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## Distances

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## Distances

We can talk about how far it is between one city and another, or how many miles from here to there when we plan a trip. In giving driving directions, we sometimes specify the distance in terms of the time it takes to travel from one place to another. Astronomers use the same means of describing distances of stars and galaxies from one another by the number of years it takes for light to travel between two locations in the universe. Sometimes too, we use distance terms in describing relationships, as when we say that two people are "miles apart" in their opinions or in their regard for one another. Finally, we can speak of distance between God and us, whether as particular individuals or as the human race in general.

Neither miles nor light-years will be helpful if we try to imagine the distance between God, in limitless eternity and us, in our time-centered limitations. But when we think of ourselves as coming directly and personally from the hand of God, no matter through what brief or lengthy process, distance collapses. If there is an incomprehensible distance from our perspective, it is not in the least a deterrent to the creative and loving power of God, who is present to each and to all of us within our very being, and at the same time, is completely other than us.

God's personal interest in each of us allows for distance and no distance. That is, from God's perspective, there is no aspect of our lives where God is separate from us. Our creation is not a past event, but is an ongoing and always "now" choice that God makes. But from our side, we are entirely free to maintain as much distance as we choose. And, just as the emotional distance between two persons can diminish or increase depending upon the free choices of each one, we are always in the position of approaching or moving away from God, whether consciously or unconsciously. But God has made an absolute commitment to encourage and support, not force, a movement toward less and less distance between us and also between each of us and all the other people in our lives.

We rightly note the distance between us and God when we think of our frail humanity and God's infinite immensity. Who are we, when compared with God? But in an act of love utterly inconceivable for us, one that takes our limited human capabilities completely into account, God has become human, in the person of Jesus Christ. Myths abound in many cultures and civilizations, imagining God appearing like a human. But no one would ever have thought that God would fully enter humanity to the point of suffering torture and death. Only God could choose such a means to remove the quite real distance between us, while still leaving us free to accept or not such an undreamt of possibility.

Distances are real. But love can remove distances between us and God and between us and one another.