

THE OLD MAN'S MEMORIES AND PAIN

By John F. Hall

There is a man 17 years older than me. I don't know his name and he may not be alive today. I can describe him. He is short in stature. His hat hides his white hair. He wears a



white shirt and white suit. He reminds me of Mark Twain except for the fact that he wears a black bow tie. The man's face is tanned and wrinkled from too much exposure to the sun. He walks with the help of a cane. He is a widower and has a small room in a retirement home. He has a few possessions and there is a sheet over the window in his room that serves as a curtain. The old man has some interesting things to say about happiness. He said, "Happiness is something I choose in advance. It is a decision I make every morning when I wake up." The old man went on to say, "I can choose. I can spend my day in bed enumerating all the

difficulties that I have with the parts of my body that no longer work very well, or I can get up and give thanks to heaven for those parts that are still in working order. Everyday is a gift, and as long as I can open my eyes, I will focus on the new day, and all the happy memories that I have made during my life."

Using an analogy of a bank account of memories, one can deposit all the happiness that they can in their bank account of memories. Then one can withdraw those cherished memories at a later time. Several years ago, I gave Jade, Skyler, and Lexie, gold foil covered boxes to store the stories and other things that I mailed them. These "memory boxes" contain cards, letters, pictures and stories that I have mailed to these three surrogate granddaughters.

Brigham Young University conducted a study that found when grandparents are involved in their grand kids lives, the relationship can significantly affect the children's academic, psychological and social development. The study also found that income is not a factor in these close bonds between grandparent and grandchild. It is also of little consequence whether or not the family is a one-parent or a two-parent family. The study also found that grandparents who live with their grandchildren are not quite as close as those who those who don't live with their grandchildren. I have a friend who has grandchildren living with him. We talked one day and he wished that his grandchildren were as close to him as I am with Jade, Skyler, and Lexie. The reason for this is may be that this friend has a role in the discipline of his grandchildren. Grandparents who are non-residents are more likely to promote positive development than those who live with their grandchildren. Scientist found that people who are closer to their grandparents are happier in life.

My stories are my memories that I share with others. Donald Baldwin, Jeffery Bowen, and Kathy Wakefield wrote the song, "Memories." These are some of their lyrics: "Memories, pressed between the pages of my mind. Memories, sweeten through the ages just like wine. Quiet thought came floating down and settle softly to the ground. Like

golden autumn leaves around my feet. I touched them and they burst apart with sweet memories...”.

I have a constant companion called pain and it's a 24-hour thing. Kyle Park wrote the song, “Live Through The Pain.” These are some of his lyrics: “I've seen more than most old men. I've been told before that I could never win. But I lay it on the line every single time. That what I have is worth fighting for. I was born to live through the pain. And I'm a soldier of hope in the firing rain. And I hope that I won't die in vain. And I was born to live through the pain. I've been let down when I bet it all. I've stood on the front line with my back against the wall. But I still serve my fellow man. I'll do everything I can. And I'll risk my life to save my brothers at war. Oh I was born to live through the pain...”.

One definition of pain is that it is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. For what ever Christ's reasons, He helped me make the decision to leave active Army duty in 1965. The following year, my former platoon in the 101st Airborne Division was deployed to Vietnam. Only three made it back alive and they barely survived. In 1973, my training officer, Trooper Joe Ward was killed as we were investigating a traffic accident on the Pennyriple Parkway in Hopkinsville. I will someday ask Jesus Christ why he let me be “a soldier of hope in a firing rain?”

According to the CDC, I am just one among 50 million Americans that suffers from chronic pain. My glory days of jumping out of helicopters and planes and crashing into trees and making bad parachute landings has taken its toll on this worn out body. Matt



Hybarger wrote the hymn, “The Purpose In The Pain.” These are his lyrics: “Some days are warm with sunshine. Some are cold with clouds and rain. Some nights are filled with singing. Other's crying out Your name. No matter what your circumstances Your faithfulness remains. Even when it's dark and I can't see the purpose in the pain. Sometimes I'm walking on the water before I sink in disbelief. Start the morning on the mountain top then I'm buried underneath. But when

I feel forsaken or hang my head in shame, sitting here alone still trying to see the purpose in the pain. There's a peace that passes all understanding. Though at times it's hardly 'peace be still.' A calm assurance that only comes from knowing that the One who made the heavens still reigns and always will. So I trust in You Lord with all my heart, my soul and mind. Though the answers to my questions are still few and hard to find. I take my strength in knowing You will always be the same. And standing on Your Word I finally see the purpose of the pain.”

So ends another story that Jade, Skyler and Lexie can put in their memory boxes. One day, after I'm gone, they can read them again and smile, because they know my work on earth is done. All these years I have taught them that Christ will help them endure the pain. And I'll end with this Bible verse, James, Chapter 1, Verses 2-3: “Consider it all

joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”

*Read other stories by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>