

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Reinhold Niebur (1892 – 1971) is credited with writing the “Serenity Prayer”. *“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”* Today’s letter will deal with this prayer.

Determinism is the philosophical theory that all events, including moral choices, are completely determined by previously existing causes. This philosophy eliminates free will. Atheist Richard Dawkins is a “Determinist”. He states: *“In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won’t find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at the bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no other good. Nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music.”* Apparently, Dawkins believes that Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot were merely dancing to their DNA, and the millions they killed were just not “lucky”. Christians do not believe this way.

Christians believe that while God is unchangeable, we are not. We do not have to dance to our DNA. We can change! Not only can we change ourselves, we can change lots of other things too, but we cannot change God and we cannot change history. For example, though we cannot completely explain why God destroyed the earth with a flood and commanded Moses to kill the Canaanites, we still accept reality. These are facts. Since we cannot change either God or history it is pointless to try.

Man is a worshipping animal. Wherever he has left the ashes of his camp fire he has also left evidence of his belief in God. Apes and monkeys do not built altars but man does. The fact that different people worship different gods reflects the need for clarification. Some things about God are evident from nature. For example, by studying creation we gain insight into God’s eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20). We cannot know God personally, however, until He reveals himself. Christians believe that God chose to do this in the person of Jesus Christ.

Just think about it. The Wright brothers built an airplane and Henry Ford built a car. Studying the airplane and the car, however, tells us very little about these famous men. Neither can we come to know them by carefully examining their physical bodies with a microscope and an MRI. We cannot really come to know anyone until they reveal themselves.

The good news is that God did reveal Himself. Yes! Even though our Infinite God is much too big to fit in our finite minds, we can still understand something about Him. The Bible teaches that all of God that we are capable of understanding has been fully revealed in Jesus Christ **“For in Christ all the fulness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Col. 2:9)**. Jesus is the Word of God (Jn. 1:1). That is, He is the vehicle by which God communicates Himself. Even though no one has even seen God, we are still capable of understanding His nature because He has chosen to make Himself known through Jesus (Jn. 1:18). It is not by accident that the four gospels comprise 44% of the New Testament Scriptures. If you really want to know God then study Jesus.

Nor can we come to understand God from the Old Testament Scriptures. The Law was only a shadow and not reality (Heb. 10:1). By contrast, Jesus is reality and not a shadow. Jesus is the Light of

the World and whoever follows Him will never walk in darkness (Jn. 8:12) The priesthood changed and the law changed (Heb. 7:12) but God never changes (Mal. 3:6) and neither does Jesus. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:6). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). James echoes the reality that our Heavenly Father does not change like shifting shadows (Ja. 1:17).

Now let us return to the Serenity Prayer. Since we cannot change God or Jesus, we need to focus on changing ourselves. Yes! It takes courage. No! It is not easy. The atheists are wrong! We are not just physical creatures dancing to our DNA, we also have a mind. We are spiritual creatures created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). "*Blind physical forces and genetic replication*" cannot produce a mind, but we have minds just the same. Yes! God has given you a mind. You have chosen to read this article, and you can choose to stop reading at any time you choose to do so! Please do not abandon your ability to choose!

Joshua challenged the Israelites: **“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”** (Josh. 24:15).

I hope and pray that you will make the same choice!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce