



The Accordion Gospel

The Most Costly Gift Imaginable

by Laurin Makohon

My family's photo albums are filled with some classic Kodak moments. We've got some great pics of my brother and me sporting the most fantastic bowl haircuts at places all across the country. (Thanks, Mom, for that public humiliation.) But despite the boocoodles of pics we've got of the rest of the family, we only have a few pictures of my dad when he was a kid—and he's holding an accordion in practically every one. You'd think the thing was super-glued to his hands.

If you ask my dad why he's always holding an accordion, he'll bust out one of those "good old days" talks. You know the ones. The old "I walked uphill both ways to school in the snow" deals. (How is that possible, anyway?) But when my dad pulls that talk out of his back pocket, he's not kidding. He immigrated to the U.S. from Germany when he was three, a couple of years after the end of WWII. And growing up as the son of a day laborer and a maid, neither of whom spoke English, the accordion was pretty much the only fun thing he owned as a kid.

One day in college, I got the bright idea that I wanted to learn to play the guitar. (I think everyone's done that at some point.) I knew that a guitar and lessons would be way too expensive for a Ramen-noodle-living college kid. I must have said that out loud because, sure enough, a couple of weekends later, I came home from college to visit, and there it was—a Fender guitar.

"It's unbelievable, Dad," I said. "How did you afford it?"

His answer hit me like a brick wall. To this day, thinking about it makes me feel like I've been socked in the stomach with a wrecking ball.

"I traded in my accordion," he replied.

My dad traded his most prized possession. One of the only keys to the past he had. In a way, he had traded a little piece of himself.

"Dad," I said, crushed, "can we get it back?"

"No, I can't," he replied. "It's a done deal."

I lost it. I don't exactly think tears were the reaction my dad was going for, but I hope he'll understand. And I don't think at the time I could have pinpointed why I was feeling what I was feeling. But, after the fact, God made it crystal clear.

In that moment, I got a glimpse of the magnitude of a gift given from another Father more than two thousand years ago. At Calvary, God did the same thing on a much bigger scale. His children wanted—and desperately needed—something they couldn't afford. He had what it would take to pay for it, but it would be a great sacrifice. And in this bigger story, God didn't just trade a piece of Himself—He traded Himself.

I think at different points in our lives all of us have become calloused to God's Great Gift. I've heard "Jesus died on the cross for your sins" so many times that sometimes it's got as much meaning as "See Spot Run." Thankfully, God knows I need a refresher course every once in a while. So He gently continues to rock my world with His love. I am so thankful that I serve a God who would use all the tools in His toolbox to communicate how much He loves me, rather than let me live without any understanding of what His trade cost Him.

So if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go praise Him with the gospel guitar that my dad gave me.

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