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A Thought for Dark Days

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One winter night almost eight years ago a negative thought grabbed my attention and wouldn't let go. I remember the experience because what happened next changed my life.

Wet, Cloudy, Miserable

At the time I was thinking about the weather in Oregon. Since I moved here in 82′ I frequently reminded myself how much I hated the winter weather. I detested the rain and clouds and more rain and clouds. This because I grew up in the bright, happy, sunny states of New Mexico and Texas. In the Southwest the sky is large and blue and bright and sunny. In New Mexico and Texas sunny days fall into one another like a line of toppling dominos.

I lived in the sun until I was 33. In January of 82′ I moved to the winter-wet Pacific Northwest. Did you know in Oregon in the winter moss grows on decks and roofs and sidewalks and anything else that’s left outside? It’s not surprising people get depressed during the dark winter days.

Night Walks With Shasta

As I reflected on the miserable weather I recalled something else. Almost every winter night I would take my Goldendoodle, Shasta, for a walk. We walked along the street that runs from east to west in front of our house.

Across the street, to the south, a dance troupe of firs, pines and cedar trees cover the face of a steep hill. As I walk to the west those towering trees stand to my left. To my right runs a twenty-foot wide grassy area which drops steeply into a tree covered ravine.

A soft mist falls from ash grey clouds behind which a milky winter moon hides, like a child peeking through a silk curtain. Shasta sniffs the air and ground and dances around, hoping I’ll throw the ball. Ahead of us, and to the left, a street light illumines the lacework branches of a cedar tree. I glance up and feel the light touch of mist on my face. In the arc of the streetlight I see countless tiny droplets float softly to the ground. I throw the tennis ball into the air and Shasta sprints after it.

It hits the street and bounces five or six feet into the air. Running full speed Shasta leaps into the air and snaps her jaws in an attempt to catch the ball. She misses and quickly chases it further up the street. I thank God for the beauty of the moon, the mist, the trees, the sound and feel of the wind. I celebrate the wonder of a God who would create such beauty. I thank him for giving me eyes, ears, a nose and skin to enjoy his gift. I celebrate the joy of a dog chasing a ball. I rejoice in the beauty of winter in Oregon.

The Weather Hasn't Changed — I Have

In that moment I made a decision: Every time I thought of winter in Portland, I would recall that beautiful night. And while the weather hasn't changed, I have. Shows the power of Paul's words when he wrote: "In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18 NASB)