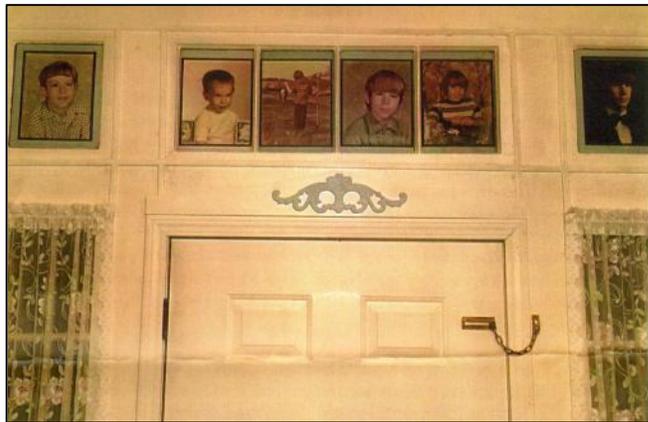


OUR JOURNEY TO CHRIST

By John F. Hall

In the foyer of my old house are six small windows above the front door. The outside of the windows was covered over when the portico was removed in 1919 and a porch was constructed across the entire front of the house. I put pictures of my son, John behind each window. In one of the windows is a picture of him when he was three years old. With that picture I put a silver certificate one-dollar bill and a two-dollar bill. That is a reminder of his age when the picture was taken.

There is a very old song going back in history when steam locomotive trains moved passengers and freight across our great country. The title of the song is "My Long Journey Home." It was written by Alfred E. Brumley and these are some of his lyrics, "Lost all my money but a two-dollar bill. Two-dollar bill, boys, two-dollar bill. Lost all my money but a two-dollar bill. I'm on my long journey home. Cloudy in the west and it looks like rain. Looks like rain, boys, looks like rain. I'm on my way home. Black smoke a-risin', and it surely is a train. I'm on my long journey home. I hear the train a-com in' and I'll soon be gone. Soon be gone, Lord, soon be gone. I'm on my long journey home. Homesick and lonesome and a-feeling kind of blue. I'm on my long journey home. It's dark and a-raining and I've got to go home. Got to go home boys, got to go home. It's dark and a-rainin' and I've got to go home. I'm on my long journey home."



All of us are on a long journey home to Christ. For some, the journey is quick and they die young. For others, the journey is long and difficult. The word "journey" is found in 23 chapters, 53 verses, and 22 books of the Bible. There is a story in the Bible about the Israelite's' 40-year journey. In Numbers, Chapter 14, Verse 11, are these words: The Lord said to

Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have performed among them?" Everyone is a sojourner on this earth. If we bend with the difficult winds of life and have faith and hope in Christ, we can survive and not be broken. Writing stories gives me a way to mentor Jade, Skyler and Lexie. Sometimes they surprise and mentor me. I share my stories with Trish, Audrey, Mike, Daniel Butler and others. After all, what are friends for?

During my 75-year year journey, I learned a thing or two that I can pass on that might be helpful to others. I learned that no matter how much I accumulated in this life; no matter

how much fame or notoriety I achieved, it merits me nothing if I don't reach out and share with others the things that I have learned in my journey in this life. I learned that we can put family first; we can cherish our friends; we can show gratitude; we can find something, every day, to be thankful for; we can keep on learning; we can talk about our blessings more than talking about our problems; we can be grateful for all the obstacles in our life; we can give thanks to everyone who has been a part of our life's journey; we can stay positive when confronting challenges; we can accept the fact that there are things in our life that won't go the way we want them to. Along the way, we should never beg for someone's love, commitment, time, affection, or attention.

We can stop expecting people to save us every time; we can remember that we cannot go back and live in the past anymore; we can remember that we can't change our past, but we can cleanse our memories; we can learn to laugh at ourselves; we can wake up every



day with a smile; we can be courageous in our lives'; we should not be afraid of change; we can walk with our heads held high and not bent down; we can find our purpose in this life; we can start each day with a prayer of gratitude and end each night with a prayer of thankfulness.

We can render unto Jesus Christ honor on Sunday and let that day be a day of rest; we can love Christ, others and our selves; we

can share our time, our talents, and our treasure to help our family; we can be kind; we can forgive those who hurt us and leave vengeance up to the Lord; we can find things to be joyful about; we can be happy just being alive; we can accept the fact that we cannot always be free of pain, physical or emotional; we can accept the fact that we cannot change others; we can accept the fact that we are only here for a little while; we can hold (after Covid-19) those that need holding and mend what needs mending; we can show compassion for those in physical or emotional pain; we can do our best at work, school or play; we can avoid blaming Christ for bad things that happen to us or others; we can avoid judging and condemning others; we can know that words can both help and hurt others.

The other day, I woke up in the middle of the night. Some of the lyrics from the song "Blessed Assurance" were dancing in my head. The song was written by Fanny Crosby, Douglas Wagner, and Phoebe P. Knapp. These are some of their lyrics: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. O what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of His Spirit, washed in his blood. Perfect submission, all is at rest. I in my Savior am happy and blessed. Watching and waiting, looking above. Filled with his goodness, filled with his love. This is my story, this is my song. Praising my Savior all the day long...". My earliest memory, at the age of four, was being in a hospital where I

nearly died from a ruptured appendix. I thought as a child, but I felt that Christ was keeping me alive.

In Galatians, Chapter 2, Verse 20, are these words: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." For the past six months, I have turned out story after story. In part of each story, I try to give glory to Christ. There is no secret formula to my writing style. When I am lost in Christ's love, the beauty of the words shine and flow like the reflection of the sun off a water fall. I mix in lyrics from songs both secular and spiritual. I mention the names of people that I love, that I care about, and who give me some measure of motivation to continue to write. But the most important ingredient in my stories is Christ and His Words. I lived in Desert Hot Springs, California for a little over 40 days and 40 nights when I was a teenager. The hot air, the blowing sand, and the barren mountains gave me no inspiration or joy. In the year-round green cedar trees, the lush green grass of summer, and the green leaves of the maple trees, I find inspiration.

I put two pictures with this story. I mentioned the foyer in my house in the first paragraph of this story. The first picture shows the six small Windows above the front door that contain my son's pictures. These original Windows have a slight blue tint and were made with great skill and ingenuity with materials of a higher quality than are generally available today. They are a part of the heritage of my old house. They are important artifacts in their own right. The windows are the last remnants and proof that at one time this was an antebellum house.

The second picture with this story shows the finished covered deck with the addition of a large metal star next to the large round clock. I can sit in a rocking chair on that deck, in the cool days of autumn, and ponder the words found in 1 Peter, Chapter 1, Verses 8-9: "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls." When I look down Dyers Hill Road, lined with the green cedar trees that I selected to save, as fence posts, 56 years ago, I wonder how many times the Good Lord will allow me to journey down that road? Being lost in God's love is the greatest thing that I have learned in my journey on this earth. Country singer Alan Jackson wrote a song after the tragedy of 9/11 and used these words, "I know Jesus and I talk to God..." in that song. When I sit on my front porch swing or in a rocking chair on my covered deck, I do the same thing.

I've heard Skyler and Lexie say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Bible, that even Jade knows. In my stories, I only care what Christ's thinks of my words. To those that never heard the pledge, these are the words: " I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path and will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God." We may not all be lost in Christ's love if we do not have faith, hope, and knowledge of God's Word. Christ cannot be seen, sitting in a chair on my deck. Yet sight unseen, He leads us and guides us. Our journey to Christ was

predestined long before we were born. It is now up to us whether we want to be lost in love with Jesus Christ, or lost forever, without Him.

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:
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