

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the influence you have on others. You may not think that you have any influence over others, but you do. The Scriptures teach **“none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone” (Rom. 15:7).**

Take, for example, the influence of Abel. He was an obscure shepherd boy. We have no idea how old he was when he died, what he looked like, where he lived, or where he is buried. Yet - he still speaks. He was the first person on earth to die, yet he still speaks. Thousands of years after he died he still has influence. Millions around the world know that righteous Abel was pleasing to God. The Scriptures state: **“By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.” (Heb 11:4)**

There is an important lesson here. Yes! You can influence people while you are alive. You can set an example for others. You can talk to them. You can write to them a letter or text them on your phone. Others will watch what you do you when you are not even aware of it. Your influence can make a difference in their lives, for good or for bad. It is important to realize, as in the case of Abel, your influence will continue even after you die.

On Oct. 10, 2016 I went to Illinois to preach the funeral of Billy Joe Shanle. Granny and I met him in 1955 when we ministered to a little country church 6 miles from Mt. Pulaski, IL.. His influence over our lives has not stopped just because he died. At the cemetery where he was buried I saw tomb stones of others whom I have not forgotten. Even though they are dead, they still speak.

Unfortunately, bad people also have influence after they die. Adolf Hitler killed millions while he was alive, but years after his death his wicked influence still inspires others to do evil. Two demented teenagers, for example, celebrated Hitler's birthday by murdering their fellow class mates at the Columbine High School in Colorado.

The first funeral I conducted for someone who committed suicide was at that same little country church. If this poor soul thought he was ridding the world of his influence, he was wrong. He still speaks! His 14 year old son discovered his body and will carry that haunting memory with him to his grave. Sixty years later his neighbors and friends still remember where he lived and how he died. Yes! We still have influence, even after we die. Do you know anyone who has named their son Judas?

Sometimes we even have more influence after we die. Take, for example, Johann Sebastian Bach. He died in 1750. Like righteous Abel, was buried in an unmarked grave. Virtually no one knew anything about him for eighty years. It was then that a young Jewish boy named Felix Mendelssohn discovered his composition, “St. Matthew's Passion”. Mendelssohn fell in love with Bach's music, and helped to make Johann Sebastian Bach one of the most famous musicians in the

world. Yes! He is dead, but he still speaks!

There is an old saying: “No one goes to heaven alone, and no one goes to hell alone”. The point is, whether we like it or not, we all have influence. Many years ago a preacher friend stopped by to visit a family and invited them to church. Their little boy grabbed his daddy’s hand and said: “Us men don’t go to church, do we daddy?” The next Sunday the whole family was in church! Just think, someone you know may go to church just because you do! Fortunately, the words of his own son reminded this father that when you train up a child in the way they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6).

Sometimes, the influence of just one person can make a real difference.

- Walt Disney failed many times, but reached a turning point in his life when his brother Roy helped him get a job in an art store.
- Sam Walton’s success in business might not have been possible without the \$20,000 loan he received from L. S. Robson.
- 10 year old Albert Einstein owes a debt of gratitude to a math teacher named Max Talmud.
- Oprah Winfrey credits her father and a lawyer named Jeffrey D. Jacobs for pointing her in the right direction.
- The influence of William Wilberforce played a key role in eliminating slavery throughout the world.
- Naaman, the commander of the army of Aram, was healed of leprosy because a “young girl” taken captive from Israel dared to tell him about Elisha the prophet (2 Ki. 5:3)

What about you? You may be “only one”, but you are “one”. Jesus said: **“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”** (Matt 5:14-16)

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce