

## LETTERS AND STORIES

By John F. Hall

In one of my earlier letters, I wrote that the painter Thomas Cole believed that people, male or female, go through four stages of life. How people will go through each stage depends on the choices and decisions they make or are made for them. Thomas Cole



might have gotten some of his inspiration from William Shakespeare's play, "As You Like It." Shakespeare's famous lines, "all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players," is as true now as it was in 1598. In Act 11, Scene 7, an actor in the play said, "There are seven ages of man: the infant, the school boy, the lover, the soldier, the justice, the absent-minded old man, and the senile, sick elder." At my age, the role that I am now playing is that of the absent-minded old man.

Bob Merrill and Jule Styns wrote the song, "Absent Minded Me." These are some of their lyrics: "Absent minded me...I'm losing a key or missing a glove. Just like me to lose my love. Gotta find it, absent minded me. I'm way, way ahead of the game then it starts. How did I lose my king of hearts? Gotta find it, absent minded me. There's my key. Gee, I left it in the door. There's my glove on the shelf. Now if I don't find my love, I'll be loosing myself..."

Life is always worth living. In the silly song above, lookin for love reminds me of that country song written by Bob Morrison, Patti Ryan and Wanda Mallette, titled, "Looking For Love." These are some of their lyrics: "I spent a lifetime lookin' for you. Single bars and good time lovers were never true. Playing a fools game, hopin' to win. Tellin' those sweet lies and losin' again. I was lookin' for love in all the wrong places. Lookin' for love in too many faces. Searchin' their eyes lookin' for traces of what I'm dreaming of. Hoping to find a friend and lover. I'll bless the day I discover another heart lookin' for love...". One will survive and one will be happy, if the love one seeks is Jesus Christ.

A few years ago, I had a cancer on my forehead that was down to my skull. I felt at the time that my writing stories and letters were going to come to a painful end. I told Dr. Natalie Curcio that she was my Angel for saving my life from the cancer trying to enter my brain. There is a song written by Don Goodman and Becky Hobbs titled, "Angels Among Us." These are some of their lyrics: "I was walkin' home from school on a cold winter day. Took a short cut through the woods and I lost my way. It was getting' late, and I was scared and alone. Then a kind old man took my hand, and led me home. Mama couldn't see him, but he was standing there. And I knew in my heart, that he was an answer to my prayer. When life held troubled times and had me down on my knees, there's always been someone to come along and comfort me. A kind word from a stranger to lend a helping hand. A phone call from a friend just to say I understand. Now ain't it kinda a funny that at the dark end of the road, someone lights the way with just a single ray of hope. Oh, I believe there are Angels Among Us. Sent down to us from somewhere up above. They come to you and me in our darkest hour. To show us how to live. To

teach us how to give. To guide us with a light of love.” I told Dr. Curcio that I believed that she saved my life. She said simply, “I did.”

In nearly all of my long letters, I would quote scriptures. In an old letter I quoted Proverbs, Chapter 3, Verses 5—6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your intelligence rely not. In all your ways be mindful of Him and He will make straight your paths.” If a person offers all of their thoughts, words and deeds each day for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, then they will have peace of soul. Happiness is not found in trying to relive the past. It is not found in having anxiety about the future because no one is promised the future. Happiness is living for the moment and being at peace with God.

Writers will comment about other writers. I first read F. Scott Fitzgerald's letters to his daughter back when I was 18. That was in my first literature course. I still have the text book after all these years. I still have the Bible that was given to me as a gift when I was nine years old. It is worn from years of travel and use. In my letters and stories, I try to mentor Jade, Skyler and Lexie.

I grew up listening to songs by Ricky Nelson. He chartered a DC-3 bound for Dallas, Texas on December 31, 1985. The cabin of Nelson's plane apparently filled with smoke due to a fire of undetermined origin. The two pilots of the plane survived an attempted emergency landing, but Ricky and six other passengers were killed. One of the last songs that Ricky Nelson wrote is titled “Garden Party.” I use some of his lyrics in this story because it explains how I write. These are some of his lyrics: “I went to a garden party to reminisce with my old friends. A chance to share old memories and play our songs again. When I got to the garden party they all knew my name. No one recognized me, I didn't look the same. But it's all right now. I learned my lesson well. You see ya can't please everyone, so ya got to please yourself...”. If along the way, my stories and my letters entertain, inform, Inspire or motivate, then my writings serve a good purpose.

There is a poem that Kentucky writer Jesse Stuart wrote. I felt that his poem needed a few more lines to make it serve a higher purpose. This is Jesse's poem: “And then to think each comes and takes his turn. Each man's a god and each is crucified. Each goes back to the dirt and grass and fern, after the temple of flesh has died. Each comes and goes and each must go alone; each life is dirt and time and rhyme and stone.” What I believe Jesse's poem lacks is the recognition that life is more than dirt. I would add to his poem the following words: “Each person has a soul and that soul transcends dirt and time and rhyme and stone because it belongs to Christ. And each soul's eternal peace and happiness is found in Christ's embrace.”

In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 3, Verses 2-3, are these words: “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, not written by ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

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