

# Winter

By Abigail Rayn



*We are flowers that fade and  
shadows that vanish...  
Our time on earth is brief; the  
number of our days is already decided by  
you. (Job 2: 2,5 CEV)*

An elderly man finishes breakfast in the dining room outside my office every morning. The rest of the day he silently resides in a cozy recliner in the adjacent living room. For this devotion I will call him Fred. Fred watches TV between meals as staff hurry past and other residents pause to say hello and offer him their newspaper as they move about.

Over the years we've conversed and I've learned a few things about him...he loves sweets, especially candy canes and hot cocoa, he enjoys corny jokes and watching sports. Fred served our country in the Navy, on a refueling ship in the near east at the end of WWII. His older brother died while serving in the Army, also in WWII though years earlier. He had been a manager, mentoring young executives at a large company and was well respected by those he supervised. Fred's favorite person in the Bible is Joseph. Joseph was a great leader that overcame many obstacles. He was a man of integrity, courage, and compassion. I see many similarities between Fred and Joseph. Never have I heard him complain or get angry with staff,

though he certainly has had reason to. Often in great pain, he will only wince. In my mind, he exemplifies Galatians 5:22,23... *the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* I see the evidence of the Holy Spirit in this mans' life.

I have seen my friend become more and more frail, even evade death by a slim margin a time or two. After one such episode when I asked him what happened, his reply with a grin was "I don't know, I guess God isn't done with me here yet." I couldn't agree with him more. Truly only God knows how long we will live and when we will die.

A few years back there was a concept that circulated church circles that went something like this...we all have a birth date and a death date that is predetermined, but it is in the period of the dash that we live our lives by the choices we make. Fred is more than likely not even aware that he is still creating "dash moments" during these winter days of his life, as he is drawing nearing to his end date.

One day Fred told me I am the bright spot of his day. I replied with sincerity and a smile, he is mine too. Though some may see just an old man alone in a recliner, I see a hero, a "Joseph". His teaching and wisdom not so much dispensed through the few words he utters these days, but through wordlessness one must mine with a gentle touch on his hand, a sweet whisper into his ear and smiling eyes that warm the depths his soul. Though when asked, he will solidly testify in a faltering voice, "my help comes from the Lord." My friend is a wellspring of God's grace, in whom God has bestowed life's great treasures. He is looking forward with great joy to the day when he finally arrives in heaven and see Jesus face to face, when he will hear those beautiful words, "well done good and faithful servant."

*Lord,*

*Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.* Psalm 90:12 (New Living Translation)