

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 435

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will feature a warning from the Bible: **“Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When they give you testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd.” (Ex. 23:2)**

Peer pressure is a major weapon used by the devil to destroy us. P.T. Barnum was famous for saying: *“There is a sucker born every minute, and one dies every 30 minutes. That leaves me 29 to work on.”*

One example of man's gullibility comes from Gary Dahl who lived in Los Gatos, California. This was not far from our old home in San Jose. Gary was broke but came up with an ingenious idea that made him a millionaire. Like P.T. Barnum he took advantage of suckers. He bought smooth rocks for a penny, put them in a cardboard box, and sold them for \$3.95. The gimmick was that he marketed these rocks as “pets” that required no maintenance or care. He told *People Magazine* in 1975 that he was selling a sense of humor. After he appeared on the *Tonight Show* the stampede to buy a “Pet Rock” went viral. In only one year he sold over a million “Pet Rocks.” There are obviously plenty of suckers who have more money than sense and Gary Dahl laughed all the way to the bank.

A “stampede,” as you know, was the very technique used by the Indians to kill buffalo. In a stampede the buffalo (correctly known as bison), lose their caution. They are swept along in the “crowd.” This makes it easy to drive them over a cliff. Hungry Indians, of course, were waited below to harvest their carcasses.

People also can be stampeded to their death. When Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments the people in the valley below lost all sense of right and wrong and committed fornication before a golden calf (Ex. 32:1-6). Like mobs breaking windows and stealing TV sets, they lost contact with reality. As a result, 3,000 died because of the sins they committed in a senseless crowd during a riot (Ex. 32:28). It was right after this tragedy that Moses wrote: **“Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong.”**

Crowds have a tendency to be fickle. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the crowd was shouting **“Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matt. 21:9)**. A few days later the same crowd was shouting **“Crucify him, Crucify him.” (Lk. 23:20)**

Riots are often not spontaneous. In Ephesus, for example, the Apostle Paul was so successful that in only two years time everyone in Asia had heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10). To understand the violent opposition to Paul you merely need to “follow the money.” Those many converts, who once practiced sorcery, publicly burned their satanic scrolls valued at 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). A pagan silversmith named Demetrius decided to do something about it. So many people quit buying pagan idols that his business was in danger. So he started a riot that put the whole city in an uproar. The “crowd” seized two of Paul's companions and rushed to the theater (Acts 19:23-31). Like many crowds **“The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there” (Acts 19:32)**

The TV program *Candid Camera* was long before your time. It was started in 1948 by Allan Funt. It was originally called *Candid Microphone* and was on ABC television. In 1949 Funt switched to NBC and called the program *Candid Camera*. It was a very popular TV program for many years and is still available on You Tube. The show involved hidden cameras filming ordinary people in unusual situations. For example, to illustrate the power of peer pressure, they sent a half dozen actors into an elevator to see if their actions could influence an innocent victim to do something irrational. First, the actors defied tradition and reason by facing the rear of the elevator. The victim, who of course was not in on the gag, did not dare to be different. He turned to the rear to be like everyone else. When the actors made a 90% turn to the right he dutifully conformed. When the men promoting the scam abruptly took off their hats, he immediately followed suit. When they put their hats back on the hidden camera captured his immediate conformity to the crowd to the laughter of the studio audience.

In 1964 the Cornell University's Department of Psychology asked for an archive of *Candid Camera* episodes for educational research purposes. *Candid Camera* provided ample evidence that most people are "suckers" who do not think for themselves! The application to Christianity is obvious. Christians must follow Christ and not the crowd. Paul stated it succinctly: **"Come out from among them and be separate says the Lord."** (2 Cor. 6:17)

Nagaland became a state in India on Dec. 1, 1963. It consists of 11 Administrative Districts and 16 major ethnic groups. The 16 ethnic groups were all composed of the infamous Naga warriors. They were known as the "Naked Nagas." They wore no clothing and proudly collected the heads of their enemies. Every Naga village featured a prominent display of human heads. When I visited there the Minister of Tourism told me that no self respecting Naga woman would consider marrying a man until he had beheaded at least one victim. The more heads a man collected the more prominent was his wife. Today, thank God, Nagaland is no longer pagan. In fact, it is one of the most Christian places on earth. The population of Nagaland is roughly 2,000,000 and over 87% are Christians. The percentage of Christians in India as a whole, by comparison, is only 2.3%. The transformation of these pagans into Christians began with a single man who dared to be different.

The first convert among the Nagas confessed Christ over 150 years ago. The last reported beheading happened in 1948. According to missionary Dr. Garland Bare, that first brave convert is said to have inspired the famous Christian hymn – *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back.* That hymn features the phrase – *"though none go with me I still will follow!"* Jesus warned that many will take the popular broad road that leads to destruction, while only a few will find the lonely narrow road that leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14). Please dare to be different and take the narrow road! Please follow Jesus and **"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong!"**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce