

# *Finding God in a Fog - of pain, loss, terror...*



Alone in a thick fog there is little to see, hear or feel except within oneself. That self is all that is real - or is it real? In a disorientated world of pain, loss, terror, confusion or depression, where is God? Is there a God to be found? Is there any space or place for God in *this* world?

In Luke 23:43, a suffering dying Jesus, fixed to a cross, promises loving closeness with one who asks to be remembered. Both are sharing the same public place of shame, pain and dying. Can this same Jesus share my place - your place?

When we enter a fog, we are unable to see where we are going, and are afraid that we are going where we do not want to go. We are adrift and out of control. Our bodies are no longer free to do what they once did. Our minds are unable to focus properly because of our shock, pain or grief.

Perhaps the cause was a sudden accident, an unexpected serious illness, or the experience of a violent event. Whatever the reason, we are in a place where we have never been before. Time stands still. Although we know days are passing, we seem to have the same day over and over again. Life has no place

for us.

In our loss and numbness, it is hard to see a way forward. We are tempted to sink into the fog and let it envelop us completely. Is there a way out? Can we in our state of pain and confusion open ourselves to God's loving presence, or even believe that such a presence exists?

As Christians, we try to seek God wherever we are. We make a feeble effort to think, but it quickly fails and we slip back into a dullness of pain and emptiness.

Prayer? O God, how can we pray when we can barely respond to the constant interruptions, questions and directions from the people attending us? Can we be with others suffering in our world—caught in war zones, with post-traumatic stress disorder, rape victims, parents watching their child die? Can we weep for and with them? (Privately, of course!) We do weep, for them - and ourselves. The Spirit, the life-giver of us all, prays in and through our tears...

Strangely, in time, our basic bodily senses may begin to stir into life, and we become aware of our environment.

We feel our bed, chair, and earth gently supporting us. We are encouraged to look out of an open window. For a moment we glimpse the rays of a sunrise cutting across the sky. But the colours seem drained of 'life'. Can the beauty reach *into* us? A butcherbird sings in the distance. Someone offers us a red rose. The perfume fills our nostrils. A close family member or friend sits and speaks with us.

We pick up a book and try to read. Perhaps this will engage us? If it is to pierce our fog it must draw us simply and quickly into another world. Will this escape give us a brief respite and the energy to return to life around us?

Finding life in our fog can begin when we discover God present in the holding, the seeing, the smelling, the hearing and the living. This is not surprising for Jesus declares he is "*the way, and the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6).

Gradually we start to take notice of our neighbours. There are others with needs like our own, and people sharing their lives to care for us. We think of family members and friends whose plans and lives we have upset.

Others are holding us, and God holds us. Can we in turn hold these people within God's love? Healing begins, and life starts to emerge for us in a world that does not seem real, yet is...

When we are able to gradually leave this physical place, and/or the state in which we find ourselves, we start to see others in a new light. We return 'home', so to speak, but the place and the people are different because we have changed.

In our fog, we experienced God dwelling in and around us. We know for 'real' that God's love never lets us go, even in the thickest fog, the most terrifying panic, or the deepest depression where 'life' is just existing.

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus comforts his followers through his farewell words to them. *"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age"*.

These words are true also for us. 'Always' means that wherever we are and in whatever state we find ourselves, Jesus is with us. We are called to follow the 'way' of Jesus, where God's love is continually holding us, and giving us life.

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