

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about Proverbs 22:6: **“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”** Please note that the promise is “when he is old he will not turn from it.” It is quite common for young people to sow some wild oats but later grow up and regret it. David prayed: **“Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways.” (Ps. 25:7)** Today's letter will be about a man who outgrew the sins of his youth.

The man's name is William Roy DeWitt Wallace. He was born in St. Paul, Minn. in 1889 to a preacher named James Wallace. Roy was raised in a tumultuous and strict environment and rebelled. His mother struggled with mental health issues but his father had a keen mind and advanced to be the President of Macalester College. In spite of his rebellious tendencies Roy excelled in elementary school and even skipped a grade. His parents sent him to Macalester Academy where his mischievous ways continued. He was described as a hyperactive boy from a troubled household. He was constantly getting into fights and even ran away to New York with friends. He was expelled from two high schools and kicked out of his father's college during his sophomore year.

Despite being kicked out of college he decided to try again and enrolled in the University of California at Berkley in 1910. During this time he fell in love with Lila Acheson, who was also a preacher's kid. Sadly, she was engaged to be married. Two years later he left college again to work for a publishing company back in St. Paul. Several years later he discovered to his delight that Lila had broken up with her fiance. They were married in 1921.

Wallace developed the habit of flipping through magazines and jotting down things of interest on index cards. Before writing something down he asked three simple questions (1) Is it quotable? (2) Is it applicable? (3) Is it of lasting interest. Wallace took his index cards seriously and mused in a letter to his parents: *“One reason so few men succeed is that they don't make a business of acquiring new ideas and information of practical value. I direct considerable reading toward this end.”*

Lila felt that her husband's notes needed to be published, and after many rejections she challenged him to be his own publisher. When he struggled for a base of readers to which he could appeal she advised him to target women. He did! After scraping together enough articles and enough money they published the first issue of their new magazine in February 1922. They called it the *Reader's Digest*!

After several issues they received some praise but little profit. At this point they decided to relocate to a quieter neighborhood and moved into a garage just outside of Pleasantville, N.Y. They also rented a small pony shed for the magazine's office. They remained here for three years and then moved to a larger facility near Chappaqua, N.Y. The magazine now had grown to 290,000 subscribers. Their annual profit was more than \$900,000 which would be approximately \$12 million today.

In 1935 they published their first original article. It was about automobile fatalities and was titled *“And Sudden Death”*. This graphic article helped inspire seat belt reform and inspired Wallace with the challenge of public service. The preacher's kid delighted in bringing hope to people in despair. At the height of its popularity the *Reader's Digest* had 70 million readers in the U.S. and 40

million more in 70 other countries. It was also published in 21 different languages including braille. It became the largest paid circulation magazine in the world!

The reformed delinquent was generous with his money, donating much of his massive fortune to a series of charities through The Wallace Foundation. He was particularly generous in funding education, youth development, and the arts. Wallace received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1972, and was inducted into the U.S. Business Hall of Fame in 1980. He died in his home in Mount Kisco, N.Y. March 30, 1981. His parents, looking down from heaven, must have been proud of him!

John the apostle wrote: **“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit., ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’” (Rev. 14:13)** This rebellious preacher’s son became one of the most famous and influential men on earth. Even though he is now resting from his labors, his good deeds still follow him and continue to bless the world!

Please do not resent the strictness of your parents for when you are old you will understand!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce