

THINGS I LEARNED 1ST IN GRADE

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DEDICATION

This book is humbly and lovingly dedicated to my four children (Jack, Kathie, Brent and Lyn) and to my four grandchildren (Brittany, Brent, William, and Paige). You have given me so much enjoyment and pleasure, and have been such a precious blessing in this life. God smiled upon me with abundance in allowing me to be your daddy and granddaddy. Each one of you has all my love and I pray every day that we—along with your mother and grandmother, Billie Sue—can be together forever in that heavenly home. It is my fervent prayer that you will always realize that dying in the Lord is the only thing that really matters. Nothing could make me happier than to know you have obeyed God's plan of salvation and will be faithful to Him unto death. As I inscribe this dedication to you, I do so with a prayer that you will walk daily with the Master and make Him proud. I love you more than life itself and thank my loving God every day that you are my children and grandchildren. You have made life on this earth worthwhile.

Daddy (Psalms 127:3–5)

Granddaddy (Proverbs 17:6)

CONTENTS

Accept Life

- 1 I Learned . . . All in Life Is Not Fair 16
- 2 I Learned . . . Play Fair 24
- 3 I Learned . . . Skunks Stink 29
- 4 I Learned . . . There Is a Difference between a Boy
and a Girl 35

Personal Responsibility

- 5 I Learned . . . Take Care of My “Stuff”. 42
- 6 I Learned . . . Discipline 47
- 7 I Learned . . . Wash, Keep Myself Clean, and Take
Care of My Body. 53
- 8 I Learned . . . Clean Up after Myself 58
- 9 I Learned . . . Think for Myself 63

Order

- 10 I Learned . . . There Is a Time to Play and a Time
to Work 70
- 11 I Learned . . . Respect Others, Especially Those
in Authority. 76
- 12 I Learned . . . Rules Are for Everybody and for
Our Welfare 82
- 13 I Learned . . . Pay Attention, Share, and Praise Others . . . 87

Contentment

- 14 I Learned . . . Cookies, Milk, and Naps Are Good,
but Tobacco and Dope Are Not. 94
- 15 I Learned . . . Hold Hands, Stick Together, and
Practice the Golden Rule 100
- 16 I Learned . . . Things Do Not Equal Love. 106
- 17 I Learned . . . It Is Wrong to Be Unkind, Steal,
Hit Others, and Lie 113

Gratitude

18 I Learned . . . God Has Been Good to America 122

19 I Learned . . . Love and Appreciate My Mother 128

20 I Learned . . . There Is a God in Heaven 134

Epilogue. 141

PREFACE

There have been numerous changes in our society within the past fifty years, some good and many not so good. We have seen negative changes in public education. Attitudes have changed toward authority; many have rejected any form of rules as being authoritative. Defiling speech permeates our society. A multitude of vandalism is seen each day. An astonishing change for the worse has come upon marriage and the home. Homosexuals and degenerates now demand equal rights. There is a daily saturation of people who tattoo and pierce almost every body part. Naked bodies of those who can no longer blush are paraded for all to see. Underwear is on public display. The purpose and role of the blood-bought church has been buried under materialism and entertainment. Bible classes and worship offered to the God of heaven (in the way He commands) mean very little to a host of people who now claim to be Christians.

But if we will begin teaching the next generation what is really important in life, it is not too late. Beginning with our generation, we can make a difference.

We must teach our children the difference between right and wrong. We must teach them that choices are to be made, describe to them the consequence of each choice, and remind them that they are to be responsible for their actions and decisions. We must teach them while they are young; and often (2 Corinthians 12:14; Proverbs 1:8; 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:4–9). We most certainly owe them more than just room and board.

What do we owe them? An example of being godly parents, honest in our daily living and word, the sacredness of marriage, believers in prayer, knowledge of God's Word, seeking the kingdom first, and yes, the hope of heaven.

The purpose of this book is to relate some of the basic and fundamental principles that I learned from the time I entered grammar school. These principles have stuck with me and

have made a marked difference in my adult Christian life. I readily admit that I have at times been a failure as husband, father, and grandfather, but these principles, which are based upon Holy Writ, have provided a foundation for me to build upon in order to be a better person. This is not to say that the Bible has not been the rock of my guidance, because it certainly has. I owe the hope of being saved to my loving heavenly Father, to my precious Lord who died on Calvary's hill, to Christian people who helped and encouraged me, and to my wife who taught me the way of salvation. Added to this are the good and upright principles I learned, beginning in the first grade.

