

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 420**

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter is about "FAMILY". When Granny and I got married I prayed to God that we would have a Christian family. We're trying! Our 5 children were all baptized into Christ before they left home. I pray for every one of them every day. I also pray everyday by name for our 26 grandchildren, and 18 great grandchild. For 22 years I had an hour long radio program 5 days a week over KOBC in Joplin. That program was called "FAMILY FORUM". For some reason, Jasper County, where we live, led the state in divorces per population factor for 6 out of the 10 years before I began that radio program. I began that program in 1978 to try and help families to avoid divorce. Among other efforts I made arrangements with the Recorder of Deeds in Carthage to provide a free tract about the family to every couple that received a marriage license. Senator Richard Webster heard of these efforts and sent me a letter of encouragement. I dreamed of making a difference, but didn't. My failure helps me relate to Noah! Even though family life is crumbling around us, the concept of a family is still an integral part of Scripture and also of my life. The thought that any member of our family would not be in heaven is a burden too heavy to bear.

The nuclear family consists of a mother, father, and their biological or adopted descendants. It is also called the traditional family. This is the kind of family that God ordained in Eden. Noah had this kind of family. Noah failed to save the world but did save his family. (Heb. 11:7 states that Noah built an ark to save his family) Building the ark was hard work, but it was worth it! According to the Bible that family consisted of only eight people - Noah and his wife, their three sons and their wives (Gen. 7:7; 1 Pet. 3:20).

The traditional family continued after the flood. Noah's sons had children by their wives and by means of these families the earth was repopulated. This information is recorded in Gen. 10 and is called the Table of Nations. The word "families" is found five times in this chapter in the KJV. It comes from the Hebrew word "mishpachah" which is translated as "clans" in the NIV. A married man and woman formed a family. A cluster of families formed a clan. A cluster of clans formed a tribe. A cluster of tribes formed a nation. This system, based on families, was established by God.

God promised Abraham, as you know, that in him and his seed all the "families" of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). Again, the same Hebrew word for "family" or "clan" was used. One reason God forbade adultery is that He wanted all little babies to be born into nurturing and caring "families".

Family records are important in the Bible. There are many genealogical lists in the Bible which document the lineage of Jesus. Jesus is unique in that he was "expected" thousands of years before he was born. The book of Genesis contains 8 genealogies. The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are all genealogies. The N.T. Scriptures begin with the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph (Matt. 1), and Luke 3 contains the genealogy of Jesus through Mary. This documents that Jesus was both legally and biologically a descendant of David. It was in his "family" that Jesus advanced in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man (Lk. 2:52). In a committed family relationship you know exactly who your father is, who your grandfather is, etc. Without the family you are not sure.

Jesus not only had a family in the past, he also had a family during his earthly ministry. You remember, I'm sure, that **Mary** the mother of Jesus, and **Elizabeth** the mother of John the Baptist, were relatives (Lk. 1:36). This made Jesus and John the Baptist cousins. Remember also that when Jesus was

12 years old his parents lost track of Him coming home from Jerusalem. Immediately they began searching for Him among their “**relatives and friends**” (Lk. 2:44). During His earthly ministry the family of Jesus cared for him tried to protect him (Mk. 3:21). When Jesus was dying on the cross, his mother was there, but she was not alone. Among that small group of faithful disciples was also her sister, **Mary the wife of Clopas** (John 19:25). This woman is thought by many to also be the mother of **James the less** who was one of the 12 apostles.

The Bible lists many “households” that were converted to Christ. For example, the household of **Cornelius** (Acts 10); **Lydia** (Acts 16); the **Philippian Jailer** (Acts 16); **Aristobulus** (Rom. 16:10); **Narcissus** (Rom. 16:11); **Stephanus** (1 Cor. 1:16); **Caesar** (Phil. 4:22); and **Onesiphorus** (2 Tim. 4:19).

The Apostle Paul also had a number of family members who were Christians: **Andronicus and Junias** were in Christ before he was (Rom. 16:7); **Herodian** (Rom. 16:11); and **Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater** (Rom. 16:21). When over 40 Jews vowed not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul, he was rescued from death by the **son of Paul’s sister** (Acts 23:16). Families are important!

**Barnabas** also had Christians in his family. He was a Levite from Cyprus and apparently was a man of considerable wealth. As you know he sold a field and gave the money to the apostles (Acts 4:37). This was such an encouragement that they named him “Barnabas” which means “Son of Encouragement”. His aunt **Mary** lived in Jerusalem and owned a home where the early church met for prayer (Acts 12:12). Her son **John Mark** traveled with Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). Later Mark traveled with Barnabas (Acts 15:39). When Paul was in prison he wrote that Mark, cousin to Barnabas, was with him (Col. 4:10).

When **Andrew** met Jesus the Scriptures record: “**The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. (John 1:41-42).** How beautiful! How absolutely beautiful! Would God that each and every one of us would be like Andrew! When we meet Jesus let us go immediately to the members of our family and share the good news with them.

YOU CAN SEE WHY THE DEVIL WANTS TO DESTROY THE FAMILY!

Remember that Noah built an ark to save his family (Heb. 11:7). We need to be like Noah! Nothing should be too expensive, or difficult, or time consuming, to keep us from doing everything we can to save our family.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce