

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

When the Apostle Paul met with elders from Ephesus he told them: **“I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you . . .” (Acts 20:20).** This makes sense to me. Therefore, I also want to share with you anything that will be helpful. For example, when I heard that your cousin Pete, Paul’s son, was seeking to teach English as a second language I called and told him about Frank Labauch. Perhaps learning about Frank Labauch will also be helpful to you.

Frank was a devout Christian and also a missionary. His devotion to Christ was remarkable. One of his most popular pamphlets was entitled “The Game with Minutes”. In it he urged Christians to keep God in mind at least one second of every minute of every day. This idea was prompted by Paul’s admonition to the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Frank had two burning passions: *“First, to be like Jesus. Second, to respond to God as a violin responds to the bow of the master.”* He said: *“Open your soul and entertain the glory of God and after a while that glory will be reflected in the world about you and in the very clouds above your head.”*

Frank is best known, however, as an “Apostle to the Illiterate”. He is the only missionary to be honored by a U. S. postage stamp. Frank went as a missionary to the Philippines in 1915. He believed that teaching people to read would not only open their minds to the Bible, but also to agriculture, medicine, and an unlimited supply of other useful books and information. After 14 years of success in Cagayn and Manila, in 1929 he realized his long standing dream to settle among the fierce Moro tribe in Mindanao. There, in the village of Lanao, he underwent a series of remarkable experiences with God. As a result, he believed that God helped him to develop a practical way to teach illiterate people. Since the Moros were Islamic, he began to study the Koran that he might better understand them. This not only helped to preserve his life, but also built a bridge of understanding with these violent people. Soon he was learning the Maranaw dialect, which had never been written. He found it a simple language with only 16 sounds. He transposed them into 16 Roman letters. In six weeks he compiled 1300 Marananaw words, and started teaching these illiterate natives to read their own language. The experiment was enormously successful. As we have said, he felt that God guided him to reduce the Moro language to writing with symbols closely related to their spoken words. This not only enabled them to learn to read in only a few hours, but also made it possible for them to teach one another. It was here that the famous “each one teach one” program was born. This program was especially needed at that time as the Great Depression resulted in professional missionaries being recalled. By the “each one teach one” method it is estimated that one half of the 90,000 people in the Moro tribe learned to read and write. The effectiveness of the program was enhanced by a Moro chieftain who saw the value of literacy and threatened to kill anyone who could read and refused to teach someone else.

In 1935 Frank returned to the states for a furlough. He chose to do so via Malaya, Singapore, Ceylon, India, Cairo, Palestine, Syria and Turkey. In each country he introduced his literacy methods. By the end of his furlough the World Literacy Committee had been formed to support Dr. Labauch’s work around the world.

As governments saw the results of Laubach's missions, there arose a demand for his methods in secular educational systems. In 1950, World Literacy, Inc., was organized to serve nonreligious clients. In 1955 Dr. Laubach organized Laubach Literacy, Inc., a nonprofit organization which is now directed by his son, Dr. Robert Laubach of Syracuse.

While only God knows the total extent of Frank Labauch's influence in the world, we know that he wrote 56 books, and his language methods have been used in 103 countries with 313 different languages. An estimated 100 million people have learned to read because Frank Labauch loved Jesus with all his heart and tried to respond like a violin to His Master's bow. He was never smug, however, about his accomplishments. He modestly acknowledged: "*I haven't even kept up with the birth rate, and besides, about 20 million or more who've learned to read have lapsed back into illiteracy for lack of reading materials.*"

Frank passed away June 11, 1970 at the age of 85. The impact of his amazing life, however, lives on! Perhaps it will inspire us to also respond like a violin to the touch of our Masters bow.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce