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Are All Your Experiences Priceless?

By Tracy Jantz

RIDING THE CHAIR LIFT up to the top of the next run is a familiar sight for many here in Frisco. Whether it's your first time or you've lost count, the feelings that begin to churn inside closely rival the priceless commercials from "MasterCard." My oldest son and I were sharing one of those rides a few seasons back. As we were closing in on our drop site, another rider began to raise the lap bar, in this father's opinion a tad early. As the bar raised, my son shifted his weight to beat dad and avoid the possible aftermath of another's directional challenges, mainly mine. As positions were being taken and the bar was rising, the footrest caught my son's board pulling him from the chair sending him into a 30-foot fall. My heart stopped. I was silent as I watched helplessly. In moments like this, seconds really do seem like hours. Not thinking, I kicked my board off and positioned

myself for the leap. The bar came down across me and the voice of a man next to my son cried out, "Wait!"

So often an individual's initial experience with religion resembles this story – something they would just as soon forget. It calls for them to leave their past behind and become a whole new being. More often than not, many lose interest in their quest for real truth as they are fed plate after plate of rules telling them what they're suppose to do and not suppose to do, along with the corresponding rituals that educate everyone in the fine art of being "good." I believe part of that newness (and there is new somewhere on the plate) is how we are to view, understand and use our past. There's nobody like you and the experiences of your life are as unique as the beginning and end of each day we live here in Frisco. Our Creator wants you to use those experiences –

the good, the bad, and the ugly for His glory and for your own good.

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The Bible is full of references concerning things we live with and through. One of the most famous says, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." As famous a reference as this

may be in Christian circles, it is also one of the most abused and misunderstood ones as well. Let me tell you what it doesn't say. It doesn't say that all things work out the way we want them to. We know that's not true. It doesn't say that everything has a happy ending on earth. It doesn't. We live on a broken planet.

What it does say is that "We know." This is a statement of fact. Just as certain as there is oxygen to breath, this truth is certain. Now that we are sure there is something to be known, what is it?

We know that in "all things." "All" means "all;" including our stupid mistakes, dumb decisions, failures, divorce, miscarriage, bankruptcy, cancer and everything else that happens in our lives. We know that in all things God fits it into His plan. "All" isn't just the "good." There's a lot of bad in the world, but He isn't the originator of it. God grieves when evil things occur, but He's given us all a free choice. He doesn't force you to do right; He doesn't take away your free will.

We know that in all things "God works." There is a masterful design behind everything in your life. There is a Designer. Your life is no accident. There is no luck, no karma, no random chance or happenstance in your life.

There is an order to everything in your life.

We know that in all things God works "for the good." Even in the bad? Yes, but for the good. He loves to bring good out of bad. He loves to take the mistakes of others and the ones we make ourselves and somehow put them all together and bring good. He's a pro at it. We make mistakes, but He has yet to make one.

We know that in all things God works for the good "of those who love Him." This isn't a promise for everybody in the world, but it is an opportunity for anybody in the world. God isn't working everything for the good of everyone who doesn't love Him. If

we're thumbing our nose, turning our back, pretending we're our own god and acting like we don't need Him, then everything is working for bad in our lives. He owes us nothing. When I deny my Creator His right to direct my life as He designed, ignoring His purpose while doing my own thing, the results that follow are of my making. Don't run



away from your past or make up stories that aren't really the way it was just to be happier for a moment. We all have experienced many things. Were all of those experiences wasted? I hope not.

This is a promise to those "who have been called according to His purpose." The way to live life to its fullest and experience God's purpose for it is to embrace all your experiences. In order to do this, we have to remember them correctly and stop pushing them out of our minds. The important thing to remember about our past is the lessons. This can be done in multiple ways, but the simplest one I've found is just writing them down. Isn't it said that hindsight is always 20/20? In other words, we

understand our lives by looking back, not by looking forward. Combining acceptance and understanding equips us with the ability to avoid past mistakes. You might not realize what's going on at the time, but later you'll understand the whys and why nots, how comes and what fors of each of your experiences.

Often when we leave an issue that has brought adverse challenges to our lives, we are so excited to be rid of it that the last thing we want to do is sift through the rubble of that experience. However, that is precisely what we should do. An unexamined experience is worthless. We've all had repeated mistakes, but there are some that still make the same mistakes because they never stop and extract the lessons. "Extreme" doesn't approach the level of courage needed to look back. "What happened this last year and what can I do differently this year?" A promising future will erode rapidly when questions such as these are avoided.

When we finally realize that the purpose of our lives is far greater than our own happiness, problems become a whole lot easier to handle. Our eyes are able to see things with a different perspective. You're able to use the experiences of your life, good and bad, to help

other people navigate through the issues of their lives. I'm happy to say after reaching my son, getting him off the mountain, surviving MRIs, CAT Scans, and all the letters that represent the battery of tests he endured, that he's fine.

Today begin to embrace, extract and employ all the experiences of your life – the good ones, bad ones, shameful ones, right ones, wrong ones, the happy and sad ones – all of them. Stop ignoring them and allow our Creator to direct you to the plate that He has prepared for you in all of your life experiences.

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