

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
417

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be a warning about investments that seem to be a "sure deal" but are not!. In 1965 a lawyer named André-François Raffray set up a "reverse mortgage" with Jeanne Calment. According to this arrangement, he would pay her 2,500 francs every month until she died, whereupon he would inherit her apartment. It must have seemed like a "sure deal" for Monsieur Raffray for he was only 47 at the time and Jeanne was 90. Incredibly, however, Jeanne outlived him. He died thirty years later and his family continued the payments. By the time of her death in 1997, they had paid Jeanne more than double the value of her apartment.

The remarkable Jeanne Louise Calment lived so long that she made it into the Guinness Book of Records. She was born Feb. 21, 1875, just one year before Alexander Graham Bell patented the telephone. She saw the Eiffel Tower under construction. She sold painting canvasses to Van Gogh. She took up fencing at the age of 85. She was still roller skating and riding her bike at the age of 100. At the age of 115 she fell and fractured her femur but it didn't kill her. She decided to quit smoking at the age of 117. In 1995, on her 120th birthday, a journalist asked her what kind of a future she expected. She replied "a short one". She was correct! She passed away August 4, 1997 at the age of 122 years and 164 days.

When we lived in California a doctor, who was a part of our congregation, suggested that our church invest \$10,000 in a "sure deal" that would enable us to give thousands of dollars to missions. Our bookkeeper, Bob Miller, also was a part of our congregation. While the doctor didn't know about it, Bob pointed out to our elders that the man behind the "sure deal" was already in bankruptcy.

At about the same time I received a phone call from a woman asking me what statue was in the N. Y. Harbor? When I said the Statue of Liberty she said: "Congratulations! You have just won a year's subscription to a very popular magazine." When I asked if it would be totally free she confessed that I had to pay "only" \$49.99 for postage. Upon hearing this I asked her: "Who was the first president of the United States?" When she replied "George Washington", I said "Congratulations! You have just won it back".

After moving to Missouri a preacher friend invested in a "sure deal" that he believed was going to support him as a missionary to Africa. He even sent that marvelous man to me that I might also get rich. The salesman took a piece of typing paper and wrote down impressive figures of how my investment with him would grow and make me rich. The contract I would sign, however, was carefully worded and did not mention such promises at all. Our insurance man at the time was Byron Replogle. Byron was an elder in our church and knew both men involved. Byron told me: "I have more respect for a man who will rob a bank with a gun than for this huckster".

Blaise Pascal was a French genius and mathematician born in 1623. It has been said that his development of the "probability theory" was his most influential contribution to mathematics. In 1655 Pascal invented the roulette wheel. "Roulette", as you know, is French for "little wheel." Gambling casinos use Pascal's genius to make millions. Using his calculations gambling machines are designed so that it is a "sure deal" that the house will always be the winner.

Based on his ability to predict possibilities for gambling casinos, Pascal became a Christian. His reason for doing so is known as “Pascal’s Wager”. The gist of the Wager is that even though one cannot prove that God exists, it is wise to live as though God does exist. Such a life has everything to gain and nothing to lose. If we live as though God exists, and He does indeed exist, we have gained heaven. If He doesn’t exist, we have lost nothing. If, on the other hand, we live as though God does not exist and He really does exist, we have gained hell and punishment and have lost heaven and bliss. If one weighs the options, clearly the rational choice to live as if God exists is the better of the possible choices. Making a finite gamble for an infinite reward made sense to Pascal.

We function every day based upon what we “believe”. When you drop a letter in the mail you cannot prove that it will arrive at its destination, but you “believe” it will. When you get on an airplane you cannot prove that it will arrive at its destination, but you “believe” it will. When you put money in the bank you cannot prove that it will be there when you want to draw it out, but you “believe” it will. Successful living not only requires faith, but also common sense. I once put a wedding certificate in an outdoor mail box at our church. It was found on the street several days later. Apparently someone had stolen the letter looking for money. Thereafter, I always put mail in a secured mail box where only a professional thief can steal it. I have been a pilot since 1961, flown thousands of hours, both privately and commercially, and I am still alive. The blessing of God plus common sense has helped make this possible. When putting money in the bank it is wise to choose a bank that is insured by the federal government. This does not “prove” it will be safe, but it is still a wise thing to do. Common sense is a valuable commodity!

You didn’t ask to be born, but you were! You may not want to die, but it is a “sure thing” that you will. The patriarchs lived long lives, but they still died. Adam lived 930 years and he died. Seth lived 912 years and he died. Enosh lived 905 years and he died (see Gen. 5:3-8). Jeanne Louise Calment lived 122 years and she died. Blaise Pascal lived 39 years and he died! IT IS ALSO A “SURE THING” THAT YOU ARE GOING TO DIE! The question is, are you prepared for it? Please prepare to meet God!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce