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Here's Hope
by Rev. Jerry Rea

Why Don't You Just Skip this Day!

On his first shot Spiro Agnew (Vice President under Richard Nixon) hit a 66 year-old spectator with his golf ball. And, that's not all. That same ball bounced off the man and hit his wife. Think that's bad...that's not all. The next shot hit yet another spectator on the ankle - she had to be rushed to the hospital. After all that, Agnew skipped the first hole. Not a bad idea.

But, you can't skip life. There are times, days, months, and even years... that you wish were quickly over. There are experiences we'd all like to forget. Living with them gets easier as the years roll on - but wouldn't it have been nice if you could've avoided them all-together? Who would not admit/ agree that some lives would've been richer if they'd been able to avoid some disabling sickness or trial? And then what about people? My wife and I were entertaining a senior adult guest while we were in seminary. She was telling us of a person in her life that gave her fits. Trying to ease the tension I spoke up - "I guess it takes all types." With a certain fire in her eyes she said, "no it doesn't, but we've got 'em anyway." True - we could live without certain "types." But, there again, we don't get to pick the days, or the people we live with or among.

We can, however, choose our attitudes. *Some* have the attitude that these days or trials should not be in their lives. But you do know, don't you, that all of us have trials and suffering... don't you? And, even though suffering is relative it is still suffering. *Others* have another attitude. They believe that God drops these burdens on us as rewards and punishments. They are like Job's friends. His friends told him, that there must be something wrong in his life or God would not have put these troubles on him. That attitude did not sit well with Job. And, that attitude is just not true to life. I certainly believe that God disciplines His kids... but that's not the case every time I have hardship. *Another* view is that the choices we make bring to us good or bad. That's partly true. Surely, all of us have suffered for some unwise choices we have made along the way. But, there are things that some of us suffer that are definitely outside any and all control we might have on life.

Whew! This gives me a headache just thinking about all these "whys." And truth is, even if I understood it all, suffering is still suffering. It is painful. Understanding all about cancer (for example) does not take away the pain of cancer. Understanding all about why someone died does not take away the pain of having to lose them. I'm reminded of a verse in the Bible. It goes like this "trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding." As human beings we want to understand. Our brains (thinking) is arguably our greatest asset. So we "lean" on our understanding. That's why we say "why me?" We want to understand. In the end, even our understanding fails us.

And so... we trust Him. There are two options in that same verse. Trust in the Lord... and don't lean on your own understanding. When do we need to trust the Lord? When we don't understand. We need to trust Him "in the pain." When the bad days pile up. When the circumstances seem intent on strangling us. When we are so oppressed we feel as if we can't even breathe. When the burdens threaten to crush us - trust! Trust, and take another step. One day we will understand, but not now. So, focus out. Focus away. Focus away from yourself, and your burden - over at Jesus. It helps! It really does. Trust Him. In all your ways acknowledge Him - and He will direct your steps. Proverbs 3:5-6.

I Love You
Jerry Rea