

Seasons of the Spirit 1: prayer and reflection exercises

Winter

As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night,
shall not cease.
(Genesis 8:22)



God's Creation is full of contrasts. Winter is as much a part of God's plan for the earth as is summer. We cannot have one without the other. Without winter cold, how would we recognise summer's heat?

- Take time this week to go for a walk – or just look out of your window. How will the scene look different in a few months? How will the winter's cold affect this part of God's Creation? What do you see today, that may soon be gone?
- Give thanks to God for what you see today, that may not be visible in winter.

“A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter...”

(T. S. Eliot, 'The Journey of the Magi')

The Wise Man who speaks in T S Eliot's poem passed through the seasons on his journey to the Christ-child. When he arrived he found a birth – but not as he had expected it. The gift of myrrh acknowledges how birth and death can be interwoven, and hard to distinguish.

- When has your life's journey passed through wintry times? What made it worth persevering? Are there aspects of your life that perished or fell away

during that time? What did you lose ... and what did you gain? What died ... and what was born?

- Ask God to show you where he was at work during these winter times in your life

Winter is not often mentioned in Scripture. But read Job 36: 6 – 12 or Isaiah 55: 10 – 11 or Proverbs 31:21 (or all of them).

- What is God saying to you through these texts? How do you respond?

What images come to mind when you picture winter days? You might like to spend time with these two winter landscapes, painted by Caspar David Friedrich (1774 – 1840). Clicking on, or pasting the links into your browser will give you larger, zoomable versions.



Caspar David Friedrich, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Winter_Landscape_by_Caspar_David_Friedrich.jpg



<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/caspar-david-friedrich-winter-landscape>

- Which image speaks to you most? Where are you in each image? And where is God?
- Bring to God any thoughts or concerns that arise from your prayerful contemplation of these images.