

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with priorities. I first heard the following story over 60 years ago. While accounts vary, the substance of the story is apparently true. Over 100 years ago, Charles Schwab, the President of Bethlehem Steel Co., hired an efficiency expert named Ivy Lee. Lee merely asked to spend 15 minutes with each executive in the company. He would expect nothing for his services for three months. At the end of three months Schwab was to review his records and pay Lee whatever he felt was appropriate. After three months Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for \$25,000. At that time, when workers made only \$2 per day, this would approximate to a half million dollars in today's currency. The advice worked! Soon Bethlehem Steel was the largest shipbuilder in America and the second largest steel producer. Schwab himself amassed a \$200 million fortune.

The essence of Lee's advice was a six point strategy involving priorities. Lee merely recommended that each department do things in the order of their importance. After defining the objective for the day, each leader was to write down six things that needed to be done to accomplish that goal. Each day he was then to do these six things in the order of their importance. Hunters achieve success by aiming before they shoot and businessmen can do the same. The Chinese have a saying: "He who chases two rabbits catches neither". This advice is relevant in virtually every area of life. No matter what your goals are, it is always wise to do things in the order of their importance.

When Jesus was alive Jewish scholars had counted 613 commandments in the Torah. Each Jewish denomination, however, had different priorities. The Pharisees, for example, had differently priorities than the Sadducees. When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, one of their experts tested Jesus with this question: **"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"** Jesus replied: **Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments"** (Matt. 22:34-40).

Since hundreds of commandments could be confusing, Jesus prioritized only two. He said that "all the Law and the Prophets" could hang on these two commandments. The top priority is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This vertical relationship with God, however, is to be alloyed by a horizontal relationship. Commandment # 2 is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Nothing technical! Nothing complicated! How simple! How profound!

All truths are equally true, but not all truths are equally important. $2 + 2 = 4$ and Jesus is the Christ. Both statements are equally true, but both are not equally important. In this regard love is the most important commandment in the Bible. You cannot be saved without faith and hope, but love is still the top priority. Note: **"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love"** (1 Cor. 13:13). We are not to love the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17), we are to love God (1 Jn. 4:16). The world and its desires will pass away, but those who do the will of God live forever. It is hard to imagine anyone being eternally successful who does not make loving God the top priority in his life. **"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. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother"** (1 Jn. 4:20,21).

Most of us will live and die in obscurity. Reporters will not care what we say and flags will not be flown at half staff when we die. Suppose, however, that suddenly we could become the most powerful and important person in the world. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was just that kind of a person. Instead of loving God first, however, he first loved himself. He walked on the roof of his palace and said to himself: **“Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty” (Dan. 4:27).** While the words were still on his lips a voice from heaven condemned him to be driven from civilization to live like a wild animal. This divine judgement from heaven immediately came true. Nebuchadnezzar ate grass like an ox and was drenched with the dew of heaven. His hair even grew like the feathers of an eagle, and his nails became like the claws of a bird. After seven long years his sanity returned and he said: **“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the king of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble” (Dan. 4:37).** He should have honored God in the first place, and so should we!

Of course you don't have to be the most powerful person on earth to be arrogant and proud. Even a five year old child can do that! That's why parents are charged with bringing up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ivy Lee was right. Success depends upon doing things in the order of their importance. If you don't love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, someday you will regret it. No rational person dies asking help from anybody but God. It is not wise to give anything or anyone the top priority in your life but God.

Please make loving God the top priority of your life!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce