

Pursuing God in the Dead of Winter

Because I grew up in Georgia's sweltering humidity and I now live in Florida's year-round sunshine, I am not fond of cold weather. I'd rather go barefoot in the sand than trudge through snow in heavy boots. To me, it's "cold" when I have to wear anything heavier than a T-shirt and shorts, or if I have to cover the Sago palm in my front yard with a plastic sheet on a chilly Florida evening.

But because I told God a long time ago I would go wherever He sends me, I ended up in the Canadian city of Saskatoon two weeks ago. It was minus 40 degrees F on my first night there. Snow was piled everywhere, and the Saskatchewan River was frozen solid, yet my hosts told me this was a "mild" winter. Locals, who start their cars 10 minutes before going anywhere to warm their engines, joke that there are four seasons in Saskatchewan: "Almost winter," "winter," "still winter" and "road construction."

We had a **renewal** service planned for a Friday night, and I wondered if anyone would be brave enough to venture out in that freezing weather. (I would have hibernated until late March.) But not only did these people from Saskatoon come to receive a **word from God**, one pastor and his family drove from a town three hours north.

As I was preparing for the meeting that afternoon, I felt the Lord told me that a "desperate pastor" was coming to the service. I prayed in the **Holy Spirit**, not knowing how I could help this person or what he or she was battling. All I knew was that God cared very much about the situation.

The people who came that night were so excited about Jesus that I forgot about the cold outside. After I preached I began

to share some words of **prophetic encouragement** with different individuals in the congregation. And then at the right time I mentioned what God had told me earlier: "There is a pastor here tonight who really needs a touch from God."

Tyler and his wife, Debra, were already standing near the front of the church. When they raised their hands I called them forward, and I asked the host pastors, Brent and Barb, to lay their hands on them. We held Tyler's arms in the air and I began to prophesy about the new strength and joy God was releasing into their situation. The enemy had been warring against this couple, and trying to discourage them. But that night the Lord aimed His spotlight at them and reminded them of His unbreakable promises.

What struck me about that night was this couple's fierce determination to lay hold of God. Would I have driven three hours in 40 below weather?

I've seen this kind of tenacious faith in other parts of the world. When I was in Uganda recently, some women walked eight miles in sweltering heat to attend a revival service. And they returned for three more days—always walking. When I visited Peru once, some indigenous people walked eight or more hours to attend a conference. And a pastor I know in Malawi rode a bus for four days to attend a week of ministry training in Kenya.

Whenever I witness this level of **spiritual hunger** I am convicted of my addiction to comfort. I'm so used to my suburban blessings that I can easily become spoiled and ungrateful. My lack of thankfulness can cause me to forget how much I need God every moment.

God honors spiritual hunger because it is a **sign of humility**. He does not reveal Himself to casual inquirers; He looks for fervent pursuers—people who are willing to go the extra mile to find Him. "You will see Me and find Me," the Lord says,

“when you search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13, NASB).

Just as God met my friend Tyler in the dead of winter and reheated his faith, He will do the same for you if you will take a fervent step. Don't be smug or satisfied. Don't let the spirit of Laodicea tell you that you are rich and in need of nothing (see Rev. 3:15-17). Ask God to make you desperate!

Let the Holy Spirit kindle a blazing passion in your heart, and determine to seek the Lord no matter how cold the spiritual environment is around you.

J. Lee Grady *is the former editor of Charisma and the director of The Mordecai Project. You can follow him on Twitter at leegrady.*