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Ladders

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Ladders

Whether we use a step ladder, one that is free-standing or an extension ladder that we lean against a wall, our purpose is to reach higher than we would otherwise be able to do at ground level. Ladders are quite helpful when we need them, but using them always involves some risk, and there might also be an element of inconvenience in bringing them to the specific locations we want.

Ladders can serve as a useful metaphor in describing our experiences of reaching higher in terms of personal development, whether physical, spiritual, emotional or intellectual. We cannot continue to remain on the same level where we are now and also attain our persistent desires for "more." As for our deep desires, we do not consider aggrandizing money or power as worthy of us, but rather those that fulfill the inherent promise of our humanity.

Continuing the metaphor, the risks are about falling, about suffering frustration when we cannot reach our desired goal. Perhaps we tried using the wrong ladder. But we can try another, once we have assessed the situation. We want to select not just any kind of ladder, but the one that is strong enough, well-supported so as to not tip over, and of an appropriate size. Or we might have tried climbing up entirely on our own, without asking for needed assistance. So, we need to consider not only our objectives, but the right means to get there.

When we take seriously that God is present in all things, we want to include our desires among the locations within us where God is active. Rather than only acknowledging that we have aspirations to become better persons and that we need to take some practical means to continue growing, we can rightly expect God to be preeminently within those desires. From such a perspective of trust, we have the firm footing we need, and even have someone to hold our ladders as we seek to continue developing into the persons God inspires us to become.

We cannot avoid all suffering by relying on God, for frustration and embarrassment are a part of life. But, we can gracefully focus our attention on where we are trying to go, rather than on the cost of getting there. Our love, together with God's love, will make the suffering less of a concern, and not an obstacle to our progress.

For example, we might have wanted to become more peaceful and more balanced in our lives, but we discovered that merely wanting to grow does not result in any discernable changes to our habitual behavior. We might

even have noticed a "step stool" book or an article available for us that we left unread because we thought we did not have time, or that any change would be too difficult. But, on another day, we risked taking a step up, and found some of that peace which we desired. Or again, we decided to ask someone with experience about how to achieve a balance of mind and heart, even at the risk of being thought overly pious or inner-oriented. And, by climbing up, we received some practical suggestions about taking brief time-outs for deliberation, and found more of what we were seeking.

We do not artificially "put God" into any of our growth-assisting movements. But upon reflection, we might recognize who was making them available to us at the time when we needed them. God is a loving master of inspirations: "ladders."

Randy