

LETTERS FROM GRADPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Craig von Buseck (CBN.com Ministries Director) offers the five following principles to explain the life and influence of **WILLIAM WILBERFORCE**. The following is a condensation.

1. The Principle of **Pardon**. As a young man he was deeply influenced by friendship with John Newton. Newton, as you know, was the converted slave trader who wrote “Amazing Grace”. Though Wilberforce’s parents sought to dissuade him from fanaticism, he was a deeply committed Christian convinced that Christ could pardon even the vilest sinners.
2. The Principle of **Purpose**. Wilberforce wrote: “*God has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners (morals)*”. While he was involved in many other noble endeavors, these two great causes became the focus of his life and ministry.
3. The Principle of **Partners**. Wilberforce drew strength from a handful of fellow believers known as the “Clapham Circle”. The name comes from the fact that this small group built houses in a circle around their church building in the small village of Clapham Commons. Even though their fellowship was small in number, they were convinced that where even two or three were gathered together, Christ was in their midst.
4. The Principle of **Power**. Wilberforce was convinced that he could never succeed without the power of the Holy Spirit. His book *Real Christianity* reflects his deep convictions on this. He wrote in 1897: “*Surely the principles as well as the practice of Christianity are simple, and lead not to meditation only but to action*”. It was the Holy Spirit that provided him the power to act.
5. The Principle of **Persistence**. Wilberforce was elected to parliament in Sept. 1780 at the age of 21. This was the youngest he could be elected. In the face of death threats and tirades of criticism he introduced an abolition bill every year. It was finally passed 27 years later on Feb. 23, 1807. While this bill stopped the evil of slave trading, Wilberforce continued for the next 25 years in the battle to end slavery itself.

Wilberforce was barely over five feet tall and weighed less than 100 lbs. He had suffered from poor health all of his life. Finally, his failing health forced him to retire from political life in Feb. 1825. Others took the torch from his failing hands and finally, in 1833, just 3 days before his death, the House of Commons passed a law emancipating all slaves in the British Empire.

Before the historic vote in 1807, Solicitor General Sir Samuel Romilly, contrasted the lives of Napoleon and Wilberforce. Napoleon would come home with pomp and power, but also with torment because of the oppression and war he had caused. Wilberforce, by contrast, would come home to the bosom of his happy wife. He would have no regrets and be able to lie down in peace. He had done his best to help millions of fellow human beings find freedom.

The Hebrew people had more than one “calling”. When they heard two silver trumpets, everyone from all twelve tribes was “called” to the assembly. If only one trumpet was sounded,

however, just the leaders and heads of the clans were to assemble. Different signals from the trumpets were also used to give direction to different tribes (Nu. 10:1 - 7).

So also today, believers have more than one calling. The first call is for everyone to leave their lives of sin and come to Christ. This calling creates the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven (Heb. 12:23). In that assembly, however, each believer, like different members of the same body, has his or her own special “call” or “assignment” from Christ.

I think each of us has a special “gift” or “calling” from God. The Bible word for “gift” is “charisma” from which we get the word “charismatic”. The root of this word is “chara” which means “joy”. The point is, when you are using the gift that God has given you, you will find both fulfillment and joy. It is always good to use your spiritual gift to help others, but it is especially appropriate to do so at Christmas.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce