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Temperature Changes

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Temperature Changes

We cannot say with assurance that hot is always better than cold, or vice-versa. When it comes to weather, some people love winters that are freezing, while others want to get to a warmer climate; Some people are pleased to visit a hot and humid location for a vacation, while others want ice and snow. Most of us live with varying conditions of hot and cold in contexts where sometimes our preferences are a controlling factor, and other times not. We might choose where we live; we certainly do not control the weather.

Our experiences of God are like the weather, since we do not control the warmth or coolness of the felt presence or absence of our Creator and Lover. Though we do not control God, we are free to choose whether to repeat a practice in which we have previously experienced God directly, or, at other times, to try something new that has been recommended to us for coming into direct contact with God. If we cannot choose the temperature of the weather directly, we can decide whether to “come inside or to go outside” in seeking personal experiences of God.

Sometimes God’s love finds us when we are neither seeking nor thinking about God. The Presence can be so appreciable that we have feelings of warmth, a deep calmness, and a sense of well-being. Many of us receive one or more “foundational experiences” that are so strong when they occur that they are unforgettable. Years later, when we do not have the same intense feelings and nearly absolute certainty about our relationship with God, we continue to live and act as though it were still true – and it is. At other times, we are hardly aware of any attraction for God, but neither do we experience a sense of alienation. Though the weather may change, God does not go away from us, nor do we from God. The depth of our relationship cannot be measured by the temperature of what we feel, but only by our commitment to stay rather than to leave.

If we accept that God really loves us, and trust in the experiences we have had that revealed that love, we will continue to remain open to God. Whatever practices we discovered as helpful when God’s presence and action affected us powerfully, we will continue to use, even when the warm or hot weather turns cool or cold. It is not ours to cause our hearts and minds to be filled with great affection and consolation. But when we insist on trusting rather than denying the experiences of God that we have had, we can recognize in our spirits

an abiding level of warmth, accompanied by a perceptible sense of peace.

God loves to give us gifts that touch us deeply, but knows well that if we become accustomed to great warmth and devotion, we might begin to think that we are somehow better persons than those who might be experiencing "cool" weather in their relationship with God. And so we might be given, as gift, a time when we wonder what happened to all those delightful feelings that made a spiritual life seem natural and easy. In order to have us experience our complete inability to cause or even to hold on to warm affections, God might leave us in the cold for a bit. If we acknowledge that every movement in our hearts towards God is a free gift from God, we will become certain and sure that God loves us, as we are.

The spiritual weather may change, but God's love for us does not fluctuate at all. Each act we make of trusting in God's faithful love is usually accompanied by at least a calm sense of truthfulness. At different times in our lives, we all have experiences of temperature changes in the spiritual climate.