

## MEMORIES OF CATCHING FIREFLIES

By John F. Hall

The Good Lord blessed me with the talent to mentor, to teach, and to write stories. I have faith and hope in Jesus Christ, and gratitude for the grace and inspiration that He has given me, all of my life. This story is about my oldest granddaughter, Andrea and the times that we would catch fireflies with her sister, Heather.

When I was a kid, I would catch fireflies and put them in a canning glass jar with small holes punched in the metal lid. They are also called lightning bugs. But they are not flies or bugs. They are soft winged beetles and they are related to the click beetle. I was fascinated by the ability of the firefly to produce light. They produce light in their abdomens by combining a chemical called luciferin, enzymes called luciferinases, oxygen and the fuel for cellular work, ATP. Fireflies control their flashing by regulating how much oxygen goes to their light-producing organs. This is why I punched holes in the lid of my firefly jar. I wanted the fireflies to have as much oxygen as they needed to keep their lights twinkling in the summer night.



Adam R. Young wrote a silly song called "Firefly." These are some of his silly lyrics: "You would never believe your eyes if ten million fireflies lit up the world as I fell asleep. 'Cause they fill the open air and leave teardrops everywhere. You'd think me rude but I would just stand and stare. 'Cause I'd get ten thousand hugs from ten thousand lightning bugs, as they teach me how to dance a foxtrot above my head, a sock hop beneath my bed; a disco ball is hanging by a thread...To ten million fireflies I'm weird 'cause I hate goodbyes. I get misty eyes as they said farewell. But I know where several are. If my dreams get real bizarre, 'cause I saved a few and I keep them in a jar..."

In Matthew, Chapter 10, Verse 7, are these words: "As you go, proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven has come near." Eleanor Torchia wrote a short piece called "The Kingdom of Heaven." These are her lyrics: "The Kingdom of Heaven is Spring, with buds on all the trees, when the fragrance of new mown grass on a gentle breeze. The Kingdom of Heaven is Summer, warm days and night's full of stars, filled with the laughter of children catching fireflies in little, glass jars. The Kingdom of Heaven is Autumn, leaves of brown, red and gold, where brightly lit jack-o-lanterns delight both the young and the old. Life is meant to be savored, let's enjoy what each day brings; the kingdom of heaven is now, it is found in ordinary things." I have dance pictures of granddaughters Andrea and Heather. I cut out all of the background and pasted them in a picture with fireflies. Sadly, there are less and less fireflies due to chemicals used to treat home lawns to kill weeds. I enjoy sitting on my deck, in the evening, away from my security street light, and watching the fireflies flashing their lights.

Time marches on and waits for no one. Twenty years after helping Andrea catch fireflies, I was in Nashville getting an epidural in my L-5. I called Andrea and asked her to join me

and my wife, Paula for lunch. We met Andrea at a Cracker Barrel restaurant. She took her lunch time to meet us.

The little girl, who gave me the nickname of “An-Father,” and that I drove to



kindergarten, was sitting across the table from me. An old memory from the back pages of my mind came up. When Andrea was four years old, she would run around Paula to get to me. She had a favorite doll. She would talk to the doll and say over and over again: “Babydoll, babydoll, babydoll.” So I began to call Andrea “babydoll.” Even today, I still call her babydoll. I remember sitting in a rocking chair and rocking Andrea

to sleep when she was a baby. Now Andrea is almost 26 and we engaged in a personal conversation. I shared things with her that she did not know. I believe that she, unknowingly, did more to help me with my PTSD than anyone else.

I looked at the time on my cellphone. I told Paula that Andrea needs to get back to work and we did not want to make her late. We walked with Andrea back to her car. She gave me a hug, then she gave Paula a hug. Then Andrea came over to me and said: “I need to give you another hug.” I got back on interstate-24. A semi-truck drifted over the line and nearly side-swiped me. Cars coming on the highway were playing Russian roulette. They just pulled in front of me. I could not pull over due to being squeezed by the big truck. I had to slam on my brakes to avoid a collision. When Andrea was little, she was afraid of the big trucks. She wanted me to go around and get away from them. It's ironic that she now works for a very large trucking firm in Smyrna, Tennessee.

To avoid driving through Nashville and dealing with the bumper to bumper traffic, and the place where Interstate-24 and Interstate-65 merge, I drove off the interstate and got on the Briley Parkway. I passed the Opry Hotel and the driver of a red pickup truck drifted over into my lane. I had to brake and move out of my lane to avoid a collision. The driver was distracted and he was talking on his cellphone. Outside of Nashville, my mind drifted back to those carefree summer days when Andrea was a little girl. She wanted me to help her catch fireflies with her younger sister, Heather.

I believe that Christ has a plan for each of us. In Romans, Chapter 11, Verse 29, are these words: “for God’s gifts and His call are irrevocable.” I believe that God's plan for me is to give me the talent to write stories that testify to His grace and His love for us. I'm such an inadequate messenger and instrument of His peace. And I shall continue to write stories, until Christ calls me home.

John F. Hall

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