

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 36

Dearest Grandchild,

Our lesson for today comes from a little book in the back of the Bible called 1st John. The Apostle John wrote 5 books of the Bible. They are: the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation., plus 3 little letters known as 1st John, 2nd John, and 3rd John.

1st John was written to Christians and love is a major theme in the letter. While I hope you will take time to read the whole letter, please prayerfully consider this one verse.

“ If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 Jn. 4:20).

There you have it! This Scripture is crystal clear. If you do not love a brother whom you can see, you cannot Love God Whom cannot see. Loving your brother is therefore essential to loving God. Let us prayerfully consider what is there about loving a brother that prepares us to love God? Remember! John was writing to believers who already had the Holy Spirit and an “anointing” from God.

Let’s start with the physical world and our own family. As you know, Granny and I have 5 children, and 26 grandchildren. None is an only child. It will therefore be easy for us to understand a new baby in the family. We may “want” the baby, but we do not “need” it. Initially the baby does nothing that is useful. It cries when we want to sleep, wants to be fed in the middle of the night, and provides dirty diapers that are disgusting. Little babies are not always easy to love. Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller’s teacher, offered this insight into the development of a child: *“Every child begins life an eager, active little creature, always doing something, always trying to get something that he wants very much. Even before he can utter a word, succeeds in making known his desires by cries and grimaces. He invents and devises ways to get the things he wants. He is the star performer in his little world; he is the horse, the coachman, the policeman, the robber, the chauffeur, the automobile. He will be anything that requires initiative action. The one thing he never voluntarily chooses to be is the grown up personage that sits in the car and does nothing.”*

It is easy to extrapolate spiritual lessons from our physical family. Cain, for example, couldn’t love God because he didn’t love his brother. Joseph, by contrast, was able to relate to God because he learned to relate to his brothers. Obviously, we should not be like Cain (1 Jn. 3:12).

My brother and I were born on the same day, but 9 years apart. He was born Oct. 7, 1927, and I was born Oct. 7, 1936. I still remember an incident that happened when he was 14, and I was 5. Bill was going on a hike with his friends, and our mother made him take me along. “Oh mom”, he said: “Do I have to take Boyce?”. The answer was “YES!” As disgusting as our little brothers are, there can be something positive about loving them.

Good soldiers are not trained by easy assignments, and neither are good Christians. The military designs obstacle courses for the specific purpose of teaching soldiers to overcome obstacles. God designed families with the same purpose in mind. By learning to love the members of our family we are developing spiritual maturity that will help us to be like Christ.

Simon Peter was once a small package of conceit almost completely absorbed with his own importance. Typical of his arrogance was his boast **“that even if all fall away on account of you, I never will” (Matt. 26:33)**. Jesus knew better and predicted that on that very night Peter would deny Him three times. Peter, however, dared to continue disagreeing with Christ and announced: **“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Matt. 26:35)**. How sad! How childish! How immature! Note that the cure for his immaturity involved his brethren. Jesus said it like this: **“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22:31-32)** Self absorbed and immature people can be helped by strengthening their brethren. In this regard, the “only child” is at a disadvantage. Peter, as you know, not only had a brother named Andrew, he also had spiritual brothers who were fellow apostles. As immature as he once was, he developed into the “Rock Apostle” whose name heads each listing of the 12. He also became an elder who was a shepherd to the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1). His growth to maturity involved learning to love his brethren. Three times Jesus asked him “Do you love ME?” and each time this love for Christ involved feeding the SHEEP (Jn. 21:15 - 19). Peter learned this lesson and wrote to the brethren that when our faith is placed in the furnace we can see, we are somehow empowered to love the God Whom we cannot see (1 Pet. 1:3 - 9).

There are many things wrong with abortion. Not only does it snuff out an innocent life, but it also robs the family of the inconvenience and discipline that enable us to love God. Most abortions occur because someone does not want to be inconvenienced. How sad! Rivers are crooked because they take the easy way around obstacles, and people get crooked the same way. Remember! The path to God is not crooked, it is straight and narrow! Loving our brother may be inconvenient, but it is an essential ingredient to loving God.

When a butterfly struggles out of the cocoon it produces a fluid that inflates it’s wings. Without this struggle it will never fly. Whatever struggles you face in your family need not be wasted. By struggling to love those whom we can see, we are strengthening our wings to lift us from earth to the very presence of God!

Job wrote that man’s days are few and full of trouble (Job. 14:1). He was right. All of us have troubles, and often these troubles involve people. The point of this letter is to try and convince you that these stressful relationships can be used by God. By learning to love unlovely people whom we can see, we are developing the discipline we need to love God Whom we cannot see.

Let’s take another look at Joseph. His brothers hated him and could not speak peaceably with him (Gen. 37:4). That is not only why they threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery, it is also why they had no power with God. Joseph, by contrast, continued to love his brothers, even though they mistreated him. They sold him into slavery when he was 17 (Gen. 37:2), and he spent most of

the next 13 years in prison (Gen. 41:46). Yet 9 years later he still loved his brothers and refused to hold a grudge against them. Listen to these loving words Joseph spoke when he made himself known to them: **“Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.” (Gen 45:4-8)**

When we love our brothers like this, we too can have power with God.

Thanks for taking time to read this.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce