipline!

Solomon said it like this: **"Better is a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city" (Prov. 16:32)** And again: **"Like a city whose walls are broken down is like a man who lacks self control (Prov. 25:28).**

MAY THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVE YOU DISCIPLINE IS MY PRAYER!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce

