

The Boy Who Lost and Gained His Life

by Michael W. Lee

Many of you know about Jack, but some of you don't. Jack is one of our sixth grade students and, after being observed displaying some bizarre behavior last year, was found to have a large tumor growing in his brain.

In the year that has followed, Jack has undergone various procedures and operations, lost his hair and regained it, has needed transfusions to help him keep his strength, and has undergone chemotherapy. There are times when he just can't make it to school because he is too sick or times that he can last only part of the day before he goes home. Occasionally, he must stop for a while and take a rest in the classroom because his body is so exhausted.

Through all of this, Jack remains one of the most cheerful and loving people I have ever met. And I want to tell you - I've met a lot of people who have faked being happy, but Jack Gardner is sincere. He is also one of the most calm children I have ever met as he faces death and suffering daily. How is it possible? How can Jack be such a person living through what he lives through?

Well, the Bible tells us that it is only by God working in us that we can think and behave in such a way that is often contrary to what we all typically do. But the Bible also commands us to think and behave in certain ways that please God. So, in a way that is too complex for any human to understand, God works in us as we work out our lives. In other words, it's not just God, and it's not only us totally independent of God, that results in Jack's kind of incredible Godly attitude about his life.

But then you wonder, "What specifically goes through Jack's mind that enables him to be joyful, loving, and peaceful?"

I think I know. You see, I think that Jack has lost his life. Lost his life? Isn't Jack still alive? Yes, Jack is more alive than ever. I believe that Jack has embraced something Jesus said and that we are seeing the fruit of that belief. Jesus said,

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 'For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.' For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matt. 16:24-27)

Jack has embraced the fact that this life is very temporary and that the only important things are the things of Jesus and eternity. Jack realizes that all of the things of this world have little or no value when compared to the things that are important to his Lord. Therefore, being willing to walk away from the temporary pleasures of this world enables him to smile and laugh in the face of a life-ending disease.

As I write this article and think about Jack's attitude, I am ashamed of my own attachments and worries in this world. As much as I talk about the Lord's work at the school, you may think that I am very dedicated to the Kingdom or that I have completely lost my life in exchange for one that is wholly dedicated to God. But, no, the Lord has convicted me of my own areas of wanting to place importance on things that bring short-term pleasure in my own life.

It was only a few days after we announced the latest goals of our Building on the Word campaign when I found an envelope in my inbox at school with money inside it from Jack. He was first, before

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parents or grandparents or any other student, to give to the Lord’s work through our school. Certainly, none of us would criticize a young boy for holding onto some money and having some fun, but Jack was doing what a person who has “lost his life” does.

What can we learn from Jack? Well, God places people and events in our lives to demonstrate how God works and often turn our hearts to Him. I

think Jack is a gift to us to remind us that those who have gained their life in Christ are to lose their life in this world. Unfortunately, it is a lesson that we must be reminded of again and again.

Please pray about following Jack’s example and giving to something that has eternal consequences. The Lord will reward each of us according to our works. ■

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