

## TURN AROUND

By John F. Hall

Many years ago, I wrote an article with a similar name about the ability of people to turn their lives around. It was about a Christian concert held in the Allen Arena on the campus of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee. Andrea's classmates at Heritage Christian Academy wanted her to go see TobyMac in his Winter Wonder Slam Concert. She was told that she would get to sing along, scream and jump up and down.



I knew nothing about TobyMac or how to find the university in Nashville. I was told to go on the internet and go to WAY FM. This Christian radio station was promoting the concert and I discovered that TobyMac is a GRAMMY winning artist. He won several Dove Awards including Producer of the Year and several BMI honors as Christian Songwriter of the year. At first, I was not able to purchase any tickets for the section where Andrea's classmates-would sit. I went ahead, made a second attempt, and purchased three tickets in the same section where Andrea's classmates were located. These turned out to be some of the best seats in the arena.

As it turned out, Andrea joined her friends on the center floor of the area. My wife Paula came with us for the three-hour concert. Thankfully, she had a small plastic box that contained several pliable ear plugs that our son gave her. This helped contain the loud noise of the concert. There were four opening groups that performed a combination of wild Christian Rock. One group leader said this was a difficult year from him because his dad died and his younger brother was in jail because of drugs. It was time for TobyMac to perform. Nearly 4,000 people in the audience cheered when he appeared on stage.

After two songs, TobyMac talked to the crowd. He said, "I want the wives to look into their husband's eyes and I want the single women to look into the eyes of their boyfriends and say don't disrespect me." After several more songs TobyMac talked to the crowds again. He waited until the arena was silent again and then said, "The Bible calls the word-repent, but I call it turn around. No matter how shallow or how deep 3 hole you have made for yourself or the number of problems you have, you should stop, TURN AROUND and walk back to Christ." I watched Andrea and the crowd agree with this Christian rocker. Paula was impressed with the crowd. She remarked to me that no one was drinking alcohol, or smoking, or wearing indecent clothing, or being discourteous. We saw hundreds of children. Paula said that we were probably the oldest couple in the arena. I smiled and told her that she was probably right.

We don't need a Christian rock artist to remind us that we need Christ only when we have too many problems or when we are in a hole over our heads. We need Jesus Christ 24/7, at all times. Without Christ we are nothing. Each breath that we take, each heart beat is a gift from Christ. Walking away from Christ is like walking into darkness. Christ is the light of the world. We need his love. Several years ago, I was watching the Super Bowl game. I felt that the New England Patriots would lose when they were down 24 to

3. Their coach told them, in the locker room, not to give up. They kept up their morale against 3 determine foe. In the end they won. We need to stop, we need to turnaround, and we need to put our hope, our faith, our trust, and our life in Christ's hands.

I'm just a writer of simple, true stories, that I use, during this pandemic, to mentor Jade, Lexie, and Skyler. Like country singer/songwriter, Alan Jackson, I know Jesus and I talk to God. Christ puts people in our lives for reasons only He knows. He put Audrey Lambert to post my stories on her web page with the help of her husband Mike. He put Trish Cunningham, a lady that goes to my church, to encourage me to continue to write. Recently, she said to me: "I love the fact that you put life and your past in your stories. Your past is interesting and just goes to show how grateful people should be for others."

Who are the other people that we should be grateful for? Years ago, I wrote a story for Kevin Atwood called "Cheerleader for Christ." His daughter, Elizabeth, planned to be a cheerleader at the University of Kentucky. She was killed in a car accident before she could realize her dream. Her name means: "God is my abundance, God is my oath." Kevin comes to work at The Bank of Cadiz carrying that burden, that cross of painful loss. Another person that I am grateful for is Sarah Neighborgall. She came to work at that bank straight out of high school in 1973. Such dedication and loyalty is rare in our world today.

I'm grateful for my family physician, Dr. Daniel Butler. He is more friend than physician. I thank him for keeping me alive. He tells me: "God keeps you alive. I merely do some tinkering." One physician that, in fact, saved my life is Dr. Natalie Curcio, in Nashville. My skin cancer nearly killed me. Her skill got all of the cancer. Natalie has a "matter of fact" demeanor. I told her that she saved my life and she replied: "I know." I'm thankful for my, wife, Paula. For 56 years, she has taken care of me. And for my son, John, who is building me a garage, something I never had. For my granddaughter Andrea for giving me the name, when she was a baby, "An-Father." For granddaughter, Heather, and grandson, John-John. For my Pastors Greg and Richard, and all of my Christian Fraternity Brothers. For my son's wife, Lori and in-laws Bruce, Brenda, Marsha and Roger. For all those that call me by my first name when I cannot remember their first names.

Christ has turned my life around at critical times in my life. He has blessed me more times than I deserve. I believe that He is truly the inspiration behind my stories. He is worthy of the honor and the glory much more than my simple words can express. He has given me grace upon grace upon grace to become the writer that I am today.

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