During the latter part of August 1952, my mother took me to the old gymnasium located at the elementary school in Oxford, Alabama, and enrolled me in public school. There I began my formal schooling. Like many children, I cried and vehemently protested. I did not want my mother to leave me in this strange environment. I must admit I remembered all the times mother had spanked me and how I had wished for the day I could be away from home. I now regretted those thoughts!

Two things happened that day which changed my attitude about school: I saw one of my best friends and I met a beautiful woman—Mrs. D. M. Worthy, the first grade teacher. I told my mother she could go back home, that I was willing to stay at school without her.

From the outset, Mrs. Worthy made me feel comfortable, safe, and secure. I wish every child could begin school with a teacher like Mrs. Worthy. That special lady has now crossed those chilly waters into eternity. I am remorseful that in her later years I made no effort to contact her and thank her for the principles she instilled in me, but her influence will live on.

The idea for this book came from a statement I read many years ago concerning what the author remembered from the first grade. That statement planted a seed and my mind

reverted to the bygone days of yesteryear. I made a sheet-chart sermon based on the memories of my personal experiences of grammar school. Many in my audiences began to ask me to put the chart material into book form.

I submit these thoughts for your consideration and study. Each point has a spiritual and scriptural teaching that will prove most valuable to young and old alike.

My prayer is that we, as part of the blood-bought church and society, will return to these principles. Regardless of what facet of life is under consideration, the fundamental principles herein discussed will lay a foundation for the betterment of society. I do not believe that the world today is better morally than it was in 1952. That was a time when people were basically decent and moral in dress, speech, and action—a time when adults taught their children and grandchildren these principles. A return to these principles will again make a difference in this world.

I do not believe everything about yesteryear was good, perfect, and right, but principles and teachings from that time will most assuredly help our present society get back on the right track and make our world a better place in which to live. Things that “Granny” taught us will provide a most healthy spiritual feast in accomplishing this and will certainly benefit future generations. Are our children safe with the parents they have?

The principles discussed in this book are based on Bible truths. They are listed, studied, and used as examples to teach each new generation how to produce better citizens, how to make a better world, and how to serve God better. Each point is supported with biblical authority and will be followed with a challenge to instill this point into the minds of our youths. In our busy, chaotic, and materialistic society, many parents seem not to find the time to teach their children what is really important. Far too many parents have related happiness to things. What an eternal tragedy! Honesty, integrity, and character are no longer emphasized in the home, school, or

society in general. As a result, these three characteristics are fading in the sunset.

One of the major goals of this book is to teach our children respect for authority. Oh, how this is lacking in today's world! The question, "What must I teach my children?" will be answered in each point made.

INTRODUCTION

While growing up in the 1950s, I remember a saying: “Wear it out, eat it up, make it do, and do without.” We understood this without question! Many of us remember the days when we did not have inside facilities. We took weekly baths in a number 2 or number 3 washtub in the back room where there was no fireplace and no air conditioning. We experienced the privilege—did I say privilege?²—of picking cotton, plowing with a mule, and building fires under the old black washpot so Mother could wash the clothes. And we raised the bulk of food that we ate. It was common for two, three, or more to sleep in the same bed—not a queen or king size either. Some of us remember those cold winter mornings when the old army blanket was frozen to the wall. We killed and processed hogs to have meat for the coming months. We wrung the necks of chickens and prepared them for Sunday dinner. We carried the water bucket around the pond and up to the spring and filled it for our drinking water. We kept the dipper in the bucket for anyone who wanted to go by and get a drink. We drank and ate homemade buttermilk and butter, and we really used a smokehouse for our meat.

I am not saying these were the best of days, but it was an innocent time filled with precious memories. The most precious thing concerning those days was the fact that we were taught principles that made us appreciate life, respect authority, be patriotic to America, and, of course, respect the God of heaven.

Several years ago an outline—no author’s name attached—came across my desk. I took that outline and revised it for my use. The following article is the result.

We are survivors! Consider all the changes we have seen. We were before television, penicillin, polio shots, frozen food, copiers, contact lenses, frisbees, and the pill. We were before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams, ball-point pens, pantyhose, dishwashers, clothes dryers, electric

blankets, air conditioning, permanent press clothes, and men walking on the moon.

We got married first and then lived together—how old-fashioned can you be! In our time, closets were for clothes, not for “coming out of.” Bunnies were rabbits; not half-naked girls. And rabbits were not Volkswagens. Designer jeans were giggling girls named Jean or Jeannie. Having a meaningful relationship meant getting along with your cousins when you were together. We thought fast food was what you ate while chopping cotton and outer space was the back of the local theatre.

We were before “house-husbands,” homosexual rights, computer dating, dual careers, and computer marriages. In our time, a babysitter was called “Mother.” We were before daycare centers, group therapy, and nursing homes. We didn’t know about FM radio, tape decks, CDs, VCRs, computers, artificial hearts, word processors, cell phones, yogurt, and earrings for boys. Tattoos and pierced body parts were not known. Time-sharing meant being together, not condominiums. A chip was a piece of wood, hardware meant hardware and software was not even a word.

To us, “made in Japan” meant junk, and the term “making out” referred to how you did on an exam. We called “home invaders” what they really were, thugs and thieves who broke into your house. Used cars were just that—not previously owned vehicles. Adultery was sin, and never was it called a fling or an affair. We studied the three R’s and did not know about the new math. Sinners were never referred to as the “morally disadvantaged,” and Daddy was not called “old man” without severe consequences. Pizzas, McDonalds, and instant coffee were not around. We spent Sundays at Grandma’s house and ate cornbread and beans. We made our own butter and drank homemade buttermilk. Sunday was a day to worship God; most stores were closed and families spent time together.

We hit the scene when there were five-and-dime stores where you actually bought things for a nickel or dime. The

INTRODUCTION

corner drug store sold ice cream cones for a nickel or a dime. For a nickel you could make a phone call, buy a Pepsi, or get enough stamps to mail a letter and two post cards. You could buy a new Chevy coupe for six hundred dollars, but who could afford one? Pity, too, because gas was only eleven cents a gallon.

In our time, dope was someone slow-witted, grass was mowed, coke was a cold drink, and pot was something you cooked in. Rock music was Grandma's lullaby, and aids were helpers in the principal's office. We were before the "sex change." We made do with what we had! We were the last generation that was so dumb as to think you needed a husband to have a baby. The worst we ever heard was a double-dog dare, or if we were really challenged, we were triple-dog dared!

No wonder we are so confused and there is such a generation gap. In our time, Daddy acted like a man and was the head of the house, Mother was in the home, and we children had not taken over the home. We were not allowed to have "ADD." And if our *attention* ever got *deficient*, a good old fashion "whooping" fixed the *disorder*!

Guess what? We survived! Discipline was administered without some book telling Daddy and Mother how to go about it, and a woodshed was more than a storage place for firewood. Mother had quicker wrists than Ted Williams when it came to a switching. Daddy did not have to repeat himself ten times, and "whooping" was a word we knew personally, and if you have to ask, "Ken, don't you mean 'whipping,' " then you never had one!

In our time, there was respect for Mother and Daddy and their names were not "old man" or "old lady." Yes, we were without a lot of modern material things, but we respected and honored God and the Bible. We did not play in worship; we were taught the Bible and we feared God. We honored authority and our flag. We loved the church for which Jesus died and did not try to change it either. Yes, we

THINGS I LEARNED IN FIRST GRADE

survived, and if future generations are taught these same truths, they will survive also.

The Bible states that children encouraged Jesus (Psalm 8:2; Matthew 21:16). A wonderful example for our consideration is how Timothy was taught and knew the Holy Scriptures as a “babe” (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Our mindset considering having the proper attitude is reflected in that of a child’s (Matthew 18:3; Mark 10:15). After Solomon taught his son all he could about living right, he challenged his son to go out and make a better world in which to live and rear a family (Proverbs 4:10–11). “For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and apply thyself to that which their fathers have searched out” (Job 8:8 ASV). These are thought-provoking and challenging scriptures. Let us now return to yesteryear and study: “Things I learned in first grade.”



ACCEPT LIFE

1

I LEARNED . . .

ALL IN LIFE IS NOT FAIR

WORDS TO REMEMBER

But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment (Ecclesiastes 11:8–9).

HOMEWORK

Genesis 30:2 Proverbs 24:30–34 Matthew 7:12
Matthew 15:4 1 Corinthians 10:31

SAYINGS THAT STICK

- ☼ Enjoy life.
- ☼ Make the most of what you have.
- ☼ Stop whining when things do not go your way.
- ☼ Get used to life as it is; it's not fair.
- ☼ A 40-pound baby is a pretty; a 40-year-old baby is a pity.

STORY TIME

“But I don’t want to go back to school tomorrow.” I whined as Mother tucked me into bed.

“Why Ken, you have always loved school. Of course you will go tomorrow. You always learn new things at school,

and you like to learn.” Mother’s voice was kind and firm as always.

Yes, but I don’t like people calling me names, I thought to myself. Mother left the room and I cried myself to sleep.

The next morning I had almost forgotten yesterday’s problems, but they all came back to me when I mounted the steps to enter the huge hallway that ran through the middle of our school.

Bruce was at the top of the steps: “Hey there, Butterfinger. Want me to take off your wrapper and let the mosquitoes at you? They love candy, you know.” Then he let go one of his chilling, conquering laughs.

Who could have been afraid of such a jeering coward? I can tell you who. A little first grader named Ken Butterworth, that’s who. Bruce’s hateful words intimidated and paralyzed me.

“And Butterfinger!” Bruce wouldn’t let it drop. “It’s *pencil*, not *pen-thul*. I’m telling you just in case you need to get permission to sharpen one.” Then Bruce broke into a chant: “Butterfinger can’t ‘wead,’ Butterfinger can’t ‘wead,’ ‘cause Butterfinger can’t talk; Butterfinger’s a dummy, a dummy, a dummy. Butterfinger’s a dummy!”

As if Bruce’s chiding were not enough, Carl joined in: “Hey Ken, how much is your butter worth?”

I hadn’t yet learned about Korah who challenged Moses’ leadership and was buried alive by God, but truthfully, I did think of the ground opening up and swallowing me. What a blessing that would have been! After all, what could a stuttering, backward first grader, who lisped through teeth that had

I hadn’t yet learned about Korah who was buried alive when he challenged Moses’ leadership, but I did think of the ground opening up and swallowing me.

had the same relationship with dentists that little Miss Muffet had with spiders, respond to such persecution?

No, Mother could not understand my pain, because I was too ashamed to tell her, and Mrs. Worthy was never around when Bruce and Carl sank their fangs into me. Oh, their teasing was building character of course, but it seemed to me at that moment to be the end of the world.

But are you ready for a secret? Bruce became my best friend. I won't go into detail, but it had something to do with the character he helped me build. One cold February morning during recess, Bruce went into his "butterfinger" chant. I had had enough. I had to visit the principal, but that very day Bruce learned to respect me. And he never called me "Butterfinger" after that.

TEACHER TALK

The first few weeks of the first grade were bitter-sweet. Bruce and company was the bitter part; Mrs. Worthy, the most wonderful teacher ever, was the sweet part. But I still had to solve my own problems. That's what getting an education is about.

**Rare is the
prisoner who
intended to
spend time
behind bars.**

So what was the solution for a stuttering, shy first grader when his peers wouldn't stop their teasing? As I became familiar with new surroundings, I soon discovered that the Butterworths were not the only poor family in the community. I even found out that we were not the poorest. I soon began to learn to deal with who I was and to "get over it." Every little bit of strength and confidence I managed to muster gave rise to more. I began to inch my way out of the sewer.

All of us choose our responses to the curves life throws. Our character handles those problems, and that character continues to change as we struggle to modify our responses.

Rare is the prisoner who intended to spend time behind bars. Few are the preachers who at first had the disposition and knowledge to be preachers.

The average teenager uses the statement “life is not fair” eight times a day! Some of those “not fair” attacks are provoked by ancient moms who believe dresses can be too short and by “dinosaur” daddies who don’t want family cars to be taken over by village hoodlums, otherwise known as Junior’s buddies. So what happens to teen happiness? It disappears; life becomes the pits. Well, Sissy and Junior need to get over life’s prejudices because life is never going to be fair to those who cannot perceive anything beyond their own emotions.

Here are some plain facts of life for all of us, especially for teens:

1. Life is precious and short. Now is the time to appreciate and enjoy life. The days ahead will bring trouble, heartache, and bad health.
2. You are not immortal. Time goes by quickly and you too will go the way of all the earth. You—yes you!—will stand before God in judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10).
3. Winners and losers are a part of real life. Sometimes you win and you’re happy. Sometimes you do not get your way. You lose. You should still be happy.
4. Entry level jobs do not start at \$100,000 a year, a company car, an expense account, and a membership at the country club. The foundation for a job with perks has to be laid with education, patience, and hard work. Then experience can pave the way for something better. And even when the day of ultimate success finally arrives, the life of dreams remains somewhat like that beautiful rainbow anchored firmly in its pot of gold—elusive!—always just a bit further down the road. Even a teen’s parents have not yet found that

pot of gold. They just appear, from a developing child's viewpoint, to be living independent of the commands and wishes of others.

5. Tobacco, alcohol, and drugs do not make you cool. I've seen corpses of those that tobacco, alcohol, and drugs have worked on, but I have never seen a casket that I thought was "cool."
6. Life's difficulties, problems, and troubles are not solved in thirty minutes. Oh, I know. Mr. and Mrs. Cleaver, Walley, and Beaver did that all the time. But that was back in the '50s . . . in California . . . on a movie set in Hollywood. Movies and television do not usually represent life in the real world.
7. The real world does not care nearly as much about your ego and self-esteem as you do, so do not think of yourself more highly than you should (Romans 12:3). A person who becomes "full of himself" is bound to explode sooner or later.
8. Semester breaks and free-at-last summer vacations are not parts of the real adult world. Top management in the real world is concerned with three things: How many widgets did you make yesterday, how many widgets you are making today, and how many widgets you will make tomorrow? And, of course, widget output has to progress—in both quantity and quality!
9. Young people who believe parents are tough on them will wake up when they get a real job with a real boss. Bosses do not normally give an "E" for effort. They even demand that each employee—I am talking about you!—be on time and do his or her job properly and happily. If not, both the job and salary disappear. (Then, so does that little sports car!)

10. The adult world makes rigid demands on all of us. Those who do not assume responsibility for themselves and their actions should be either incarcerated or committed. Blaming others for personal failure is a cop-out. Act as if you have some “smarts.” Respect and obey your parents.
11. Genuine politeness really pays. Be especially polite to “nerdy” people because you will more than likely end up working for one of them.
12. Working for minimum wages at a fast food restaurant should not be beneath your dignity and pride. Back in the '50s, we would have given our eye teeth for a chance to earn money in an air-conditioned building for school clothes. And making hamburgers? That work would have been child's play compared to picking cotton, hauling hay, or digging in a garden.
13. You will soon find out why your parents are not “with it” and why they are old fashioned and boring. It is because they love you and are trying to provide basic necessities. Before you try “hugging” some tree to save it from the loggers, how about making yourself useful by doing your chores around the house. And remember that when you build a house, you will need the loggers' products.

Learning that all in life is not fair will prepare us to go out and make a better world. The sooner we learn that no one always gets what he wants when he wants it, the sooner we are prepared for the real world.

We live in an imperfect world, so there will be “unfair” treatment at times. Life will not always be kind, but the key is to allow God to control our thinking, dress, habits, and speech (Psalm 101:3; Proverbs 2:20–22). God has not promised exemption from troubles, disappointments, and heartaches, but He has promised that He will see us through these times

(2 Chronicles 7:14; Hebrews 13:5). These “troubled times” should make us stronger and more determined to stand firm with what is right (Romans 14:18). So before you do too much whining, think of the lonely road our Master traveled to Calvary.

Yes, I learned in the first grade that I would not always get my way and life is not always fair. I got use to that fact in a hurry. And I helped Bruce to get use to it.

LESSON LEARNED

God knows best and is in control of all things. If I do my part—obeying Him and living right—then life will become more than fair because He cares for His own! Who dares tell God that His ways are not fair? (cf. Daniel 4:25; Acts 27:25).



1. Learning that all in life is not _____ will prepare us to get out and make a better _____ .
2. The average teenager says, “It is not fair” on an average of _____ times a _____ .
3. Life is precious and _____ .
4. _____ and losers are a part of real _____ .
5. _____ , _____ , and _____ do not make you cool.
6. A person who becomes “ _____ _____ _____ ” is bound to explode sooner or later.
7. Who dares tell _____ that His ways are not _____?
8. God knows _____ and is in _____ of all things.

9. We live in an _____ world, so there will be
“ _____ ” treatment at times.
10. So before you do too much _____, think of the
lonely _____ our Master traveled to _____.



1. Discuss some ways selfishness will harm the church and family.
2. Why is our society so determined to do away with winners and losers in life?
3. How can “playing fair” make for a stronger spiritual family?

2

I LEARNED . . .

PLAY FAIR

WORDS TO REMEMBER

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Ephesians 4:28).

HOMEWORK

Matthew 7:12

Philippians 3:16

Proverbs 11:1; 20:10, 23

Galatians 6:7

Romans 12:17

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Colossians 3:23

SAYINGS THAT STICK

☼ Play to win.

☼ Play fair.

☼ Abide by the rules.

STORY TIME

In 1952 marbles were hard to come by, but Larry, Tommy, and I still wouldn't play for keeps. Gambling violated the Golden Rule; it also violated our rules.

One cool autumn day I was winning when the clanging of the school bell elbowed its way right into the middle of our game. Larry jumped up from the marble ring and quickly extended his hand toward me: "Gimme yo' marbles!" He was a first grade repeater—older and bigger than the rest of us.

"I won't!" My reply was immediate and forceful, maybe even a little stubborn. Yes, definitely—more than a little stubborn!