

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Last week we wrote about the unpleasant subject of abortion. While many “regret” aborting healthy babies, others “understand” killing an unborn baby that is mentally retarded. According to LifeNews.com 67% of Down Syndrome babies are aborted in the U.S. In Iceland 100% of Down Syndrome babies are aborted. It seems there is a Hitler like trend to “play god” and seek to eliminate anyone whom “you” deem inferior. Today’s letter will therefore be about a famous football coach named Gene Stallings. His only son, John Mark Stallings, was born with both Down Syndrome and a serious heart problem. Johnny was not expected to live to see his fourth birthday. The question is, did Johnny have a “right to life”, or not?

At first, Gene prayed that God would change Johnny and make him “right”. Later, in an interview with Dr. James Dobson, Gene said that if he had it all to do over, he would never ask God to change Johnny. He considered Johnny an angel from heaven who taught him about love, and friendship, and what it means to really care. Against all odds, Johnny lived to be 46 years old. As the end drew near, Johnny’s oxygen level plummeted from the normal 90’s to only 63. His daddy said: “Johnny, how do you feel?”. Johnny replied “I fine”. He passed away the next morning. It was Aug. 2, 2008.

Gene began by praying that God would change Johnny, but in the end, with God’s help, Johnny changed Gene. Gene even wrote an inspirational biography about his son: *Another Season – A Coach’s Story of Raising an Exceptional Child*. This biography has literally inspired millions. As word spread of Johnny’s death, 1,500 letters poured in from all over the country. Two governors sent police cars to lead the funeral procession and hundreds of mourners showed up to pay their respects. Although Johnny could not read or write, or even count to ten, his short life had a positive influence on millions.

Here is a partial list of his achievements:

- A best selling biography honoring his life was written by his father.
- He received an honorary High School Diploma from Dallas Christian High School.
- He received a “Change the World” honor from Abilene Christian University.
- An equipment room was named in his honor at the University of Alabama.
- A playground was also named for him at the University of Alabama.
- A football field was named in his honor at Faulkner University.
- A life size statue of him and his father is also at Faulkner University.
- He was named a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International.
- He was made an honorary Marine by the U.S. Marine Corps.
- The Texas A & M Class of ‘57 endowed a Medical School Scholarship in his honor.
- He proudly represented Texas in the International Special Olympics.
- He was featured in the only United Way commercial produced for the NFL.
- He received the Alabama Sports Festival Medal which was carried on the space shuttle.
- He kicked off the “First Down for Downs” associated with the NFL Arizona Cardinals.
- He appeared on many TV programs such as the Today Show, Dateline, and an ABC Special.
- He was featured in People’s Magazine, Reader’s Digest, and also many Christian publications.
- He assisted teaching Sunday School classes for four year olds in several congregations.
- One university included him in a special list of five famous people who have changed the world.

- He was baptized into Christ in 1985 in Dallas, Texas.
- The name John Mark Stallings is not only famous on earth, but also in heaven.

One woman reflected on Johnny's life and wrote: "*Life is not about waiting until the storm passes by, it's about learning to dance in the rain*". His father concurred and said: "*Johnny taught the girls and Ruth Ann and me, to dance in the rain. Just do the best we have with what we've got.*" The Psalmist gave God the glory and said: "**For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.**" (Ps 139:13-14)

One day, as Jesus went along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. "**His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind'? 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned', said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life'**" (John 9:1-3). Thank God that John Mark Stallings was not aborted, for we can certainly see that the work of God was displayed in his life.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce