

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Many years ago I ran across an article by Janet Cawley that was published in *Biography Magazine* (March of 1999). It told of a little crippled boy named Mohammed who was born in Mali in approximately 1972. When his father died the family moved to Nigeria to find food. At about seven years of age he injured his clubbed foot while roaming the streets. It was soon infected with gangrene and maggots. In desperation he poured boiling water and then battery acid into the open wound. Sadly, this destroyed part of his foot. A local Catholic hospital treated the wound with antibiotics for a year before it healed. Then Mohammed was hit by a car that broke his collarbone, shoulder, arm, and rib. The article explained “*He walked with his right anklebone flat on the floor. His back looked like an S. He had TB of the spine, polio, and three kinds of malaria*”. His many medical problems required five major surgeries

In December 1984 Diane Sawyer went to Africa to cover their famine for CBS’s *60 Minutes*. She met Mohammed and he received 18 seconds of face time on national TV. The program aired on Aug. 11, 1985 and was seen by millions, including Cheryl Shotts in Indianapolis, Indiana. Shotts was a public relations consultant in her early 40’s with two sons and a daughter in their early twenties. As a non-practicing Catholic she was questioning the meaning of life and looked up to heaven wondering what God wanted her to do. When she saw Mohammed on TV those 18 seconds transformed her life. She said: “*I was dumbfounded. I couldn’t get him out of my head*”. For three days she talked about him constantly with her husband, Charlie, and then announced: “*I know what I am going to do. That child is my son. I have to find that child and bring him home*”. Cawley states that by her own admission Cheryl became “a woman possessed”. Within three days she resigned all of her business clients and focused on finding Mohammed. Sawyer put Charlie and Cheryl in touch with missionaries in Mali who knew Mohammed. So this godly couple maxed out their credit cards and took out a \$12,000 loan to bring Mohammed home to America.

Charlie made the trip to Africa and brought Mohammed home on Dec. 7, 1985. Family and friends hung up a huge banner that said: “*WELCOME TO AMERICA. YOU’LL NEVER BE HUNGRY AGAIN.*” Since Mohammed couldn’t read English, the banner meant nothing to him. In fact, he thought Charlie and Cheryl were bringing him to America to be their house boy. The first morning after his arrival he asked: “*Where is the grass cutting machine? Where is the rug cleaning machine?*”? When Cheryl explained that he was not their house boy, he was their son. Mohammed responded: “*I don’t know what it means to be a son. You have to teach me. But I promise to learn*”.

Though the article in *Biography Magazine* is over twenty years old it contained a telephone number for *Americans for African Adoptions Inc.* This is an adoption ministry that Cheryl founded. For some reason I felt compelled to try that number and was amazed when Cheryl herself answered the phone. She told me that Mohammed is now 50 years old, and a college graduate. He is also married and has two children. Since he speaks a variety of languages he now works for the Department of Defense and is on his 10<sup>th</sup> deployment.

Cheryl also adopted a little African girl who was begging on the streets. This precious child is now a brilliant woman who was trained by the U. S. Air Force to be an air traffic controller. Incidentally, she is also married to the Vice President of the Cleveland Browns football team.

C.T. Studd was a famous missionary to Africa, China, and India. He was born in 1860 and died in 1931. He was a gifted athlete and could have achieved fame playing cricket. He came from a wealthy family and inherited £29,000 from his father's estate. He could have used this inheritance to go into business and become even richer. He chose instead to give this money away to ministries that taught the Bible, helped orphans, and fed the poor. He wrote a beautiful poem that epitomizes his philosophy of life: "*Only one life 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.*" Cheryl Shotts came to a similar conclusion when she looked up to heaven and asked God what He wanted her to do?

Wise King Solomon also looked up to heaven and came to a similar conclusion. He wrote: "**I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. . .**" Nothing he did, however, brought him lasting satisfaction. After a life time of discouraging experiments he wrote: "**Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man**" (Eccl. 12:13). You cannot go wrong fearing God and keeping His commandments!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce

P.S. I sent this letter to Cheryl to make sure it was accurate. Here is her reply:

"Hi Boyce - you did a terrific job - thank you. I am still very involved with African children - now only Liberia where in my ripe old age of 79 I manage an orphanage with currently 32 children & 17 staff while I search for families to adopt the children. It is expensive work so I live on social security, rent my "kids" bedrooms & have not drawn a salary since turning 65. The children are special - all they want it to eat twice a day, have a pair of shoes & go to school. Take care - lovely to suddenly hear from someone with a terrific memory. Cheryl"