

Much of what we do in life revolves around the satisfaction of our needs. I am talking about true needs, not just our wants. Although we try to be self-sufficient, we do require the constant input of food to keep us going. We require shelter and warmth. These should be a lesson to us that we cannot stand totally on our own. There is something else that we need in our lives.

This can be better brought to our mind when we think about how cold we get during the winter. Who hasn't wished fervently that the car heater would hurry up and get hot? When we get a sudden cold snap, it is similar to what happens in life when some problem hits us. As some say, it is a cold, cruel world. Suddenly we see that it takes an external source to provide us with the warmth we need to be comfortable.

Sometimes it is more than comfort about which we have to worry. Not too long ago I went camping with the Scouts, and the temperature went down to 15 F during the night. I had a sleeping bag rated for this temperature, but I now know that it just means that you won't die. (I had always thought that it meant that you would still be comfortable at that temperature.) This particular night was at the winter solstice, which meant that it was the longest night of the year. This gives you a very long time to be chilly and uncomfortable. It gives you a long time to think. Finally, when I could stand it no longer, I got up to get the fire going again.

Many times in my camping experience, there have been hot coals still in the fire ring when I got up in the morning. Naturally, it was not true in this case. There was no warmth at all. I laid down some fire starter and then tried to light a match. It is one thing to get the match started, but quite another to keep it going long enough to light something else. Eventually, I was successful and was able to build the fire up satisfactorily.

One thing that I learned from this early morning experience was that I don't have the warmth within myself to make it when things get rough. In our normal life we are not subjected to life-threatening cold. But this trip could have been deadly if I had not had external sources of warmth. With my body shivering and my hands shaking so bad that I could hardly light a match, I realized that I could not make it alone. Without that fire I could freeze to death. Even in the sleeping bag, with "passive warmth" and a lot of insulation I was not at peace. We all need something outside of us that gives us life and energy. We need God and His strength "radiated" into us.

I learned a little more about the emptiness of life without God. Getting down to 15 degrees revealed my true need for external warmth. In Hebrews we read that the universe is sustained by the constant attention of the word of God. It is interesting to know that if God withdrew his sustaining power; the universe would collapse and be devoid of energy in a fraction of a second. Life without God is what hell is like to me, the absence of God's nourishing warmth. In heaven, there will not be the need for matches and firestarter, for in Revelation 22:5 we read, "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light." If we live in God we will have no need beyond Him, for David says in Psalms 55:22, "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall." And Paul echoes this in Phillipians 4:19 when he writes, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Let us not forget that we cannot live without God, who is the source of all life.

© Copyright 1997, Heard Lowry