

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a familiar verse from the Bible. **“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’”** (Gen. 2:16,17).

While it is easy to dismiss this story as totally irrelevant, I believe it is significant beyond words. I believe it stands at the crossroads of everyday life. I believe it ultimately determines life or death. At some point in every life, every person has to make a decision between good and evil. The question is, what is good? Will we allow God to decide or will we make up our own rules?

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world. Literally billions of people are captivated by it. Athletes practice endless hours and multiplied thousands cannot wait to turn on the TV or rush to the stadium to see a soccer game. The “World Cup” as you know, is a soccer tournament involving athletes from all over the world. As popular as it is, however, this amazing sport can be easily destroyed. If each athlete decides to disregard the rules the game would be destroyed. If every soccer player decided to disobey the referee the game would descend into anarchy. There are literally thousands of games in the world. They range from board games like checkers and chess, to athletic contests of strength, and speed. Every game, however, has rules and no game can survive without them.

The tree in our text defined “good” and “evil”. These words are meaningless to those who do not believe in God. Atheist Richard Dawkins, for example, said: “ *The universe we observe has ... no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. ... DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music*”. If man is merely a bag of chemicals who evolved by chance from pond scum, what does it matter whether you love your neighbor or eat your neighbor? If there are no rules and no Rule Maker, why criticize Hitler for merely dancing to his DNA?

Don Richardson, in his book *Peace Child*, writes of the Sawi people in Netherlands Guinea. This stone age tribe considered lying and duplicity as a virtue. The book opens with the story of a man seeking to make peace with this violent tribe. After convincing the man that they they were his friends, they killed and ate him. In their convoluted way of thinking, the longer they deceived him the more virtuous they were. Thus when Don told them the story of Jesus, Judas Iscariot became their hero. He epitomized the deception and duplicity they were striving for.

Eve looked at the tree and noticed that it was good to look at, good for food, and desirable to make one wise (Gen. 3:6). The more she thought about it the more she was inclined to disobey God and make up her own rules. Even though Adam was not deceived he still joined with her in this rebellion (1 Tim. 2:14). Often it is not wise to try and reason your way out of temptation. It is best just to quote God and obey His rules. That's what Jesus did! Every time Jesus was tempted He merely quoted the Bible and told the devil “It is written” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). Jesus obeyed God every time and didn't make up His own rules. We ought to do the same!

Just think about it. Adam and Eve already knew what was “good”. Everything around them was “good”. That's the way God made everything. The word “evil” however allured them as it was a mystery. What did this new word mean? Was God trying to keep them from something desirable?

Had they decided to trust God and go by the rules they would never have had to dig a grave, shed a tear, or experience a pain. They chose, however, to make up their own rules and the rest is history.

But what about you and me? The Scriptures warn that in the last days some will abandon the faith and be seduced by evil spirits and the doctrines of demons. Paul said that such teaching comes from hypocritical liars whose conscience has been seared with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:1,2). I believe we are in the last days. Those who want to make up their own rules speak of “your truth” and “my truth”. Such a philosophy doesn’t work either in a soccer game or the game of life. Just as in Eden, the wicked one is this very day trying to trick us into forgetting what God has said and making up our own rules. Remember, when you make up your own rules you ruin the game!

The Psalmist said: **“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.” (Ps. 1:1-3).**

Please be careful where you “walk”, “stand”, or “sit” for evil company invariably corrupts good character (1 Cor. 15:33).

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce