Opinion
Spirituality



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by Christian Mocek

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Frustrated by cabin fever? Dust off your Bible.

There is something about winter I really love. Maybe it is the hot chocolate on cold evenings, sweatpants and warm socks, or the way street lights illumine freshly fallen snow. I know many who experience "cabin fever," but I enjoy the extra time in my house. I have no doubt that most of that stems from my introverted personality and my intense love of reading a good book under a heavy blanket.

For those of us with cold winters, the temperatures necessitate staying home a little more, cooking warm soups instead of having backyard barbeques, and playing card games in place of trips to the park.

The changing of seasons to colder weather brings the normal rituals. Changing out summer clothes to winter clothes, buying salt to melt the winter ice, moving the snow shovels to an accessible spot in the garage, and ensuring each car has a snow scraper in the trunk. It is a process of preparation, one most us of do habitually, for the cold and dark winter months.

This time of preparation is undergirded by a common understanding; that winter is traditionally a time of scarcity. The short days, cold weather, and snowfall make normal routines just that much more challenging. Traditionally, the pantries were packed with autumn's harvest with the hope that the hard work of summer and fall would bring food to hungry mouths in the winter.

However, with modern technology and transportation, most of us can now enjoy fresh blueberries in the middle of January. Thankfully, most of us no longer hunger in the stretches of winter, but this unbounded abundance also brings the challenge of reclaiming a healthy sense of scarcity. Winter may no longer be the time when we miss the comforts that keep us warm, healthy and fed, but it could be the time when our slower domesticated way of life can be a lesson in what is truly important.

Icicled trees and expanses of white snow can make even the blandest of scenery beautiful. The real challenge for our hearts this winter is what will emerge when the warm sun of spring comes to melt that covering away. Winter can be a time for inner work — the hard work of breaking down the many walls we have built between us

and what Parker Palmer, the great Quaker writer and retreat master, calls our true self, our soul.

On those coldest, darkest and snow-covered days where the only choice is to be in the house after shoveling your snow, maybe this winter could be the time where you pull out your Bible instead of turning on the television. It could be a time to discover anew the great teachings of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Paul's treatises on the body of Christ, or the relatable humanity expressed in the Psalms.

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It could be the time to read again the great journey of Moses from an unbeliever in God's power to the leader of God's people out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Or to reflect on the silent and prayerful strength of Joseph as he led Mary and his newborn son — the savior of the world — on a perilous trip to Egypt in hopes of saving their lives.

The rest of the year is full of distractions of friends, commitments and, of course, technology. Seldom do we have the chance to sit and wonder, pray and discover God within ourselves.

Fitting, I think, to have a season in which Earth gives us the chance to slow down and discover her maker. In the scarcity — in the wanting, in the boredom, in the stillness — is where God comes most profoundly.

After many months of great hurricanes, fires, mudslides, floods and one particularly loud leader of the free world, this winter may be the perfect time to discover, like Elijah, that still, small voice of God.

For if we sit, read, listen and pray, what we will uncover after the snow melts away is a beautiful image of ourselves looking back at us — the way God looks at us.

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