

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about Don Richardson. The Reader's Digest published 30 million copies of his book *Peace Child*. The movie *Peace Child* has been seen in 60 different countries and 27 different languages. A link to this movie will be provided later. Sadly, this famous missionary died of brain cancer Dec. 23, 2018 at the age of 83. Not only was Don a missionary, but also a husband, a father, an author, a runner, an artist, a chess champion, and a man who climbed 33 different mountains over 14,000 feet high.

Today's letter will be a brief review of Don's book "*Eternity in Their Hearts*". This title comes from Ecclesiastes 3:11 - **"He has set eternity in the hearts of men"**. Blaise Pascal, a mathematician and philosopher from the 1600s, says the same thing in different words. He said: "*There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every person which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator.*" Paul said, God has not left himself without witness (Acts 14:17). Don Richardson notes that in addition to the witness of nature God has filled the earth with what he called "redemptive analogies". One of Don's favorite Scriptures was **"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who give generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him" (Ja. 1:5)**. Don believed that God gave him wisdom to use the Sawi tradition of the "Peace Child" to lead them to Christ. It did! His book *Eternity in Their Hearts* contains other amazing "redemptive analogies".

This book begins with the familiar story of Paul preaching to the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17). Their patron saint was Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Don took 16 pages to tell the following story in detail, but here is a brief review. Athens was "full of idols" but Paul passed over them because he found an "altar to an unknown God". An "altar", of course, is different from an "idol"! God gave Paul the wisdom to use that altar to explain that this "Unknown God" was the One True God Whom they didn't know! The history of that altar dates back to the sixth century before Christ. At that time Athens was beset by a terrible plague and all of their many gods were powerless to help. In desperation they sent to the island of Crete for the prophet Epimenides. He came to Athens and made three bold assumptions (1) There must be another God powerful enough to help (2) If they sacrifice to Him He will help (3) If this Unknown God is great enough to help, He will also be great enough to overlook our ignorance if we are humble. The prophet then counseled them to release hungry sheep on the grassy slopes of Mars Hill. If these hungry sheep ate they were to be ignored. If any sheep did not eat, however, it was to be sacrificed to the "Unknown God". By the next day the plague began to disappear and within a week it was gone. The icing on the cake is that Epimenides is mentioned in the Bible: **"Even one of their own prophets has said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons'" (Tit. 1:12)**. Here are a few other fascinating stories from the book.

- God guided Abram to Melchizedek. Most Canaanites were godless idolators but Melchizedek was the king of Salem and priest of God Most High Who was the Creator of heaven and earth. While Abram shunned the king of Sodom he ate bread, drank wine, and paid tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-24). Melchizedek is mentioned in Hebrews chapters 5 – 7 to teach us about the priesthood of Christ. The meeting of Abram and Melchizedek was not an accident!
- In 1867 Lars Skrefsrud and Hans Borreson sought to evangelize the Santal tribe in India. While learning their language they came across the words "*Thakur Jiu*". In the Santal language this means "Genuine God". Their forefathers worshiped the "Genuine God" but they only knew the demon spirits. God gave these missionaries the wisdom to explain that they had been sent to

tell them about the “Genuine God”. When they explained that “Thakur Jiu” had sent His Son to save them the missionaries began baptizing as many as 80 people every day.

- The Gedeo people of Ethiopia had a tradition that the One True God was named *Magano*. One day one of their men named Warrasa Wange dared to pray to Magano to ask him to reveal himself. As Wange was part of the royal family his prayers became known. Almost immediately he received a vision of two white strangers erecting a flimsy shelter with a shiny roof. The vision promised that these men would tell them about *Magano*. As all their dwellings had grass roofs these two white strangers would not be difficult to find. Eight years went by and then in December 1948 Canadian Albert Brant and Glen Cain came over the horizon in a battered International truck and began building a shelter with a shiny corrugated metal roof. Their arrival, their shelter, and their message about the One True God were not accidents.
- The Wa people of southeast Asia believed the One True God was named *Siyeh*. They believed that a Holy Book telling them about *Siyeh* had been lost. In the 1880s one of their prophets, Pu Chan, had a vision that a white man with the lost book was near by. Pu Chan saddled a pony and told his disciples that it would lead them to this man with the lost book. They followed the pony for some 200 miles to the city of Kengtung where it stopped by a well being dug by missionary William Marcus Young. Speaking in the Shan language they asked him if he had a book from the One True God, and the rest is history. Young’s granddaughter told this story in person to Don Richardson as it is a treasured memory in their family. Our friend, missionary Dr. Garland Bare, also worked with the Young family and confirmed the story.
- Since all the people of earth came from Adam and Eve we should not be surprised that they have traditions about the One True God. Here is a link explaining how the Bible has influenced the Chinese language. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w57EPf8dZJ0> (7 minutes)

Here is the link to the movie *Peace Child* <https://vimeo.com/345648244>
(26 minutes)

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce