

Call to Obedience #517  
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA  
[www.joyfulabiding.com](http://www.joyfulabiding.com)

## Grandpa

Pastor Jordan Litchfield

Birch leaves dance and shimmer in the dawn light. A nightingale serenades the calm stillness of the forest. Then comes the rude awakening—ants racing up his legs! After an initial bout of stomping and jumping to rid himself of the ticklish invaders, Reimar stands still, taking in the warm sunrays and the sweet smell of the trees. In this peaceful moment, God unexpectedly speaks: “I love you, I love you—I AM love.” And so Reimar’s journey begins, “from nothing...to all things.”

Reimar Schultze, my grandfather, took the next step into God’s “all things” when he slipped into the presence of Jesus on Tuesday, the 14th of May this year. To his last breath, he was discovering the joy and love of abiding in Christ. In his final days, some of his last words were about love. Speaking to my aunt Esther, Grandpa asserted: “We need more love, less regulations.” And then to some of the gathered family: “I love all of you. I love the Church.” Rather than fearing death, in his excitement for heaven, he proclaimed: “This is what I’ve been waiting for!” And then he spoke in a softer voice with a bright countenance: “It’s wonderful. The Kingdom is coming!”

When Grandpa went to be with Jesus, I began to meditate on the significance of the first time God spoke to him in that birch forest. Of all the things God could have said to him, the Holy Spirit told him, “I love you, I love you—I AM love.” Surely there were many things God could have said to Grandpa, such as “You must be born again;” “Trust in Jesus;” “Repent of your sins and believe the good news;” or “I have a plan for your life—it is going to be okay.” All good, true and scriptural. But, no, God affirmed His love for Grandpa and gave him the most wonderful message of all: God is love.

Christians have long recognized that the most central and crucial truth we can affirm about the Triune God is the Apostle John’s statement: God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). The truth is that God is sovereign, powerful, just, gracious and many other beautiful attributes. But perfect love identifies the one God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Before there was anything or anyone to be sovereign over, the Triune God has rested in and joyfully shared in their love for one another in perfect unity. Some of the early Church Fathers described

this as the dance of love—an unceasing movement of loving, being loved and sharing the love received. What joy is in this triune love! What freedom! What infinite beauty and dazzling light!

This is how God introduced Himself to Reimar so many years ago, the One who is love and who loved him before Reimar knew God or had done anything for God—a gift of love. This is where the journey begins for all of us: encountering the eternal God who is perfect love and loved us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8). And this is how the journey must continue. The Apostle Paul assures us that God’s love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), therefore we know that we are also in God (1 John 4:7) as we love God with all that we are and love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31).

As I continued to reflect on the significance of that moment in the forest, I realized that Jesus’ message to Grandpa that morning contained the kernel for the rest of his walk with God. It would be three more years before he started to put his faith in Jesus as Lord, but the rest of his earthly life would be about learning to abide in Christ, the secret to participating in the triune life of love. And now, Grandpa is face to face with this wonderful God!

But knowing the love of God is also about learning to receive love and to love others as God has loved us. When we first become Christians, we all come with baggage, wounds and scars. Grandpa was no different. While his parents’ actions in times of terrible danger and difficulty demonstrated their unwavering love for him, they did not express that love verbally. No one had ever told him they loved him—until God did. The trauma of war, tragic family deaths, being a refugee and many other dangers inevitably left their mark on Grandpa. Those who met him as an adult were often impressed by this tall (six foot, four inches), strong and confident witness for Jesus. However, this masked insecurities that were deeply rooted inside his heart, and one of the ways he had to grow in his faith was to learn to rest in the security of God’s love and not in what others thought or said about him.

Key points in his life illustrate this journey. After Grandpa and his family had emigrated to the United States and he had been studying at the University of Wisconsin for a while, he was becoming increasingly anxious and discontent with his Christian walk. He felt that there was always more he needed to do as a Christian—witness more, read and memorize more Scripture, pray more, etc. Dallas Willard (a friend and mentor at that time), noticed this and asked: “Reimar... Why don’t you just start obeying God?” This was a revolutionary

question, but as Grandpa emphasized repeatedly in his Call to Obedience letters, if we truly love Jesus, then we will obey Him (John 14:15).

Love then came in a special form when the Holy Spirit led Reimar to Marcia Van Zile. In many ways, they were very different, not least in height! Grandpa was often amazed how Grandma likes to pet every cat and dog she meets, the joy she finds in growing vegetables, and fulfillment in mending and sewing clothes for others. But they shared a love for Jesus and for each other, and this love grew and grew over the decades. Grandpa learned that loving God sometimes meant leaving the prayer room to go help Grandma rototill the garden. And love never stops learning, even after sixty years of marriage. When Grandma was seriously hurt in an accident a few years ago, Grandpa continued to learn how to love by doing the laundry, trying his hand more in the kitchen and doing some cleaning about the house. It did not come naturally, but love always tries (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

No matter how busy he was, Grandpa always found time for his family. When my mom, aunt, and uncles were growing up, Friday nights were normally reserved for his family. Even though they usually had very little spare money, they always tried to get a little treat or play a board game together. Grandma has hundreds of pictures of quality time spent together as a family: camping, hiking and just having fun.

As grandchildren, we also have many fond memories of time spent with Grandpa. He could be very funny and was lots of fun to play with. We would play 'horsy'—he was the horse, and we were the riders. Or he would chase us around the house or down the hiking trail. A skilled carpenter, Grandpa would include us in the never-ending projects around the farm. He would show us how to safely handle the saws, show us what type of tool we needed for a project and encourage us to have a try. Whether riding with him in his airplane, helping him care for his honeybees, participating in family devotions around the breakfast table or joining him in a time of praise and prayer, Grandpa left an eternal mark on our lives.

Many of you came to know Reimar through his writings, but he was also a wonderful pastor to his congregations. In fact, he was my pastor while I was growing up and his example was one of the main reasons why I am a pastor today. Grandpa's love for God overflowed in his love for preaching the Word of God and his faithful call to a holy life. He was an excellent expository preacher, someone who could lead you chapter by chapter, week by week through the Scriptures. As a leader, he refused to yield to the tyranny of the urgent and

instead, he modeled a healthy spirituality through the rhythms of Scripture, prayer, rest, exercise and enjoying God's good creation.

Another crucial encounter Grandpa had that I want to share with you was his friendship with another preacher, Rev. Loran W. Helm. Loran understood that the heart of Christianity was dying to our self-life to find abundant life with Jesus. He stressed the absolute necessity of loving God above all else, of loving others unconditionally, and of listening to and following the leading of the Holy Spirit. It was Loran who encouraged Grandpa to keep writing the Call to Obedience when he was ready to quit. Through Brother Helm's teaching and example, Grandpa learned much of what he shares in his autobiography, I AM Love, about following the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, I want to thank you, each and every reader, for the support and prayers you have given to my grandfather and the Call to Obedience ministry. Your prayers and the sharing of the articles with others have resulted in many thousands of people in numerous countries answering the call to obey the Holy Spirit. What God begins, never ends, and we know that the ministry of the Call to Obedience is not over yet. We ask for your continued prayers and continued sharing of Reimar's books and articles.

Reimar Schultze has now joined that great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1), urging us to run the race before us with perseverance. As he would admonish us: "No excuses!" In a worldly sense, Grandpa started with nothing except suffering. However, God used that suffering to instill within him perseverance, a rugged commitment to what is right and the hope that God would guard him in all his ways (Ps. 91:11). What began as 'nothing' has led to all things in Jesus (Eph. 1:3) and perfect happiness before the face of God (1 John 3:2). May the Holy Spirit also fire us with a like passion for our amazing God!

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