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## God Experiences

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## God Experiences

Sometimes we can name experiences we have with pleasing clarity, but at other times we can scarcely understand what has taken place. We might not understand what has happened until we talk about it with someone trustworthy. This is especially true with matters of spirit. It is easier for many of us to talk about any other topic than to describe experiences related to God. But unless we do attempt to find appropriate words to express the complex of thoughts and feelings that might indicate the presence and action of the Spirit, we can easily miss the great value to us of these personal contacts.

When we converse with someone about God experiences, God is present, actively participating, though not controlling. In talking about past events, we will often become aware of present inspirations: the movements of the Spirit confirming and guiding our mutual understanding. Each "aha" of recognition about previous spiritual experiences occurs in the present, conferring a double blessing upon us. Our willingness to reflect with another person about matters for which we have no proofs requires courage and trust. The confirmation and consolation we receive make the risks worth taking.

Some of our most life-enhancing experiences do not become real for us unless, in talking, we listen to the words we use in describing them to another person. Our sense of honesty will often serve as a very gifted guide, leading us to avoid either exaggerating or minimizing what took place. And when someone else understands what we say, we can more readily and confidently accept the significance of what took place.

The qualifications of a conversation partner for talking about experiences of God are the same as the "credentials" that we bring to the dialogue: the desire to recognize some of the real, personal, and direct contacts with God that take place in our lives. Theological language is not necessary, nor is a license or a diploma. Both parties to conversations about experiences of God must be willing to discover a resonance with God's goodness in the present moment, while speaking and listening about specific incidents that have occurred in the past. Explanations of God experiences might be found in appropriate books or through consultation with those who are recognized for their helpfulness with such matters. But talking about experiences of God ultimately depends upon openness to God.

The thought that we might be a "burden" to someone else can discourage us from speaking about our tentative wonderings about the movements of God in our lives. Rather, we can consider a conversation about possible encounters with God as an occasion for an exchange of gifts. The one listening can share our joy if we discover the presence of God in one or more incidents that we choose to tell. Just as someone who has been a visitor to a beautiful National Park will enjoy hearing from another about his or her experiences there, most listeners to God experiences will be reminded of their own encounters. Frequently, a sharing of stories takes place, and a grace rather than a "burden" is the result.

If God were a "thing," we would have no need to talk about our experiences. We know that a beautiful sunset pleases us. But God is Spirit, and Love. If a sunset or a sudden thought causes our hearts to move in such a way that "God" comes to mind, we have much to gain and nothing to lose by talking about the experience until we satisfy ourselves about whether or not we have had a God experience.