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Small Boats

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Small Boats

I learned once (and that was enough) that entering an unsteady little boat from a stationary platform cannot be done half-way or tentatively. On my first such attempt, with one foot on the dock and the other on the boat, the boat tipped in my direction and I fell in. The lesson for me: make a decision and act on it.

If we want to learn a new skill or try a new behavior, we have to actually start, however imperfect our first efforts might be; we cannot make an attempt and hold back at the same time. Half-hearted intentions lacking clarity of purpose can lead to unpleasant mishaps. If we are of two minds, we can easily fall into the water between a pier and a floating boat.

We could be somewhat shy when we meet someone for the first time, and so we might reveal only a little of ourselves. Yet, we can still at least say something, and look at a person's face rather than at our feet. Our decision is about making a beginning, not about enjoying a full and complete relationship. Without our initial choice to interact, no bond of any kind can be established. We make a decision and act on it.

If we would like to relate with God in some fashion that seems more satisfactory than hitherto, we can do more than think about it, more than reach out while pulling back. We can try something that is perhaps new and unfamiliar, but reasonable. One of us might speak some thoughts and concerns aloud to God, and experience some hoped-for closeness even if accompanied by a bit of awkwardness. No harm in actually trying a new practice, whereas reading about practical exercises in a book but hesitating because "it might not work for me," accomplishes nothing.

In praying, attending to our spirituality, or engaging in religious practices, we will get somewhere if we step deliberately, even if cautiously, off the solid ground of every day familiarity and into the boat by which we hope to be brought closer to the desires in our hearts.

Some of us have heard or read that conscious, slow, deep breathing can be helpful for quieting the constant stream of thoughts in our minds, and have tried it. Based on our experiences we can then decide whether or not the practice is helpful for us. We can only benefit from what we actually do not just from hearing what others tell us is helpful to them.

When our desires are for God, for our good and for the good of others, we can depend upon God to be in the beginning, middle and end of our decisions and actions. Inspirations are far more than random electrical impulses in our brains! If we have awareness of an invitation to act that is within us, the only truly negative option is to ignore it. We will not “fall into the water” when, in response to God, we consciously decide to step from the familiar present into a somewhat unfamiliar next moment. Doubts may arise, and we might hesitate. But to experience that to which we are personally invited, we have to make a decision – the more firm and confident, the better.

Even a small boat can be a fine means of moving from here to there, but only if we get into it.