

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a Scripture that shaped the lives of some famous missionaries. The Scripture is: **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:5-6 KJV).** J. Russell and Gertrude Morse both considered this their favorite Scripture. It helped shape their lives when they began dating. It continued to give them guidance when they enrolled as students at Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma. It provided a solid foundation for them when they got married. It also influenced their decision to dedicate themselves to serve God as foreign missionaries. When missionary doctor Albert Shelton spoke at Phillips University and asked for volunteers to return with him to Tibet, J. Russell and Gertrude both accepted the challenge, believing that God was “directing their paths”.

After many years of laboring in obscurity, the Morse family was propelled into international fame when the Reader's Digest published a book about them in 1974. The book is *“Exodus to a Hidden Valley”*. It was first published in 1974 but has gone through multiple printings since that time. A condensed version appeared the February 1974 Reader's Digest magazine. (For many years *Reader's Digest* was the best selling consumer magazine in the U.S. with Global editions reaching an additional 40 million people in more than 70 countries, via 49 editions in 21 languages. It is the largest paid circulation magazine in the world)

J. Russell's mother was a humble farmer's wife with four children. She longed to have another child but was unable to do so for 14 years. Like Hannah in the Bible, she cried out to God for help and promised God that if He would give her another son she would dedicate him to be a foreign missionary. On Feb. 4, 1898 God answered that prayer and J. Russell Morse was born.

The family moved to Tulsa in 1904. This was 3 years before Oklahoma became a state and there was not one paved street in the whole town. There was only one high school for J. Russell to attend. In 1917 that school became known as Tulsa Central. Granny and I both graduated from Tulsa Central in 1954.

J. Russell, Gertrude, and their 4 month old son Eugene set sail for Asia on Aug. 11, 1921. THIS YEAR IS THE HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY OF THAT HISTORIC VOYAGE. His mother was 60 years old at the time. When she said good bye she reminded him again that he was an answer to her prayers. She feared that she would never see him again this side of heaven, but by the grace of God she lived for 32 more years and was a great supporter of his mission work. More than four months later the Morse family arrived in Asia on Dec. 22, 1921. Six weeks later Dr. Shelton would be shot by Tibetan bandits and would die in J. Russell's arms. The Morse's courageously continued without him.

They were true pioneers taking the Gospel to tribal groups who had never heard of Jesus. That area was so primitive that they labored for 30 years without a wheeled vehicle of any kind. Since the nearest doctor or hospital was weeks away, J. Russell bravely took Dr. Shelton's place. His medical skills prompted thousands to come to him for help. He not only helped them physically, but was always faithful to tell them about Jesus. Recognizing that many of their health problems were the result of a poor diet, he imported over 150 varieties of fruit trees and trained the locals in the art of grafting.

When Chairman Mao took over China J. Russell was arrested and spent over 450 days in solitary confinement. Not knowing what day of the week it was, or if he would even live to see another day, taking communion was an important part of his daily routine. All he had, however was rice and water. Thankfully, communion is more a matter of the heart than elements of bread and wine.

Finally he was abruptly taken from his cell to the court yard. Since executions happened every day he was mentally prepared to die. To his utter amazement, however, he was released to the custody of armed guards and sent on an 18 day journey to Hong Kong and freedom. Before crossing the bridge to freedom the soldiers relieved him of what little expense money he had. After over 15 months in solitary confinement he had no idea if his family was even alive. Praise God, not only were they alive and well, but his wife and son Lavern just “happened” to be in Hong Kong at that very time.

We should not be surprised that God guided the path of the Morse family back to Asia. Nor should we be surprised that they continued to be persecuted for preaching the Gospel. Driven out of China they ministered in Burma. Then they were driven out of Burma. With thousands of converts they made the difficult journey over the Himalayan Mountains to India. When India refused to accept them they were forced to settle in “Hidden Valley”. This was a remote and uninhabited area between Burma and India. The fact that they were able to thrive in the wilderness has led some to compare them to Swiss Family Robinson. Instead of being the end of the road for the Morse family, Hidden Valley was their open door to international fame.

After a hundred years of service the Morse family continues to work in Asia. Their base of operations is now in Thailand. It was said of Jesus that **“he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil” (Acts 10:38)**. This is precisely what the Morse family is doing and has always sought to do. Your parents (our five children) will remember the times that these godly Christian pioneers visited our home. They sat at our table and thrilled us with stories of God’s work. It has been my privilege to travel to Thailand and teach some of the preachers they are training. The many facets of their ministry reaches into virtually every segment of society. During their century of service they have reached multiplied millions with the Gospel of Christ.

As most of you know God has provided me with a web site <https://boycemouton.com> Under “videos” you will find the “Venture in Faith” series. The Morse family is featured in several of these video taped interviews. You will be blessed by hearing their testimony first hand.

Never forget: **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”.**

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce