

WORDS OF GRATITUDE

By John F. Hall

When I began writing stories over four decades ago, I limited my stories to things that I have experienced and observed during my life time. Tragedy happened when my dad,



Charles J. Hall's job was abolished at American Standard where he was a researcher. Then our rented house and everything that we owned was totally destroyed in a fire. My dad had no renter's insurance. He did not own a car. My mother, Marion, was gone. My dad had no savings. I was seven years old at the time. What I remember is standing on a sidewalk in a city. A city bus drove by and the exhaust fumes caught my attention. Every time I'm walking on a sidewalk in Nashville and a city bus drives by, the exhaust fumes bring back that memory. We were homeless and penniless. My dad pulled himself out of those terrible times and he

became a member of the NASA Apollo Project Team that put a man on the moon in 1969. That experience taught me to never give up and to be grateful to have a roof over my head.

In 1959, an advertising campaign for America's first large-size retirement community coined the phrase "The Golden Years." Retirees saw themselves as "too old to work, too young to die." They had the financial support of Social Security, but once they left the workforce, they had little purpose in their lives. Robert Johnson wrote a poem titled "My Evening Prayer." These are his words: "It is in these gifted golden years I pray as each precious day slowly fades away. I pledge before my earthly mission is fulfilled, and before God I face and my heart is stilled, that each promise that my life contains was enacted and none remains. Did I greet each sunrise with a song and soothe each heartache as it came along? And from the branch of the piercing crimson thorn, did I gather fragrance of the rose freshly born? Was my greeting filled with arms of love and faith and hope sent forth on wings of dove? Did my heart go forth with warmth and giving with a spirit of grace and forgiving? Did I greet each sunset with a prayer in gratitude that I was always - there. To comfort, lift, and give a hand and to say I truly understood? Though I strive, do I often rue, when on my knees, what I did not do? As morn's intentions were absolute are evening's promises softly mute? And do I close my eyes heavy with a peace, knowing that with kindness comes a sweet release. Till praying lips with prevailing slumber drift to greet another blessing of tomorrow's gift?"

Tony Robbins wrote: "Life is a gift, and it offers us the privilege, opportunity, and responsibility to give something back by becoming more." Tony Robbins is an American author, coach, motivational speaker and philanthropist. He also wrote: "To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others." Tony is paid as much as \$300,000 for a single speech. His net worth is \$500 Million dollars. I like to quote two inspiring things that he wrote: "When you are grateful fear disappears and abundance appears. The quality of your life is the quality of your relationship." I tell Jade, Skyler and Lexie to surround themselves with Christian friends because they will be

known by the friends they keep. I look up at the bright, blue sky, on a sunny day and thank Jesus for each person that He has put in my life.

In writing this story, I was looking for a hymn about gratitude. Nicole Nordeman wrote the hymn, "Gratitude." These are her lyrics: "Send some rain, would you send some rain? 'Cause the earth is dry and needs to drink again, and the sun is high and we are sinking in the shade. Would You send a cloud, thunder long and loud? Let the sky grow black and send some mercy down. Surely You can see that we are thirsty and afraid. But maybe not, not today. Maybe You'll provide in other ways. And if that's the case we'll give thanks to You with gratitude. For lessons learned in how to trust for You. How to bless the very sun that warms our face if You never send us rain. Daily bread, give us daily bread. Bless our bodies, keep our children fed. Fill our cups, then fill them up again tonight. Wrap us up and warm us through. Tucked away beneath our study roofs. Let us slumber safe from danger's View this time. Maybe not, not today. Maybe You'll provide in other ways. And if that's the case, we'll give thanks to You with gratitude. A lesson learned to hunger after You. That a starry sky offers a better view if no roof is overhead. And if we never touch that bread. Oh, the difference that often are between, everything we want and what we really need. So grant us peace, Jesus, grant us peace. Move our hearts to hear a single beat, between alibis and enemies tonight. Or maybe not, not today. Peace might be another world away. And if that's the case, we'll give thanks to You with gratitude. For lessons learned in how to trust in You. That we are blessed beyond what we could ever dream. In abundance or in need. And if You never grant us peace, but, Jesus, would You please."

I selected Nicole Nordemans's hymn because of its powerful use of words that touched my life. I have been blessed beyond what I could have ever dreamed. My words are not as eloquent as Nicole's, but the hymn she wrote, touched my soul. In Philippians, Chapter 4, Verses 6-7 are these words: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God, And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Each day, the first part of my short prayer begins with these words: "Good morning Jesus! Thank You for my life. Thank You for all the gifts that you have given me..." Words of gratitude are the best way to start each day.

John F. Hall

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