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Backing Into the Future?

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Backing into the Future?

Some people back into parking spaces, so they can more easily pull out when they leave. Some people jog backwards (at least for a short distance) so they can build up their leg muscles. And some people back into the future, so they can keep their focus on the past. Of course the most efficient way forward is to face in that direction and give our full attention to where we want to go.

In terms of moving through experiences, especially those which elicit strong feelings, the intention we hold in mind and heart is extremely important. When we come to the end of a shorter or a longer-term experience, such as a school year, a volunteer program, or a job or living situation, we will have some thoughts and accompanying feelings. As we look at the darker memories, we might feel anger or pain; as we recall the moments of light, we might feel consoled or happy. We can let the feelings push or pull us one way and another, or we can decide that we want to work through the present moment into a future that matches our purpose in life.

We do not have to avoid, deny, or rationalize our feelings, nor do we have to remain in them endlessly. Rather than let the moods and ups and downs of our emotions determine our directions, we can attend to them so that we can go through them, into our future. We can grow and adapt rather than become depressed or beclouded. We have freedom to believe that present hurts can be healed.

Feelings come and go, if we acknowledge them. If we ignore them they will move us to unconscious activity or lead us to become closed to our experience, and into a state of numbness. So we take charge, by deciding that we will deal with whatever is going on inside, the positive and the negative, the pleasant and the unpleasant; we will take whatever time is required either to make sense out of the experiences we have had, or to accept our human condition without understanding it. Either way, our intention is to move forward.

Those who acknowledge their spirituality know that their values are challenged by the thoughts and feelings they experience, but that feelings do not define us, and they do not determine the kind of person we are and want to become. Our decisions, including those we make about dealing with our thoughts and feelings will either contribute to building up or to tearing down the building of the unique person we are in the world.

God is not indifferent to what we experience in our minds and hearts. The latest study of hospital patients is quite clear about the positive benefits in terms of healing and recovery for those who exercise their beliefs in a power of love greater than themselves. If we can ask our friends to understand us and to be with us through our struggles, we can certainly depend upon God to accompany us, but not to take away either our freedom to choose or some of the challenges that are the occasions of our growth. God is the power of love in the world, not control.

Those who choose to work through their present difficulties are connecting themselves with the essential goodness at work in all that exists. We have no need to back into the future.