

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 463

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about the book *And the Angels Came* by Dr. Larry Brothers. The book is about the F-5 tornado that struck Joplin, Missouri on Sunday, May 22, 2011. An F-5 tornado has winds ranging from 261-318 mph. This storm destroyed between 6,000 – 8,000 buildings, including 550 businesses, 100 medical offices, 27 churches, 28 apartment complexes, 10 children's daycare facilities, 3 nursing homes, and 11 school buildings. 35% of the citizens of Joplin were displaced and 18,000 vehicles were destroyed. There were 1,300 injuries and 161 deaths.

Dr. Brothers interviewed between 50 and 100 people who survived the storm because of what they attributed to "divine intervention". Many whom he interviewed attributed their survival to the "ministry of angels". There were thousands, of course, whom he did not interview, so we can assume that others also had some super-natural experience. Students of the Scriptures are aware that angels ministered to Jesus (Mark 1:13), and that Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are, and yet never sinned (Heb. 4:15). In short, if Jesus had angels minister to him, so can we! In fact, angels were created by God to be **"ministering spirits set to serve those who will inherit salvation."** (Heb. 1:14)

Patty, for example, as the storm approached was taking Anthony to St. John's hospital for a breathing treatment. She parked her small Ford Focus behind an SUV and near the emergency room entrance. As they prepared to make a rush for the door and inner voice told her: "get in the car and stay in the car, and you will be safe." When the storm was over the car was without windows, filled with debris, and even the gear shift was twisted. Further, a large piece of metal had smashed through the roof of the car and stopped 18 inches from hitting Anthony in the head. The hospital was destroyed, a patient was even sucked out of a hospital window and killed, and the hospital helicopter lay on its side 40 yards away, but Patty and Anthony were unharmed! She gives credit to God for their safety!

Or consider the story of Mark and Tina and their three children. Mark watched as the neighbors's trees were toppled and suddenly all five were huddled in the hallway of their home. Soon the roof was snatched away and broken glass was everywhere. As they prepared to go into the bathroom for safety Tina heard an audible voice. She said, "It felt as if God had his hand over us in the hallway, and we should stay exactly where we were." When the storm passed they opened the bathroom door and discovered a huge tree limb had crashed through the roof and smashed the bath tub.

Roger was standing on the east side of his home in Duquesne when a woman across the street warned him that St. John's hospital and Joplin High School had both been destroyed and the storm was heading their way. Roger and his family made it safely to the bathroom moments before the storm hit. Roger was lying underneath a mattress between the toilet and bathtub with his feet jammed against the bathroom door to keep it shut. Then Roger feels a miracle took place. A vanity drawer that had been stuck shut for years was sucked into a position that prohibited the bathroom door from opening no more than a few inches. Roger feels that this kept him and his family from being sucked out of the bathroom to their death.

Shirley and Charles were driving home on the west side of Joplin. At 20<sup>th</sup> and Virginia they met the north wall of the funnel cloud. Charles pulled their Honda CR-X to the curb just in front of the Bethany Presbyterian Church. A light pole crashed to the ground in front of their car, the windows of their car were blown out, and the side mirror broke free and hit Charles in the head. He pulled their damaged car beside a Walgreen's store seeking shelter from the north wind and the driving rain.

Shirley was suffering from an asthma attack and was struggling to catch her breath. Suddenly a man wearing an oversized dry white shirt spoke to her about her breathing problem. He opened the car door, took her by the hand, and her breathing returned to normal. After a few brief moments she opened her eyes and the man was gone. Shirley received no scratches or injuries from the flying debris and broken glass.

Dr. Brothers feels that the following facts were all common to the dozens of people he interviewed. Here is a brief summary:

1. Each victim had only 30 seconds or less to prepare for the storm.
2. In spite of the raging noise and chaos each person experienced a sense of incredible peace and calm.
3. They all prayed to God for help!
4. They were all thankful to have survived and now feel closer to God than ever before.
5. They all said family heirlooms and other earthly valuables are not as important as they once were.
6. No one felt that those who died were bad people or deserving of punishment.
7. They all recognized their continuing need for God on a daily basis.

There is an old story about the mariner whose small boat was about to sink in a violent storm. The terrified man cried out to God for help vowing to repent of all his sins and live a different life. Just then he felt the boat slide up on the beach and said: "Never mind God, I just hit land."

Please do not play games with God! Life is short and eternity is long! Yes! God created angels to help you, but you must first be willing to help yourself.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce