

“When Winter Comes”

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“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? 3 My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” (Psalm 42:1-3)

Every believer has gone through periods when they simply do not have the motivation to read their Bible, pray, or even want to attend church.

For those of us in the Midwest we are very much accustomed to the 4 seasons of the year. Winter is that season of the year where everything lies dormant and appears dead and unyielding. The two bookends to winter’s tenure are the seasons of transitions; fall and spring. Fall leads us into winter and spring leads us out of winter. Summer is somewhat enigmatic. Because of our present schooling year, summer becomes a time of family vacations, cookouts and visitation.

I enjoy the seasons. Each one makes me glad for the other three. In the summer I look forward to winter and in the winter I look forward to the summer. One of the tremendous beauties in our seasons is the changing of the leaves. Many in the Mid-West take time out to run up North for the changing of the colors. Even here in our own communities we find the color of the leaves breathtaking.

We have come to appreciate the colorful Maple tree. The Maple leaf turns bright red and yellow and ignites the entire landscape with its transitory beauty. Within a few short weeks all of its leaves will fall away and it will stand as a naked sentinel over the snow covered ground. Its life seems all but gone. Nothing appears to move from either within or without. Yet soon enough spring happens and new life is brought forth.

It is at the end of the winter season and before full spring that the Maple tree yields its sugary treasure of Maple syrup.

The Christian life is very much like the Maple tree and its seasonal life cycle. All of us have a fall where our leaves begin to drop off and we enter a period of time that appears to be barren and unfruitful. The winter months of life are often preceded by a brilliant display of activity. Yet how are we to understand our winter seasons? Winter can be a time of tremendous dryness. Our skin cracks and flacks and moisture is crucial during this period of time. We become depressed and we struggle against this season of the year.

When I find myself struggling spiritually and/or emotionally drained, how am I to find comfort and rest? The issue for me is making sure I understand what is happening in my life from the perspective of God and not that of my circumstances or feelings.

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I do not think many of us actually consider how we view life. If God is not in control, and in some sense each individual is, then one's worldview is best represented by a pane of glass that has shattered and splintered into a million unconnected pieces.

If God is in control, then life is to be viewed as a mosaic or multi-pieced puzzle that has a singular over-arching picture comprised of a million distinct though connected parts. The season we call winter is an intentional and connected part of God's singular over-arching picture. If for no other reason, winter makes us appreciate the other three seasons of life.

Should you find yourself in a winter season, let me suggest four thoughts. First, be still which implies slowing down. Second, stop trying to figure out how to resolve the problem. Most of the time where you find yourself is bigger than you. Third, trust God to be God. And finally, rest in His control.