

## LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

# 421

Dearest grandchild,

In a recent letter we honored the late Dr. Benjamin Rush who was one of the founding fathers of the United States. In another effort to give honor to whom honor is due, today's letter will honor my good friend Charles L. King. Charlie was featured on the front page of the Joplin Globe on Nov. 3, 2022. He has spent a life time helping others and has been on the Board of Directors of Big Brothers in Joplin for 65 years. In fact, they named their new gymnasium the *CHARLIE KING RECREATIONAL FACILITY* in his honor. It was a total surprise to Charlie as family members flew in from all over the place to be there for the happy occasion. His 18 year old grand daughter even flew in early from a mission trip to Africa. Charlie is a young 91 years old and just renewed his Second Class Medical with the FAA that authorizes him to fly as a commercial pilot.

Charlie was baptized into Christ when he was 8 years old, but his commitment to Christ deepened radically when he got polio at the age of 21. In 1955 Dr. Jonas E. Salk licensed a polio vaccine that put an end to this paralytic disease in the United States. Before that, however, as many as 16,000 people died each year from this dreaded disease. Charlie was critically ill with two kinds of polio at the same time and was a patient in the General Hospital in Kansas City. 17 people died of polio in the K.C. hospital that week. Charlie was in the naval reserves at the time ready to be called into service with a 24 hours notice. The only other hospital for polio patients in Missouri at the time was in St. Louis. Incredibly, the K.C. hospital was so crowded that a 12 year old polio victim was placed in the same bed with Charlie. At about 4:00 a.m. the next morning the boy died!

Try, if you can, to put yourself in Charlie's situation. You are paralyzed and struggling for every breath of air. The young man next to you in bed just died and is already turning cold. You have no guarantee that you will not be next. Before getting polio Charlie had been working at a machine shop. He was happy to continue that work if he was able. So on that fateful night Charlie made a promise to God that if he survived he would support himself and preach the gospel for small churches that couldn't afford a preacher.

By the grace of God Charlie eventually got out of the hospital and his boss allowed him to work as much as he was able. At first it was only one hour a day. Within a year, however, he was able to do an 8 hour shift. Charlie became so proficient in his work that the Franklin Technical School hired him to teach other young men to be machinists. Charlie taught there for 23 years.

Charlie also fulfilled his promise to preach for small churches that couldn't afford to pay a full time preacher. His longest ministry was with a church in Amoret, Missouri. The population of that tiny town is only about 200. Charlie and his wife Marilyn drove 114 miles each way to minister to that congregation for 27 years.

In addition to his many other talents Charlie is a flight instructor with over 8,000 hours instructing students. When I received a Multi Engine rating Charlie was my instructor. Every two years for over 40 years I have received a flight review from Charlie as required by the FAA.

Charlie is always ready to serve the Lord and we have gone on a number of mission trips together. One of the reasons why Charlie is such a faithful worker for the Lord dates back to a decision

he made 70 years ago in the General Hospital in Kansas City. On that night Charlie made a promise to God which he has been careful to keep.

- The Apostle Paul made a similar promise to God after God struck him blind on the Road to Damascus.
- In July 1505 young Martin Luther was caught in a horrific thunderstorm in the midst of a gigantic forest. As trees and limbs came crashing down around him he feared for his life and promised God that if he survived he would become a preacher.
- On October 7, 1808 young Alexander Campbell was involved in a shipwreck. In the middle of the night a violent storm blew their ship on a rock with a tremendous shock accompanied by the breaking of timbers and the sound of water rushing into the hold. The sailors hewed down the mast with broad swords to keep the ship from capsizing. On that night Campbell sat down on the stump of a broken mast and vowed that if God spared his life he would enter the ministry.
- Anyone who completely surrenders to Christ is to be congratulated regardless of the circumstances that made it happen.

Not all near death experiences have a happy ending. Some 50 years ago I paid regular visits to a cancer patient at the McCune Brooks Hospital in Carthage. He had been through the painful routine of surgery and chemo-therapy but expected to recover. He steadfastly refused to give his heart to Christ, however, and was confident that medical science would make him well. Then one day the doctor gave instructions to take him off his strict diet and give him anything he wanted. This devastated the poor man and shattered his hopes of getting well. He told me that he felt like a man on death row receiving his last meal. He died a couple of days later. Even while facing the certainty of death, however, he still refused to repent. He proudly said that he had lived his entire life as an unbeliever and wasn't about to change. How utterly absurd! There are seven things that are an abomination to God and a proud look is at the top of the list (Prov. 6:16-19). No wonder God hates pride!

Jesus, as you know, was crucified between two thieves. One of them died hurling insults at Jesus, but the other one repented. He rebuked his fellow criminal: **“Don't you fear God” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:39-43).**

That thief did the right thing, and so did Charlie King! I pray that you will do the right thing too!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce